



PHI BETA KAPPA

THE KEY REPORTER

SPRING 2009

42ND COUNCIL SET FOR AUSTIN, TEXAS

HENRY WICKHAM & THE LEGACY OF BIO-PIRACY
BY JOE JACKSON





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And for the Beauty of It, Too

Recently, I visited a campus in the mountain west. My host had arranged an informal session with students. As I no longer go to work daily on a college campus, I relish the opportunity to talk to some of the people in whose education Phi Beta Kappa takes an interest. No, admittedly, they had not been pulled at random from the sidewalks on the quad. They were honors students. In fact, they were members of the Honors College's Student Advisory Council. But so it goes on campus visits. Who would expect otherwise?

We talked about their hometowns, other colleges and universities they had considered, their majors and broader coursework, their fellow students and their professors. Clearly, these students were wringing every drop of value from their college years.

We talked about life after college. They felt well-prepared, by liberal arts pursuits, for entry into the world of work or for more formal education. They had no qualms about the practicality of liberal education.

Public service loomed large in their thoughts, at least for a couple of post-graduate years, if not through a full career. So it seemed that their experiences were confirming what we believe about liberal education and the responsibilities of citizenship.

I gathered acquaintance with the best students on that campus and heard their assessment of its intellectual and educational tenor. I asked them — mostly seniors — whether they were still meeting for the first time fellow students who shared their own excitement in the life of the mind. They answered “Oh, yes.”

It was a very good picture.

But perhaps I was being snowed, hearing what my hosts knew that I would want to hear. In closing, I asked each student for a reading recommendation. One suggested Jimmy Carter's most recent book on the Middle East. That led to a discussion of the controversies the book had provoked. Another suggested a current book dealing with misconceptions of mental illness. Yet another, departing from the present-minded drift, said, “You ought to read Darwin's *The Origin of Species*.” For the sake of argument, I countered, “But if I want to get hold of evolutionary theory, I should read something that incorporates modern genetics, which Darwin, of course, did not have to work with.”

“No, no,” she replied. “The point is to see how Darwin builds the argument, to see the beauty of the case he makes.”

Suddenly, a commonplace thought took wings. The student was a serious scientist, and she was pressing upon me a classic in her field, not for its theoretical precision, but for its beauty. That was noteworthy. But the conversation went on. I volunteered that the first owner of Phi Beta Kappa's Dupont Circle headquarters building, a scientist, had corresponded with Darwin. I explained that it had to do with ornithological work he had done in the Kerguelen Islands. Then one of the other students, a political science major, said, “Oh yeah, the insular populations thing.”

Indeed, Jerome Kidder's work on the birds of that remote, wind-swept archipelago had been about “the insular populations thing” discussed in *The Origin of Species*, Chapter XIII. And it seemed to me, snow job or not, that liberal education was doing quite well on this campus.

John Churchill
Secretary

SPOTLIGHT



L-R: George H.W. Bush, Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter in the Oval Office.

On January 7, out-going President George W. Bush, with then President-elect Barack Obama, hosted a historic reunion of former U.S. Presidents at the White House, the first gathering of its kind in more than 20 years. This meeting was an important occasion in the history of the office, as well as a landmark for the Phi Beta Kappa Society.

All of these Presidents — past, present, and future — share a Phi Beta Kappa connection.

The three former U.S. Presidents invited to this event are Phi Beta Kappa members. George H.W. Bush became a member at Yale University in 1948, Bill Clinton at Georgetown University in 1968, and Jimmy Carter became an honorary member at Kansas State University in 1991.

The other two are sons of Phi Beta Kappa members. Barack Obama's father, Barack Hussein Obama, Sr., became a member of Phi Beta Kappa at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa in 1962. George W. Bush's father is, of course, George H.W. Bush.

Phi Beta Kappans share the honor of membership with seventeen U.S. Presidents and seven of the nine current U.S. Supreme Court Justices.

Famous or not, all of our members have one thing in common: the pursuit of excellence. To see who else belongs to Phi Beta Kappa, visit the Membership page on the Phi Beta Kappa Web site at www.pbk.org.

CONTENTS

FROM THE SECRETARY

And For the Beauty of It, Too 2

ΦBK NEWS

ΦBK Receives Arts and Sciences Award from CCAS 4

42nd ΦBK Council in Austin, Tx. 4

The 2009 Walter J. Jensen Fellow 4

2008-2009 Romanell-ΦBK Lectures 5

ΦBK Visiting Scholars 2009-2010 5

Writing Faction: Where Historical Research and Imagination Meet
by Karen Harper 6

ΦBK Inaugural Lecture Series: Journalists Examine Possible Strengths and Weaknesses of Obama Presidency
by Patrick Verel 7

Henry Wickham and the Legacy of Bio-Piracy: The Struggle to Control Local Resources in a World of Global Power
by Joe Jackson 8

A ΦBK Member Witnesses the Plight of Iraqi Refugees
by Laura Sheahan 10

ΦBK Middle Atlantic District 5th Triennial National Symposium 11

FROM OUR BOOK CRITICS

Reviews 12

ON THE COVER

Students traverse the campus of Tulane University in New Orleans, La., one of the host sites for the ΦBK Traveling Exhibit this spring. Photo courtesy of Tulane University.

ΦBK Receives Arts and Sciences Award from CCAS

The Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences (CCAS) has recognized the Phi Beta Kappa Society with its inaugural Arts and Sciences Advocacy Award. The announcement was made at the CCAS Annual Meeting held Nov. 14 in Portland, Ore.

The award honors an individual or organization demonstrating exemplary advocacy for the arts and sciences, flowing from a deep commitment to the intrinsic worth of liberal arts education.

In presenting the award to Phi Beta Kappa Secretary John Churchill, CCAS President Matthew C. Moen, dean of arts and sciences at the University of South Dakota, said that “there was no debate among the CCAS Board members that Phi Beta Kappa should be the first recipient” of the award, for “exemplary advocacy of the liberal arts and sciences is their mission, dating back to their founding by five students at the College of William and Mary in 1776.”

Moen further stated that “Phi Beta Kappa lives by the motto ‘the love of learning is the guide of life,’ and they have brought that magnificent intellec-

embraces principles essential to the academy, and to the work of deans, including free inquiry, and liberty of thought and expression.”

In accepting the award, Churchill applauded CCAS “for the very idea of this award.”

“We live in an age in which the value of education in the arts and sciences seems increasingly ignored, misunderstood, or even opposed,” Churchill added. “Instituting such an award brings new attention to these worthy pursuits, and offers us a platform from which to proclaim, explain, and defend education in the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences and mathematics.”

CCAS is the largest association of arts and sciences deans, representing more than 600 deans whose colleges and universities collectively educate some four million students. CCAS is headquartered at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va. ■



Arts & Science Advocacy Award presented to the Phi Beta Kappa Society, November 2008

tual spirit to more than 600,000 members, and to chapters at 276 colleges and universities. Phi Beta Kappa

42nd ΦBK Council in Austin, Tx.

The 42nd triennial Council of the Phi Beta Kappa Society will be held in Austin, Tx., at the Hilton Austin on October 1-4, 2009. The Hilton Austin is located downtown at 500 East 4th Street, near the Austin Convention Center, Austin's famous 6th street nightlife and the Warehouse Entertainment District.

At the triennial meetings, chapter and association delegates vote on the chartering of new chapters and the election of ΦBK Senators.

This year's delegates will also have the opportunity to take advantage of Austin's excellent local cuisine, live music and cultural attractions.

One of the Council's evening events will be held at The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, which offers three levels of exhibits to explain Texas history. Most recently, the museum held an exhibit titled “Cowboys and Presidents.”

Information concerning registration, lodging and transportation will be

available on the ΦBK Web site in mid March. For more about the ΦBK Council meeting, contact Lucinda Morales, coordinator of Society events, at (202) 745-3235 or lmorales@pbk.org. ■

The 2009 Walter J. Jensen Fellow



The recipient of the 2009 Walter J. Jensen Fellowship is Matthew Wendeln (above), a doctoral student in the interdisciplinary program in history

and French studies at New York University. The working title of his dissertation is “Inventing Regional Development: the Politics of Territorial Redistribution in France, 1920s-1960s.”

The Jensen Fellowship, with a stipend this year of \$13,900, will allow Wendeln to maintain his *cotutelle* (dual enrollment) at New York University Institute of French Studies and *L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* and spend a year in Paris.

The Walter J. Jensen Fellowship for French Studies was established in 2001 at the bequest of Professor Walter J. Jensen.

David F. Hult, a professor in the French department at the University of California, Berkeley, and a judge for the fellowship stated: “[Wendeln's] work on regional development in France from the 1920s to the 1960s promises to be a ground-breaking contribution to the specifically French approaches to social change as it relates to urban planning.” ■



2008-2009 Romanell-ΦBK Lectures

Kwame Anthony Appiah (above), Laurance S. Rockefeller University Professor of Philosophy, and the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University will present the 2009 Romanell-ΦBK lectures in philosophy. The title of the lecture series is “The Life of Honor?” and will include the following three lectures: “The Death of the Duel” (March 24); “The End of Footbinding” (March 25);

“Lessons and Legacies” (March 26). All lectures will be held at 4:30 p.m. in McCosh Hall, room 10, on the Princeton University campus.

The Romanell-ΦBK Professorship is awarded annually. The awardee receives a stipend of \$7,500 from the Society and gives three public lectures. The professorship is made possible by an endowment from Patrick and Edna Romanell. ■

David Martin Darst to Address Secretary’s Circle in April

Every spring, the Secretary’s Circle hosts a speaker of exceptional renown who is uniquely able to address topics of current, national interest. This year, David Martin Darst (right) will address members of the Secretary’s Circle during the group’s annual gala weekend in Washington, D.C., to be held April 17-19.

Darst is a managing director of Morgan Stanley. He serves as chairman of the asset allocation committee and chief investment strategist of the

Global Wealth Management Group, with responsibility for asset allocation and investment strategy, and was the founding president of the Morgan Stanley Investment Group. The author of five books on bonds and asset allocation, he also appears frequently on *CNBC*, *Bloomberg*, *FOX*, *PBS*, and other television channels.

For more about the Secretary’s Circle, call (202) 745-3287 or write to secretarycircle@pbk.org. ■



PHI BETA KAPPA VISITING SCHOLARS 2009-2010

For more than 50 years, ΦBK has been sending distinguished scholars in the liberal arts and sciences to institutions where our chapters are located. They serve as ambassadors for the Society and make a substantial contribution to the intellectual life of the campus. The following scholars have been selected to participate in the program for the coming academic year. For more write to visitingscholar@pbk.org.

Thomas Bender, University Professor of the Humanities and Professor of History, New York University

John H. Coatsworth, Dean, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University

Jean Comaroff, Distinguished Service Professor of Anthropology and Social Sciences, 2009-2010 ΦBK-Frank M. Updike Memorial Scholar, University of Chicago

Elaine Fuchs, Lancefield Professor of Mammalian Cell Biology and Development, Rockefeller University

Linda Gordon, Florence Kelley Professor of History, New York University

John G. Hildebrand, Regents Professor of Neurobiology, University of Arizona

Catharine A. MacKinnon, Elizabeth A. Long Professor of Law, University of Michigan

Doug McAdam, Professor of Sociology, Stanford University

Andrew Odlyzko, Professor of Mathematics, University of Minnesota

Stephen Owen, James Bryant Conant University Professor, Harvard University

Lisa M. Pratt, Professor of Geological Sciences, Indiana University

Alan Ryan, Warden, New College, University of Oxford

Writing Faction

Where Historical Research and Imagination Meet

By Karen Harper

Although I loved my seventeen-year career teaching writing and literature to high school and college students, I am thrilled to now be living on my imagination — and on a lot of historical research. First published in 1982, I am the author of over 40 books, many of them historical novels based on the lives of real English women and set mostly in the Elizabethan period. I am writing what Alex Hailey, the author of *Roots*, dubbed *faction*, that is, historical research which is partly fictionalized to make an educational and entertaining story.

Of course, I create dialogue and events to propel my plot, but the background, basic story and characters must be anchored in reality and research. Yet, since I am not writing English history per se, such verisimilitude presents unique challenges.

I fell in love with Elizabethan England and its dynamic personalities years ago on the first of many trips to the British Isles — or was it when I read my first biography of Elizabeth Tudor or my first Shakespeare play when I was in high school? I've been a rabid Anglophile since, and the hooks for my books have been such protagonists as the queen herself, her dysfunctional family and lesser known luminaries of that time such as Katherine Ashley, her governess.

But where does fact meet fiction? In my nine-book mystery series based on the queen's early life (she's the amateur sleuth), I used records concerning her health, travels and current events so that my fictional plots would mesh with her factual biography. If the queen was at Greenwich Palace for Christmas, so be it in my book, even if I would rather have moved her to Hampton Court. When she barely survived smallpox, I used precise records of the progress and treatment of her disease — and tried to keep a straight

face when the doctors of the day proscribed that she be wrapped in a scarlet cloth so the pustules would transfer from her skin to the material.

My biggest challenge was my novel based on the life of Anne Whateley, the woman who is recorded in a still extant list of marriage bonds as being betrothed to William Shakespeare just before he was



Elizabeth I wore a ring that held miniature portraits of herself and her mother, Anne Boleyn (above).

“forced” to marry Anne Hathaway in what we would call a shotgun wedding. There are hints of “Will’s other wife” throughout his life, but much of Anne Whateley’s story had to be imagined. Nothing that is known about Will Shakespeare was changed for this novel, but I’m glad there were several periods in his life in which what he was doing is debatable. If scholars still argue over whether the genius from the boondocks even wrote the plays, let them argue over whether there were really two Annes in Shakespeare’s love life.

Unfortunately, Elizabethan era research is made difficult by several

realities. Spelling was not standardized. Shakespeare himself signed his name several different ways. I found that the maiden name of the central character in a novel I just completed was spelled four ways, so I chose to go with the most common of those spellings from Devon, the area of her birth.

Accurately dating events is another problem. The Elizabethans used two calendars, switching from the Julian to the Gregorian in 1582; this dropped ten days. Even more confusing is the fact that their new years began on Lady Day, March 25, even though January 1 was called New Year’s Day. These shifts in time can cause discrepancies. Sometimes I drive my exacting copy editors crazy.

One other note about writing such faction: small things can become telling details to guide the story. On our 2003 visit to England, the 400th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth I’s death, I was especially intrigued by a ring of the queen’s on display in Greenwich. A tiny catch on the gold and ruby ring opens the top of it to reveal two, tiny painted portraits, one of the queen and one of her mother, the disgraced and executed Anne Boleyn, the mother the queen never really knew. It is recorded that Elizabeth always wore this ring, so my imagination took flight. In my story that ring is Elizabeth’s link to her mother, her way of keeping that side of her family secretly close to her heart and to the hand that held the scepter. From such tiny, telling details of research are sweeping stories made. ■

Karen Harper became a member of ΦBK at Ohio University while majoring in education and English. She continued her education at The Ohio State University where she earned her M.A. in European literature and wrote her thesis on Shakespeare. She is a New York Times and USA TODAY best-selling author. For more information, visit www.karenharperauthor.com.

Phi Beta Kappa Inaugural Lecture Series

Journalists Examine Possible Strengths and Weaknesses of Obama Presidency

By Patrick Verel

Barack Obama's confidence and cool-headedness are partly why he was elected president of the United States. But if that confidence curdles into arrogance, it will be his downfall.

That was one of the messages delivered by an all-star panel of print and broadcast journalists at "The Changing of the Guard in Washington: What to Expect," held on Jan. 15 at Fordham University's Lincoln Center campus.

Judy Woodruff, senior correspondent for *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, headlined the evening with a lecture on domestic and international issues facing Obama. She then joined the panel discussion hosted by Bill Baker, the Claudio Aquaviva Chair and Journalist in Residence at Fordham.

The panel featured Neil Shapiro, former president of NBC News and current president of Thirteen/WNET; Jodi Kantor, Washington correspondent for *The New York Times*; and Caren Bohan, political correspondent for Reuters' Washington bureau.

In her opening remarks, Woodruff noted that it was customary for journalists to be jaded about politicians who talk about change, but that there is a tangible feeling of excitement in the nation's capital. That is fortunate, she added, because the United States has not faced such an array of grave challenges in 75 years.

"Even the smartest experts worry about the fragility of our financial institutions," she said. "Who would have thought that under a Republican administration and a Republican central banker, that the federal government would be bailing out Wall Street?"

Obama's supremely self-assured nature was the subject of much discussion. Woodruff said that confidence will serve him well when working with his cabinet of political and intellectual heavyweights.

"To be sure, there's a danger of hubris, or too much self-confidence," she added. "As David Halberstam so greatly chronicled years ago, [it is] the

ture, who he agrees on nothing about, and still form a connection to that person."

Shapiro, who helped launch the nightly international newscast *Worldfocus*, said he was struck by how pragmatic Obama is. As a presidential candidate, his initial support for public financing vanished when he realized he had a 7-1 advantage over John McCain.

This might be helpful when trying to predict how he will deal with challenges abroad, which have become tightly entwined with economic and domestic policy. In addition to China, Shapiro predicted that Japan will play a huge part in the United States' fortunes.

"Japan is the world's second-largest economy, and where, for a time, we've basically ignored our issues about Japan. Now I think they're going to be a huge force. Are they helping us and buying

our debt, or not?" Shapiro said.

"As the world gets smaller — both in terms of communication and in the terms of economics — domestic politics, economic politics and international politics converge," he said. "That will put even more pressure on the president."

The panel was the inaugural event in the Phi Beta Kappa Lecture Series and was a collaborative effort with the Graduate School of Education at Fordham. At the conclusion, both Baker and Woodruff were made honorary members of Phi Beta Kappa. ■

Patrick Verel is the assistant editor of Inside Fordham, a twice monthly newsletter for the faculty, administration and staff of Fordham University in New York City.



L-R: Jodi Kantor, Caren Bohan, Neil Shapiro and Judy Woodruff at the Phi Beta Kappa Inaugural Lecture Series. Photo: Michael Dames.

arrogance of the best and the brightest. But the antidote to that is not the worst and the dumbest."

Kantor, who has covered Obama since early 2007, talked about how she was assigned to poke holes in his official biography.

Even when he was a student at Harvard Law in the early 1990s, fellow students produced a parody of him talking about his background — proof that that he has long been using his life story to connect with people politically. He also has an almost relentless appetite to win over people who don't share his views, she said.

"If Obama has a flaw, and this is something that's tripped him up a couple of times in life, he really thinks he can win everybody over," she said. "He has a lot of confidence that he can meet somebody from a totally different cul-

Henry Wickham and the Legacy of Bio-Piracy

The Struggle to Control Local Resources in a World of Global Power

By Joe Jackson

Bolivian President Evo Morales recognizes opportunity. His small, impoverished nation is home to 73 million metric tons of lithium carbonate, more than half the world's supply. As international auto companies eye the green shift from gasoline to voltage, their attention is drawn to the vast reserves of the mineral needed to power the new electric cars.

Yet Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous head of state, is not so easily wooed by wealthy suitors. A critic of the United States who has already nationalized Bolivia's oil and natural gas industries, Morales has also rebuffed representatives from Japanese and European auto companies. The new Constitution he pushed through in January gives Indians control over the natural resources found in their territories. Foreigners interested in extracting those riches without establishing some kind of long-term profit sharing are quickly shown the door.

Morales is not alone in such actions. Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez might not have lithium, but he has oil. Venezuela has been one of the United States' top five oil suppliers, and the Orinoco Basin is believed to hold deposits rivaling Saudi Arabian reserves. In 2007, Chávez nationalized the major oil companies active in the Orinoco, and later signed a \$4 billion deal with China that could direct the flow of oil across the Pacific instead of north, its traditional direction.

Such moves make energy-conscious Americans nervous, but history gives them special meaning. Chávez and Morales have tried to shroud themselves in the mantle of Simón Bolívar: for many Latin nations, the bicentenary of independence from Spain is falling between 2008-2010, and in them there is much talk of liberation from

“empire.” Both consider the United States today's oppressing empire, at a time when “globalization” and imperialism are often seen as synonymous terms. Whether it be the Spanish, British or Americans in Latin America, their history has been one of extraction — taking away natural riches while leaving little of lasting value behind.

The old resentments arise in sur-

siphoned from their veins.

The power politics of Chavez and Morales may seem worlds apart from the fears of Amazon Indians, but they spring from one source: the threat of “bio-piracy,” that fear of losing control of valuable natural resources. Broadly known as the misappropriation of “indigenous traditional knowledge,” its prevalence in the Third World is common enough to become a human rights issue on the international level. Yet it is nothing new.

Two milestones from the Victorian era shaped that fear, both remembered in South America as if they happened yesterday. The first is cinchona, an Andean tree which graces the Peruvian flag and whose bark was the original source of the anti-malarial drug quinine. The “bark of barks” became known as a miracle cure in the 17th century after it was used to treat England's King Charles II for malaria. But Peru never grew wealthy from its medical contribution. Instead, British botanists smuggled out seeds and cuttings in 1856, and vast plantations of cinchona grown first in India and then Indonesia undercut Peru as the world's primary supplier of quinine.

The event giving birth to the idea of bio-piracy was the theft of rubber. From the 1850s until 1913, the Amazon was the world's sole source of *Hevea brasiliensis*, a silver-leafed tree whose high quality rubber was essential for the transportation, communication, and industry of competing Western empires. Rubber then was what oil is today, a strategic resource whose free access was paramount to any global power's interests and whose control was the “ultimate hard currency of exchange.” Echoes of today's oil and lithium politics are inescapable. Brazil's rubber cartel in Manaus was the OPEC of its day: it set prices, controlled production, and watched the



Wickham standing by the oldest tree in Ceylon, 1905

prising but telling ways. In 2007, the Karitiãna Indians of the western Amazon refused to allow scientists to collect their blood and DNA any longer after learning such samples were being sold for \$85 by an American firm. Genome mapping of close-knit populations like the tribe allows geneticists to track the transmission of illnesses through generations. Such research, say scientists, is good for mankind. But the Karitiãna say they have not received one penny for the secrets

world dance to its tune. British imperialist Clements Markham mused that if Britain hoped to stay a Great Power, she must secure a permanent and uninterrupted supply of “black gold.” American imperialist Harvey Firestone declared that no government had the “moral right” to withhold a vital world commodity, and wrapped his quest for “resource independence” in the flag.

Rubber is the byproduct of the milky latex flowing through the lactifers of over 500 species of plants across the world. It oozes from trees, vines and bushes in such diverse places as Africa, India, the Malay peninsula, and Central and South America, usually in tropical climes. Yet hevea was — and still is — the most durable of the natural rubbers, and the best hevea reportedly came from somewhere near Santarém, Brazil, a river port 500 miles up the Amazon from the Atlantic. There was a myth in Amazonas of a giant rubber tree said to support entire families on the profits from its daily flow of crude latex; in some versions, this “mother tree” bore fruit or a bread-like manna, but in all tales it supplied all of life’s necessities. Though the tree’s riches were renewable, they must be used wisely, and as with all good things, the secret leaked into the greater world. One day, thieves arrived by river and chopped into the tree’s delicate bark to find what lay inside.

Instead of riches, water burst from the wounded trunk and drowned both strangers and guardians. The stream turned into a flood that wouldn’t stop. Soon the waters covered the earth, destroying all mankind.

Myth has a funny way of coming true. The heralded thief was Henry Wickham, a catastrophe-prone British adventurer who smuggled 70,000 hevea seeds from the Amazon basin in 1876. He did so at a price, dragging his wife, mother, siblings, in-laws, and several hopeful laborers to this green Eden with the promise that all would become planters and live in luxury. Instead, most died of malaria and yellow fever. A broken Wickham and his wife escaped, hiding his seeds (wrapped in banana leaves and stored in woven pannier baskets) aboard a British tramp steamer and taking them to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

Although only 2,000 of these seeds would germinate, they changed the world. The seedlings were shipped to Britain’s Far Eastern plantations, and in 1913 waves of British rubber flooded the world market, supplanting in price, convenience, and quality the rubber produced in Brazil. The Amazon Rubber Boom became a bust in less than a year, creating an economic apocalypse from which the Amazon Basin has not yet fully recovered.

The Spanish empire took gold and silver, the British rubber, and American-based companies today search for biological gold, such as the active components in jungle plants or the blood of the Karitiânas. The history of “empire” in South America comes wrapped in such extraction, and because of this, what may seem to us as rants by Morales and Chávez about controlling the flow of lithium and oil has real meaning to their neighbors and constituencies. Chávez, for one, has already proposed huge pipeline projects to pump oil and natural gas throughout South America, a new twist in the resource management of that continent.

Unlike most Americans, both presidents know a secret: history is very real. Few Western empires have ever replaced in kind what they have taken from the earth, and though the elites get rich, everyone else suffers. This is why “globalization” is such a dirty word in this part of the world. To those historically left with nothing, “empires” take, but rarely give. ■

Joe Jackson became a member of ΦBK at Florida State University while majoring in English and psychology. He continued his education at the University of Arkansas, where he earned an M.F.A. in creative writing

Continued on page 11

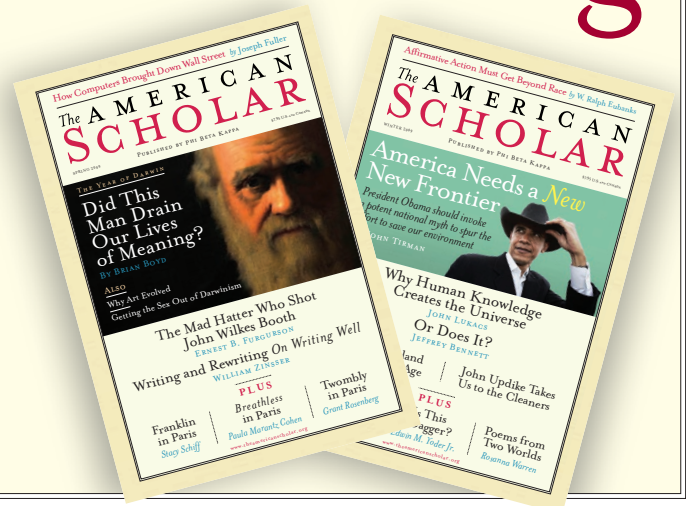
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KRSP09



A ΦBK Member Witnesses the Plight of Iraqi Refugees

By Laura Sheahen

“When the militants put a bomb in front of my house in Iraq, I asked them to think about my children,” said Issa, an Iraqi refugee now living in Lebanon. “They told me, ‘The nation is more important than the children.’”

I blinked, trying to process this. “But the nation is the children . . . right?”

Apparently not. Issa, a father of five, had already paid a ransom in spring 2006, when his college-age son was kidnapped. Then the same Mehdi Army — militants terrorizing his war-torn country — started pressuring Issa’s teenage sons to join their movement.

Issa decided that the only way to escape the violence was to leave. In August 2007, he took his family to Beirut. The couple and four of their children now spend their days in a bare two-room apartment in the slums, waiting for something to change.

I was visiting Issa’s family as part of my work with Catholic Relief Services’ (CRS) programs in the Middle East. There are close to two million Iraqi refugees scattered throughout the Middle East in countries like Lebanon and Syria. They’re not your stereotypical refugees, if any such exist. They tend to be well-educated — some have enviable resumes. When I visit their damp, crumbling, near-empty apartments, they pull out ragged report cards and diplomas to show me.

As a ΦBK member, I respond to their enthusiasm. Iraqis place a high value on education, for themselves and for their children. My own background in the liberal arts — I was a Russian language major — was what led me to international work in the first place. Like them, I know that a well-rounded education doesn’t just bring in a much-

needed paycheck — it expands your world.

But the more Iraqi refugee parents I meet, the more I see that their dreams for their kids’ education are shrinking. Like most immigrants in the Middle East, Issa isn’t allowed a work permit in his host country. Neither is his wife, who used to be the director of a school. His 22-year-old daughter Marwa has a

on the table. Issa is just one of them. In grammatically correct, only slightly accented English, he described his fears for the future.

Despite the lack of money and jobs, I’ve seen Iraqis make tremendous sacrifices to educate their children. Because they’re not citizens, refugee kids aren’t usually allowed to go to public schools in the Middle East.

Families have to come up with money for private schools.

Though Issa’s apartment has no chairs and beds — only thin mattresses on a concrete floor — the family managed to send their three youngest children to school; CRS was able to help with some of the fees. The family also studies English through programs for refugees. During my visit, they crowded around an old desk piled with books; it’s one of the few pieces of furniture in the room.

At school, their 13-year-old daughter

Haneen faced another barrier: prejudice. Her Lebanese classmates made fun of her Iraqi accent, and even her teacher wasn’t sympathetic. She tried to drop out, but her sister Marwa convinced her to return.

I hope Issa and his children will make it, but I understand how desperate he feels about their chances. Charities like mine are scrambling to provide tuition or catch-up classes for Iraqi kids who have missed a year of school. A big goal is to get them back in the classroom before too much time goes by.

Education, especially an open and liberal one, has another benefit — it promotes tolerance and a worldview that accepts that different beliefs exist, even if it you don’t share them. It’s an education that helps graduates consider the views of others and be open to dia-



Issa and his wife peruse their family’s modest collection of books and other educational resources in their apartment in Beirut, Lebanon. The family asked that their faces not be shown. Photo: Laura Sheahen/Catholic Relief Services

college degree in biology and shows me her university class’s graduation photo proudly. In Iraq, she was planning on a career. In Beirut, she stays home. “My degree is wasted,” she told me.

It’s not as life-threatening a complaint as lacking food or shelter. But seeing your years at a university go to waste, and not fulfilling your intellectual potential, is yet another emotional wrench for Iraqis who have lived through atrocities. How many honor-society students from Iraq are now huddled in slum apartments, wistfully looking at their old report cards? How many Iraqi doctors and teachers are sitting at home, idle, because they can’t work?

It’s painful to think of the thousands of Iraqi refugees with advanced degrees who have run through their savings and have trouble putting food

Continued on page 11

WICKHAM continued from 9

and studied under Beat writer John Clellon Holmes. A former investigative reporter for the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, his most recent book, *The Thief at the End of the World: Rubber, Power and the Seeds of Empire*, was one of Time magazine's Top 10 Non-fiction Books of 2008.

REFUGEES continued from 10

logue. Missing out on that is a great loss for any society or country.

What I've seen is a huge backslide for an entire population — Iraqi children growing up with less schooling than their parents. Whether they resettle abroad or return someday to their homeland, they're going to need an education. Because whatever the Mehdi Army might say, children *are* the nation. ■

Laura Sheahen (ΦBK, University of Maryland, 1993) is Regional Information Officer for Catholic Relief Services. She lives in Cairo.

ΦBK MIDDLE ATLANTIC DISTRICT 5TH TRIENNIAL NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM



SATURDAY, MAY 2
HUNTER COLLEGE, NEW YORK

The 5th Triennial National Symposium will explore how the pillars of the ΦBK philosophy as represented by the three stars on the gold key — learning, friendship and morality — inform leaders in politics, business and culture.

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For more information about this event, go to the ΦBK Web site at www.pbk.org, and click on the Online Calendar.



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Phi Beta Kappa's popular Jefferson Cup and traditional Julep Cup are made in solid polished pewter and engraved with the Phi Beta Kappa insignia. The Jefferson Cup is 1 1/2 inches high and the Julep Cup measures four inches. The popular membership display includes a personalized certificate and a large gold-electroplated key, double-matted in an attractive 12 x 16 inch walnut frame.

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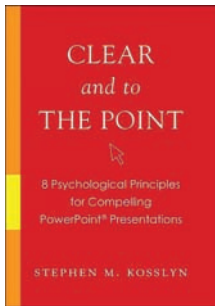
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From Our Book Critics

By Rick Eden



Clear and to the Point: 8 Psychological Principles for Compelling PowerPoint Presentations. Stephen M. Kosslyn. Oxford University Press, 2007. 240 pages. \$19.95

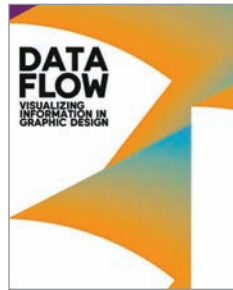
This is an excellent primer for professionals who need to create and deliver illustrated talks, regardless of whether they use PowerPoint or another software package. The author, psychologist Stephen Kosslyn, is a well-known expert on the perception, understanding and memory of visual displays. In a series of clear, well-constructed lessons, he offers prescriptions for effective presentations that are based on eight psychological principles. An example is number five, “The Principle of Perceptual Organization”: “People automatically group elements into units, which they then attend to and remember.”

Unfortunately, Kosslyn is not a rhetorician, and this may be why he leaves unaddressed many of the basic challenges faced by presenters. Of the five domains of classical rhetoric (roughly: message development, organization, style, memory and delivery), he focuses chiefly on style, particularly the design of individual charts. He also provides helpful tips on organization (e.g., chunk information into groups of four or less); memory (e.g., design each chart so that it doubles as one’s speaking notes); and delivery (e.g., make eye contact, don’t pace, etc.).

Clear and to the Point is weakest on the first canon, message development, meaning how one establishes the purpose of presenting content to an audience. Because of the inattention to message and purpose, Kosslyn’s advice on the other canons necessarily remains incomplete. For instance, he recommends using an outline (the

“Rule of Four”), but he does not explain how to develop one (which four? and in what order?). Similarly, he recommends how long to speak while presenting a chart (about one minute), but he does not teach how to decide what points to make, the order in which to make them and how to build a transition to the next chart.

Despite this shortcoming, *Clear and to the Point* provides an effective and well-supported counterpoint to Edward Tufte’s infamous tirade against “the cognitive style” PowerPoint presentations. I recommend it. Kosslyn offers no bad advice and plenty of good.



Data Flow: Visualizing Information in Graphic Design. Edited by Robert Klanten, Nicolas Bourquin, Thibaud Tissot and Sven Elmman. Gestalten, 2008. 256 pages. \$78.00

Data Flow showcases fascinating contemporary examples of data-rich graphic designs. The contributions represent over 100 graphic designers and firms, chiefly from the United States and Europe. Most of the contributions are experimental and appear expensive to develop and produce — they comprise the haut couture of information graphics. What the designers share is the problem presented by today’s increasingly large and complex datasets — how to devise static, two-dimensional displays that succeed as art, analysis and communication. Six chapters group different approaches to the problem.

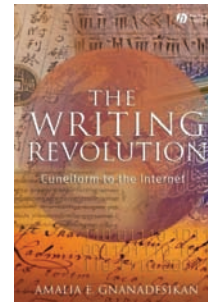
“Datasphere” focuses on graphics that arrange data in circular displays. For example, Christina Van Vleck uses circles reminiscent of Euler diagrams to represent the world’s major automakers and elucidate their subsidiaries and partnerships. “Datanets” presents graphics that use complex network designs to reveal connections between data points and categories. “Similar Diversity” by the Strukt

Design Studio compares the central values of the world’s major religions by linking lists of their most common verbs, such as “know,” “praise,” and “love.” “Datascape” features graphics that use topological and topographical formats (diagrams, drawings, photographs, constructions and maps) to reveal patterns of meaning: “typopath 1.0” by Catalogtree analyzes the relationships and impacts of 200 typographers in a graphic that looks like a road map.

“Datanoid” features graphics that integrate images and artifacts (such as hand-drawn elements) of the human body. This approach is especially effective in conveying information about emotionally charged issues, such as war and sex. “Datalogy” illustrates the use of visual analogies to help viewers comprehend data and apprehend their significance. Xavier Barrade conveys how clearcutting devastates a forest by superimposing soccer field outlines on an aerial photograph. “Datablocks” explores extensions of the rectangular representations of data familiar in formats such as bar charts. “Meta Rankings,” also by Catalogtree, uses nested blocks to analyze the fame of 30 top architects.

Despite their creativity and artistic quality, the graphic designs in *Data Flow* generally do not succeed in creating displays of large data sets that are accessible and understandable as well as beautiful.

That the data are overwhelming the designs is revealed by the labeling, often in miniscule font that necessitates a magnifying glass. Nevertheless, the individual attempts are almost uniformly wonderful to behold and rewarding to contemplate.



The Writing Revolution: Cuneiform to the Internet. Amalia E. Gnanadesikan. Wiley-Blackwell, 2008. 328 pages. \$34.95

Writing has been invented

three times: in Mesopotamia about 3500 B.C., in China about 1200 B.C. and in Mesoamerica about 200 A.D. It has few rivals as the most important human invention and none as the most important information technology. For those interested in the origins and workings of the major writing systems, Amalia Gnanadesikan has produced as concise and readable a history that one is likely to find.

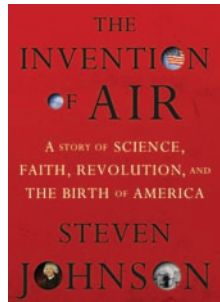
By writing system, Gnanadesikan means a set of signs sufficient to enable everything that can be said in a language to be represented. These sets of signs are called “scripts,” and the allusion to drama is apposite. Writing does not transcribe linguistic acts but represents them well enough to enable a re-enactment by the reader — in effect, a script cues a performance.

Writing systems differ primarily in what unit of language they focus on representing. Logographic systems concentrate on representing a language’s morphemes, complexes of pronunciation and meaning such as the “girl” in “girlish” that native speakers find to be recognizable units within words. Egyptian and Mayan hieroglyphs are logograms. Syllabographic systems use signs corresponding to the possible syllables in a language; Japanese is written with two syllabaries. In alphabetic systems, such as that used to write English, signs represent phonemes, the distinct sounds of a language that we call consonants and vowels. In practice, one writing systems may incorporate elements of all three types.

Throughout her exposition, Gnanadesikan interleaves tales of important epigraphers, the men and women who helped to break the code on many ancient scripts, as well as illuminating comparisons of writing to other information technologies. She keeps linguistic jargon to a minimum and explains well those terms that are essential to understanding how scripts work, such as morpheme and phoneme. Still, her survey necessarily contains technical details regarding a very large number of languages and their scripts, and some linguistic background is needed to fully appreciate it. ■

Rick Eden is a senior analyst and the associate director of research quality assurance at RAND, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research institution headquartered in Santa Monica, Calif.

By Joseph C. Haney



The Invention of Air: A Story of Science, Faith, Revolution, and the Birth of America. Steven Johnson. Riverhead Books, 2008. 272 pages. \$25.95

The story of Joseph Priestley, in Steven Johnson’s conceptually expansive telling, begins some 300 million years ago: Coal deposits formed then from an explosion of nonbiodegradable plant life in the oxygen-rich Carboniferous era powered England’s Industrial Revolution, which churned out the money, machines, and magnets that coalesced in a culture enabling Priestley’s scientific breakthroughs. In the 1770s, in a historical moment Johnson calls “beautiful symmetry,” Priestley discovered that breathable air came from plants and unleashed a new way of thinking about the system of life.

A relentless optimist, a fearless follower of hunches, and an unabashed dabbler, Priestley possessed the “connective sensibility” that also lit the minds of his American friends Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. He interwove ideas from multiple disciplines and led transformations in chemistry, electricity, politics, and, as a critic of establishment Christianity and a founder of Unitarianism, faith.

Priestley’s story as a world-famous intellectual has been well exposed; Johnson’s intriguing contribution is his “long thinking.” He traces the origin of scientific revolutions and the advance of civilization to dramatic increases in the flow of energy through society — the coal-fired energy influx of Priestley’s age with its tide of innovation and wealth. A consilient ecosys-

tems theory, a web of interacting forces, organizes Johnson’s understanding of epic breakthroughs: they happen “when energy flows and settlement patterns and scientific paradigms and individual human lives come into some kind of mutually reinforcing synchrony that helps the new ideas both emerge and circulate through the wider society.”

Wider society became a problem for Priestley. In 1782 he published *A History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, a litany of false mysticisms indicting the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. Priestley was a faithful heretic. He believed in God and defended an earlier, “genuine” Christianity. But his writings and sermons in this period ignited an intense reactionary backlash. A mob burned down his home and laboratory, and at age 61, he abandoned Britain for America.

Jefferson embraced *The Corruptions*, finding in it the means to reconcile his faith in reason with faith in God. Priestley composed a rousing defense of Jefferson’s Republican values, and the two men became friends; Jefferson wrote him to say that “[y]ours is one of the few lives precious to mankind.” Almost 10 years after Priestley’s death in 1804, his political and religious thought triggered and sustained the debate — a struggle for the revolutionary legacy — fought in the 13-year Jefferson-Adams correspondence.

Johnson’s treatment of Priestley and his age becomes a detailed and multilayered argument for the world’s interconnectedness, a vision sharply if implicitly distrustful of our faith in specialized knowledge, and it lodges the suspicion that progress, if understood to be increases in liberty and understanding, is more likely to spring from synthesizing, long-view thinking.



The Last Witch of Langenburg: Murder in a German Village. *Thomas Robisheaux.* W.W. Norton, 2009. 432 pages. \$26.95

The essential tale travels a familiar linear course, one horrifying in its fated directness: In 1672, in a village in southwestern Germany, a profane, hard-drinking old woman named Anna Schmiege, who quarrels and brawls with her peasant neighbors, becomes a repository of her society's fears and malevolence. Tortured, then with her forced confession convicted of witchcraft and murder by poisoning, she is executed publicly and painfully. The larger story, of Schmiege's complex milieu, zigzags and doubles back in a performance of narrative nimbleness called microhistory, a method, explains author Thomas Robisheaux, "that explores events on the small scale in which people experience everyday life."

For the poor laboring class, that life played itself out on a psychic field under siege. Personal identity was unstable and mutable, dependent upon an external matrix of relationships with neighbors and powerful public authorities. Once isolated in prison and interrogated by the prince's court for several months, Schmiege became less and less sure of who she was, and thus uncertain of what she had done. Her tormentors, in constructing her identity and history, enacted the crisis of Baroque Lutheran culture: human truths — our terrible sins — lay hidden behind deceptive words and actions. When Schmiege invoked God, the court pastor instructed her, she was actually beseeching Satan. Her words meant their inverse. The hidden self had to be dragged into view because the law required a detailed confession, and Schmiege would be made author of her final, and fatal, inverted identity.

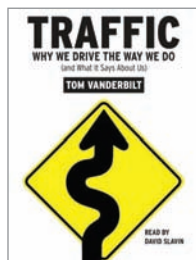
Law and religion held equal sway in this ritual of unmasking. The chief counselor to the count of Langenburg functioned as court magistrate and lead prosecutor. He alone, as representative

of both divine and secular orders, determined truth, composing a relentless inquiry from both factual and magical matter. A witch's apostasy attacked God and state; it terrified the population and undercut the authority of the court. But once proven, pulled out of darkness into light and given an exact, understandable form by the state, witchery became an explanation for mysterious crimes, sudden deaths, crop failures — a social purgative in a time of dread. The process thrust the earthly polity into the mystical struggle between good and evil, and made visible the action of salvation: Confessed and contrite witches, willingly meeting death at the stake, went straight to heaven.

An abstract seamlessness galvanized the influential minds of this age Robisheaux conjures up with such clarifying specificity: the cosmic and the political were woven inextricably together in one garment enshrouding the individual for life. We confront such a place with trepidation, reminded of the value of fractured worlds. ■

Joseph C. Haney is a Washington, D.C.-based editor and writer. He has held senior editing positions at Reader's Digest, National Journal, and AARP Bulletin.

By Jay Pasachoff



Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do (and What It Says About Us). *Tom Vanderbilt.* Knopf, 2008. 416 pages. \$24.95

Have you ever wondered, when stuck in a traffic jam, why it seems to evaporate? Have you thought about the pros and cons of adding extra-cost lanes to toll roads or of building new freeways? Tom Vanderbilt has toured the country and the world to find out about driving, an activity in which most of us are involved every day.

Some matters of traffic are straightforward physics, such as the capacity of a road or the interval that it

takes a series of cars to start up after stopping at a traffic light or for a traffic jam. But others are matters of psychology, such as how and why rubbernecking while passing a construction site or an accident site, even for drivers in the lanes heading in the opposite direction, leads to delays.

More psychology comes from how our eyes fixate on objects, and from how our brains reach their capacity of attention. As more states pass laws banning hand-held cell phones, it is useful to learn how the act of talking to an unseen person, someone who cannot appreciate your own changing circumstances, is itself at least as great a distraction and a danger.

I read some of the book while traveling to Delhi and was pleased and surprised to then find the author describing how Indian drivers accommodate to the many more variations of vehicles — bicycle rickshaws and scooters, for example, not to mention more bicycles, motorcycles and the occasional cow — than we are used to in the western world: "Delhi has forty-eight modes of transport." Vanderbilt describes how drivers in Florence talk about a "full red" light, implying "that there are other reds that are less 'full.'" Would we in the U.S. be willing to accept the income-related speeding fines that led one rich Finnish driver to a "\$71,400 tab for going 43 miles per hour in a 25-mile-per-hour zone"?

Vanderbilt is particularly enthused by the Dutch traffic engineer who removed all signage from the town of Oudehaske. Drivers become more careful as they drive through, and safety seems to improve — at the same time that the visual pollution of the signs is abolished.

Most of us would benefit in our daily lives from reading this book and taking some of its lessons to heart. And we drivers might also enjoy a book about parking: Calvin Trillin's novel *Tepper Isn't Going Out*.



Keep Watching the Skies!: The Story of Operation Moonwatch & the Dawn of the Space Age. W. Patrick McCray. Princeton University Press, 2008. 324 pages. \$29.95

With the 50th anniversary of the founding of NASA in 2008, and the International Year of Astronomy in 2009, many people are reminiscing about the early years of the Space Age. When the Soviets launched Sputnik on October 4, 1957, the only people in the western world prepared to locate and track it were a group of amateurs organized by the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, which had recently moved out of Washington, D.C., to the grounds of the Harvard College Observatory.

Though impressive satellite-tracking cameras were being built, they weren't ready yet. And radio signals didn't pinpoint the spacecraft well enough to allow an orbit to be computed. As later satellites followed, one even bearing the dog Laika (a current exhibition of oil paintings of Soviet space dogs is on display at the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Culver City, California), the Moonwatch teams spread around the country and to some extent the world made vital contributions.

As a high-school student, I traveled on the subway to the RCA building in downtown New York before dawn to participate in our Moonwatch team's attempts to locate Sputnik (and, later, American satellites) when it was high enough in the sky to be in sunlight while it was still dark at our level, even at the 72nd floor. My memories made only a tiny bit of the collected reminiscences that University of California at Santa Barbara historian W. Patrick McCray used to shape his book.

As with so many books, he focuses on a few individuals and their influences. Vioalle Hefferan's group in Albuquerque, based on her high-school students, plays that role in this work.

We also learn what went on behind

the scenes, at the Cambridge, Mass., headquarters of Moonwatch, with Fred Whipple, the famed comet scientist who had become the new director of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, and his staff trying to keep up with the demands of the satellites speeding overhead at 18,000 miles per hour and of the rocket scientists trying to track them.

An important theme of McCray's book is the contribution of amateur scientists. "While prominent scientists and politicians appear here, Moonwatch's story and that of amateur science in general is history from the bottom up." Amateurs still retain a role in astronomy, with their discoveries of comets and supernovae and their increasing participation in online projects like SETI@home as well as those for classifying types of galaxies or craters on Mars. As the quality of amateur astronomical photography, given advances in electronic imaging and computer processing, begins to exceed the quality of images from the world's largest telescopes of decades ago, McCray's book provides an interesting and pleasant way to bring us back to an earlier age.



The Pluto Files: The Rise and Fall of America's Favorite Planet. Neil deGrasse Tyson. W. W. Norton, 2009. 224 pages. \$23.95

Who would have thought that world-wide sentiment would come to bear on an astronomical question: should Pluto be reclassified out of the category of "planet"? Yet such an occurrence happened three years ago at a meeting in Prague of the International Astronomical Union. Neil deGrasse Tyson, arguably Carl Sagan's successor as the major American popularizer of astronomy, has been in the center of the Pluto battle even before the Prague meeting, when he oversaw its omission from the list of planets in his new planetarium in New York.

Tyson's relatively short book (his

fame and therefore prospective sales allowing it to be illustrated in color throughout) pulls together the story with a wide variety of interesting anecdotes, from the circumstances of Clyde Tombaugh's discovery of Pluto in 1930 to Walt Disney's naming of the cartoon-dog Pluto (Tyson even tracks down authority at the Walt Disney Archives) to children's reactions to, and *The New York Times's* front-page article, about his Rose Center for Earth and Space's omission of Pluto from its pantheon of planets.

We learn how the discovery of Pluto's moon, Charon, led to the diminution of our calculation of Pluto's mass to the point where one scientist calculated that at the rate of estimations, Pluto would fade away entirely by 1984. We learn about the New Horizons mission that NASA has en route to Mars, and wonder whether it would have won its funding had Pluto been reclassified earlier. We see a variety of cartoons that dealt with Pluto's change of status. We read children's letters and about Pluto songs and state petitions. (Unfortunately, we don't learn about the ongoing work, in which I am participating, of measuring and monitoring Pluto's atmosphere and the sizes of Pluto and Charon through their occultations — hiding — of distant stars.) Tyson kindly acknowledges the aid of his research assistant, Allison Snyder, with helping to find, assemble and get permission for the many cartoons and quotes.

Everyone will enjoy reading Tyson's wonderful book. We will see in August whether, though it now seems unlikely, the International Astronomical Union ponders Pluto's new category of "dwarf planet" again, or the recent category of "plutoid" chosen to honor Pluto, when it meets in Rio for its next triennial meeting. ■

Astronomer and author Jay Pasachoff is the director of Hopkins Observatory and Field Memorial Professor of Astronomy at Williams College. He is on sabbatical at the California Institute of Technology.

ΦBK members and all other authors are welcome to submit their books for possible review in *The Key Reporter*.

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