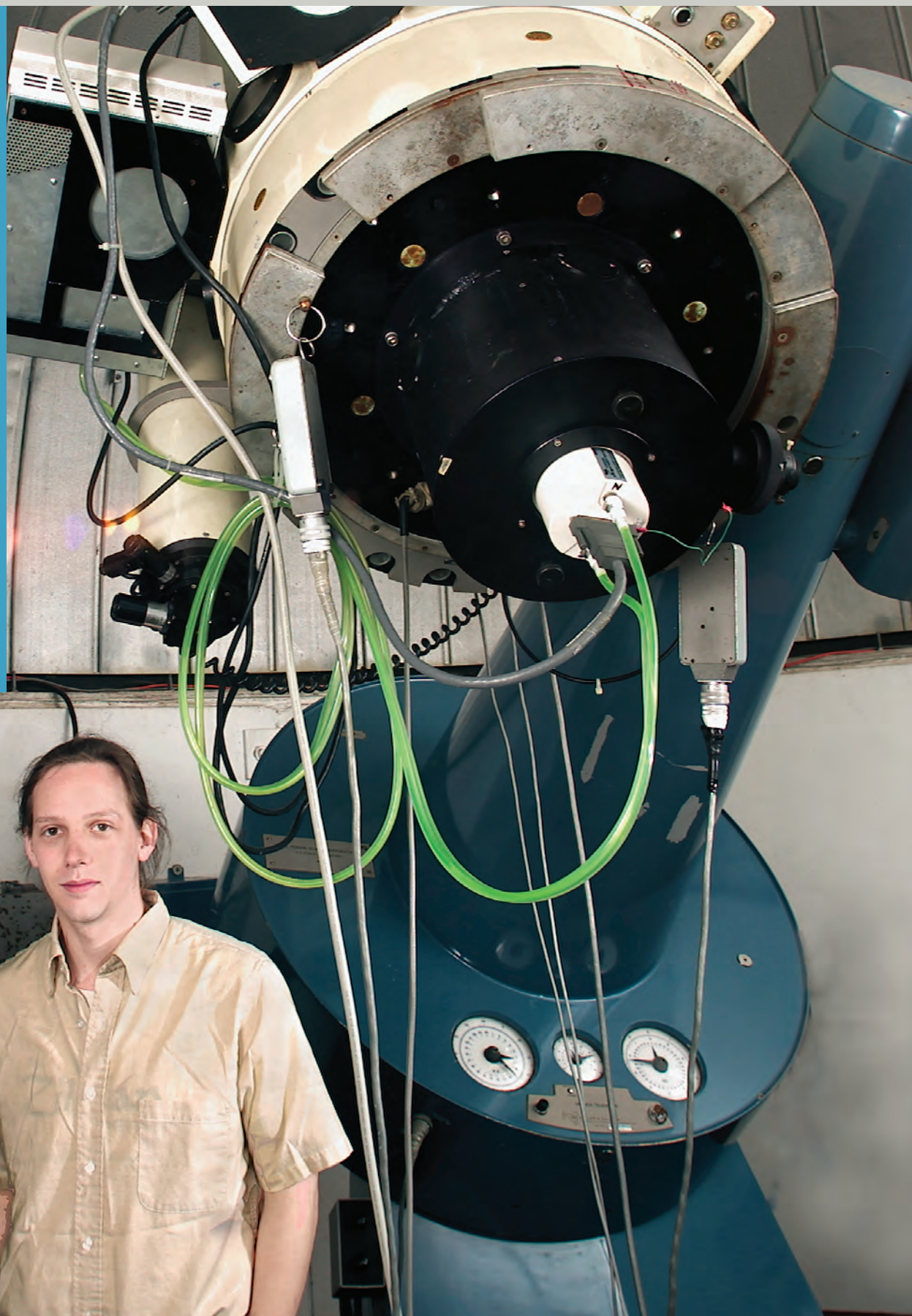




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Roger Cohen '03 (right) surprised Professor of Astronomy William Herbst with the discovery of an eclipsed star.

# STAR POWER

A WESLEYAN ASTRONOMY STUDENT WAS JUST LOOKING FOR SOMETHING "INTERESTING." HE SUCCEEDED BEYOND HIS WILDEST DREAMS.

When Roger Cohen '03 first looked at the images, he thought there must be some mistake. The dates had to be wrong, or perhaps the images had been mislabeled. But after rechecking the data, the realization of what he was looking at began to take hold. He had located a young sunlike star that had undergone an eclipse lasting three years. Nothing like this had ever been observed.

"I nearly fell out of my chair," Cohen says.

Cohen immediately brought his findings to William Herbst, Wesleyan's John Monroe Van Vleck Professor of Astronomy, who gained renown last year for his discovery of KH15D—a far-off star encircled by a proto-planetary disk—possibly a nascent solar system.

Herbst confirmed Cohen's finding: Something very large spent three years passing in front of a young star, HMW15, which is located in IC348, a star cluster in Perseus. The eclipsing body apparently moved at a rate of about 100 meters per second, very slow by cosmic standards. Earth, in contrast, circles the Sun at about 30,000 meters per second; Pluto, the slowest planet in our solar system, moves at about 4,000 meters per second.

"When I saw the data I knew Roger had found something special," Herbst says. "It was something never seen before. The longest eclipse observed to this point had been just under two years. I was impressed with Roger's work."

Herbst was so impressed partly because Roger Cohen was not an astronomer with a Ph.D. working with images from the Hubble telescope or at some large earth-bound facility. He was not even a graduate student toiling toward his doctorate. Cohen was an undergraduate at Wesleyan who was working with a small 0.6-meter telescope at the Van Vleck Observatory. The discovery has been detailed in a paper, which Cohen presented at this year's meeting of the American Astronomical Society (AAS) in Nashville, Tenn.

It's the type of discovery that many seasoned astronomers dream of. But Cohen wasn't looking for some out-of-this-world finding. He was just looking for something "interesting" in recent data samples.

"I found this in the course of analyzing data for my senior thesis," he says. "The fact that the average brightness of this star changes quite a bit from year to year tipped me off that something interesting might be going on."

As for the eclipsing body, neither Cohen nor Herbst can say for sure what it is. Herbst says the star is similar to our Sun but only a few million years old, a juvenile in cosmic terms. Although the eclipsing body could have been passing the star in a one-time event, the slow speed argues that the object and star are gravitationally bound. Cohen may have detected a proto-plan-

et or a feature in a proto-planetary disk.

"It really is fascinating and exciting," Herbst says.

Herbst is not surprised that a Wesleyan undergraduate was able to make such a discovery. Since Wesleyan's program to observe young stars began in the early '90s, undergraduates have been doing the lion's share of the observation and analysis of data.

"It's a product of the academic environment we've created here," he says. "We have a tradition in all the sciences to involve the students directly in research. These are not canned lab exercises with predicted outcomes. Here, undergraduates work directly with professors, which gives them the opportunity to do graduate-level work."

Cohen agrees.

"That an undergrad can have all these opportunities speaks to the level of research being done here. The faculty is great, and there's some really fascinating science going on."

But how were Cohen and Herbst able to make such a discovery using a relatively small 0.6-meter telescope? In a word: enhancements.

"We would have never been able to see this with just the telescope," Herbst says. "But over the past few years we have outfitted it with computerized 'CCD' cameras and electronic detectors."

These devices increase the telescope's ability to sample light; data is

then digitized and analyzed by computers adjacent to the observatory.

"The electronics give us the capability of a much bigger telescope," Herbst says. "It's like taking a 16-millimeter movie camera and giving it a lot of the capabilities of a state-of-the-art digital camera."

Cohen's discovery provided him with the heady experience of presenting his findings to some of the world's foremost astronomers at the AAS meeting just two days after his graduation, not as a coauthor of a paper, but as the primary investigator: a peer.

"Presenting at the AAS conference was great," says Cohen, who plans to attend graduate school and pursue a career in astronomy. "I'm always astounded by the range of people who show genuine interest in this kind of research. It was also a great chance to interact with a lot of people doing really interesting work."

The findings have drawn interest from reporters. The work was featured in the *Hartford Courant* and Space.com, and produced calls from *Science*, *Science News*, *Sky and Telescope*, and *Astronomy Magazine*.

"It was a good experience for Roger and me," Herbst says. "Roger did an excellent job of explaining things to the many interested astronomers who stopped by our poster session. He even got invitations to apply to graduate school! I think you could call that a success."—David Pesci



THREE ARE ALUMNI-ELECTED  
NEW TRUSTEES JOIN BOARD

The Board of Trustees will be welcoming seven new members at its next meeting. The new alumni-elected trustees, serving three-year terms, are:

Ethan Bronner '76, assistant editorial page editor of *The New York Times*; Bobby Donaldson '93, professor of history and African American Studies at the University of South Carolina; and David Siegel '69, professor/vice chair of internal medicine at U.C. Davis and chief of medicine at the V.A. Northern California Health Care System.

New charter trustees appointed to six-year terms are: Robert Allbritton '92, affiliated with the family-owned Allbritton Communications Co. in Washington, D.C., and CEO of Riggs National Corp.; Lael Brainard '83, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, former White House Fellow in the Clinton administration; Ellen Jewett '81, vice president for municipal finance at Goldman Sachs; and Beverly

Tatum '75, P'04, president of Spelman College in Atlanta.

The Board also elected Alan Dachs '70 chair of the Board through 2005 and elected James Dresser '63 to a second term through 2009. Dachs is president and CEO of The Fremont Group; Dresser is retired and formerly was the chief administrative officer at the Boston Consulting Group.

NEW HISTORY JOURNAL  
STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

Wesleyan undergraduates interested in history can't wait to get published.

So they have created a scholarly journal, *Historical Narratives*, which was published by Lightning Source at the end of spring semester. Editors Adam Janvey '03 and Anna Halperin '03 say the journal will be distributed free to majors and faculty in history and sold for \$7 to others.

*Historical Narratives* is a remake of a student history journal established two years ago and published twice yearly

under the name *Spectral Connections*. This year Janvey and Halperin switched to an annual publication to provide more time for selecting the best undergraduate papers and for substantive editing.

They received 40 submissions and narrowed those to six for publication. They looked, says Halperin, "for students who were doing real research papers, going beyond using only assigned books."

They also tried to represent the scope and variety of historical research at Wesleyan. Topics range from the first school for African American women in Connecticut to same-sex marriages in the Muslim world; from King Leopold's exploitation of the Congo to an economic and social history of the Shining Path movement in Peru.

"The essays each stand alone," says Janvey. "They assume very little background knowledge on the part of the reader and do a great job of explaining."

"This is a student-run academic publication," adds Halperin, "that is an

expression of how education at Wesleyan extends beyond the classroom."

Assistant Professor of History Magdalena Teter has served as faculty adviser to the project and said she believes the experience has greatly benefited both the writers of papers and the editors:

"The editors become critics as they make choices on what to include and give editorial suggestions to the writers. It gives those writing good papers a reward for their extraordinary efforts. *Historical Narratives* represents the high quality of scholarship by our students, whose talents and sophistication are nurtured by Wesleyan's history professors in the various classes and by individual outside-of-the-classroom interaction."

The two editors hope that their successors will be able to make next year's publication financially self-sufficient through sales or advertising. This year they were helped by grants from President Bennet and the Student Budget Committee.



Professor of Philosophy Joseph Rouse and Professor of Astronomy William Herbst (as well as Professor of Religion Janice Willis) were this year's recipients of the Binswanger Prize for Excellence in Teaching, awarded at Commencement.

BILL BURKHART



ZELNICK PAVILION HONORS UNRESTRICTED GIFT

Strauss Zelnick '79 and Wendy Belzberg have made an unrestricted gift of \$1 million to the Campus Renewal Fund. Their generous support will benefit building and renovation projects across campus. Wesleyan will acknowledge their gift by naming the pavilion now under construction between Memorial Chapel and the Patricelli '92 Theater. A dazzling glass-enclosed structure, Zelnick Pavilion will open later this summer.

REUNION GIVING HITS RECORD \$63.1 MILLION

With reunion gifts and pledges at an all-time high, alumni cite their appreciation for Wesleyan and strong desire to give back to the university as the primary factors in their generosity. Leading the pack in dollars raised was the class of 1943, celebrating its 60th reunion, with gift commitments totaling \$33.2 million. The class of 1953, commemorating its 50th, reached \$6.8 million, followed closely by the class of 1973, which marked its 30th reunion and made gifts of \$6.6 million. All but four of the reunion classes have broken the \$1 million mark. Members of the class of 1983, which celebrated its 20th reunion, have committed just over \$5 million.

STARR FOUNDATION MAKES ENDOWMENT GIFT IN  
HONOR OF BUCK FREEMAN '43

The Starr Foundation of New York City has been funding scholarships for Wesleyan students for many years. This spring, in honor of Buck Freeman's 60th reunion, the foundation trustees made a scholarship endowment gift of \$2 million. Increasing the endowment for student financial aid is a high priority in the Wesleyan Campaign, and the Starr Foundation's generosity will make a difference for students into the future.

WORTH WATCHING ON DVD

**THE GOOD GIRL** (Twentieth Century Fox) Miguel Arteta '89 (*Star Maps*, *Chuck and Buck*) directed this touching, offbeat comedy-drama, produced by Matthew Greenfield '90 and written by Mike White '92, who won an Independent Spirit Award for his screenplay. *Friends* television star Jennifer Aniston delivers an impressive performance as 30-year-old Justine, a sad soul who longs for something better than her boring job at the Retail Rodeo and her predictable marriage to a housepainter (John C. Reilly). When she becomes involved with a brooding checkout guy (Jake Gyllenhaal), her life changes in unpredictable ways.

**THE GURU** (Universal) In this lighthearted romantic comedy, directed with verve by Daisy von Scherler Mayer '88 (*Party Girl*, *Madeline*), a dance

instructor from India named Ramu (Jimi Mistry) travels to New York City in search of stardom and accidentally discovers fame as a sex guru, with the assistance of a spoiled socialite (Marisa Tomei) and an adult-film star (Heather Graham), who steals his heart. The film has a charming cast, amusing Hollywood-style musical numbers, and eye-catching location shots of India and the Big Apple.  
—David Low



A new Wesleyan graduate is intent on capturing the moment.



## Assessing the Campaign's Impact

The Wesleyan Campaign is about to embark on its final year with \$210 million in gifts and pledges raised toward the \$250-million goal. Barbara-Jan Wilson, vice president for university relations, says the campaign has transformed the culture of giving in the greater Wesleyan community.

**Q:** What difference has the campaign made to Wesleyan?

**BARBARA-JAN WILSON:** You see the impact in 20 new faculty, a better faculty/student ratio, and new courses in the curriculum that explore exciting interdisciplinary areas. You see it in better facilities. As the former dean of admission and financial aid, I feel most personally invested in financial aid. Our students were graduating with as much as \$28,000 of debt, and we've cut that to a maximum of \$20,000. For some, that means the opportunity to take public sector or nonprofit jobs or head directly to graduate school.

**Q:** Is it fair to say that the campaign has restored Wesleyan's competitive position in financial aid?

**BJW:** Competitiveness in admission is a moving target, but both our admission data and anecdotal evidence show that Wesleyan's aid packages are competitive. This is great news and a huge improvement compared to our position prior to the campaign. It reflects the high priority the Board of Trustees and the administration place on maintaining a strong, need-blind aid program.

**Q:** Are there other ways the campaign has improved Wesleyan's competitive position?

**BJW:** People who walk around the campus will see some beautiful restorations, such as Memorial Chapel and the Patricelli '92 Theater. They will see an attractively restored Clark Hall, the new glass-enclosed Zelnick Pavilion, and a Center for Film Studies under construction. They will hear about the quality of the new faculty we've hired. All this helps enormously. But we have

a way to go before our endowment is comparable to the richest liberal arts schools in the country. That will not happen in this campaign.

**Q:** How have alumni responded to this campaign?

**BJW:** They have transformed Wesleyan's culture of giving. More than 50 percent of alumni contributed to the annual fund this year—a hugely important indicator of support. More than 70 percent of alumni have contributed to Wesleyan during the campaign. People are engaged and giving at levels they had never before considered.

**Q:** What are the giving options that have been most attractive to donors?

**BJW:** In general, financial aid has been most attractive, but we also have had incredible success with the unrestricted gift. I think that is a credit to President Bennet, the Board of Trustees, and to the alumni engaged in this campaign. People say, "I trust the leadership of Wesleyan; here is a \$5-million gift; do what you think is best." We have put much of that money toward financial aid and faculty positions. Many other institutions have endowments that are tied up with restricted funds. That's not true at Wesleyan, which gives us tremendous flexibility.

**Q:** How much money has been raised for facilities?

**BJW:** We're just starting to raise money for the campus renewal fund. Our goal for facilities is \$55 million and we're at \$28 million—more than halfway there. We've developed a campus master plan that will transform the center of campus with a new university center. I think alumni will be excited about this and

other projects, such as the renovation of Downey House and eventually a teaching museum and a new science center.

**Q:** Why haven't we done more with facilities in this campaign?

**BJW:** We've done several very important projects, and we've renovated classrooms throughout the campus. The new film center is underway, and we're planning other major projects such as a humanities village. But when we decided on a \$250-million campaign, it was clear that financial aid, at \$96 million, would be the largest portion of it. We could have put a lot more into facilities, but that wouldn't have been right. Nobody was saying that we should expand our facilities but not pay our faculty enough or be competitive with financial aid. Now that we've been successful at building those endowments, people are excited about looking at facilities. Fayerweather, for instance, is a key building in the center of campus. But if you walk into it, you will see a run-down interior that is underused, given its strategic location. I believe that alumni are going to want to see that site put to good use.

**Q:** Has the campaign changed the way alumni perceive Wesleyan?

**BJW:** The conversations have changed over my 20 years at Wesleyan. Alumni feel very proud of what is going on here, that they are part of something special, part of the momentum. I no longer hear complaints about Wesleyan's fundraising compared to Amherst's or Williams'. The conversation is about how we keep the momentum going. Alumni are a bit amazed that we are continuing to raise significant dollars in a very difficult economy.

**Q:** Although the campaign is on schedule, the economy must have had an impact, right?

**BJW:** Two years ago I would have told you we were going to raise a great deal more than \$250 million. I really felt we were going to blow the goal out of the water. The economy and the stock market have definitely affected the capacity of many people to give. Some hesitate to make major commitments because of uncertainty. Still, we are continuing to meet every goal along the way. I feel confident we will hit \$250 million. It's still possible that we will do more.

**Q:** Isn't \$250 million more than some people thought Wesleyan could raise?

**BJW:** Before we launched the campaign, consultants told us we couldn't expect to raise more than \$95 million. It was an embarrassingly low figure. Before the campaign began we had one or two gifts of more than \$1 million. Now we have 44 gifts of \$1 million or more. Some of them are alumni from the '80s. That's the future of Wesleyan fundraising.

**Q:** What role have volunteers played?

**BJW:** John Woodhouse '53 and David Jenkins '53, the campaign chairs, have been amazing. They visit alumni, write and call them, and have contributed generously themselves. There are 35 volunteers in the campaign leadership, all of whom have played very significant roles.

**Q:** What has the campaign revealed about Wesleyan's alumni?

**BJW:** There has been a myth that alumni at Wesleyan are not as rich as those at peer institutions, that they are all

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ministers and teachers. We have a wonderful mix of alumni. Many do work in nonprofits. But we have numerous alumni who have made a great deal of money and are very generous. Research shows that alumni who give early and often are the ones who make big gifts later on. So I cannot overplay the importance of the annual fund. Ninety percent of the senior class gives to the senior class annual fund gift. We need to sustain that.

**Q:** Have there been surprises?

**BJW:** Parents have been more generous than we expected. We've raised more than \$10 million from parents who are already paying tuition, some from parents after their sons or daughters have graduated. This is such a testament to the education their sons and daughters received at Wesleyan—and particularly to the faculty. We have had great success with foundations, including a recent \$2-million gift from the Starr Foundation. We had a \$21-million goal; we've raised \$25 million already. Our planned giving has been as successful as we hoped it would be. The surprises in a campaign come when someone you don't know leaves you a lot of money. For instance, Lucile Stritter [stepdaughter of the Rev. Edward Ernest Matthews, class of 1889] left us \$5.6 million. She was motivated by fond memories of visiting the campus, especially the alumni parade at reunion and the wonderful experience her stepfather had at Wesleyan, but we knew nothing about her before her lawyer called us two years ago.

**Q:** What are the challenges in the final year of the campaign?

**BJW:** The challenge is to get everybody engaged in the campaign. My greatest worry is not that we ask people too often, but that at the end of this campaign someone calls me and says, "I was never asked." There will be other opportunities to give, but I want everyone to be part of the success of this campaign.

**Q:** What will be Wesleyan's next step after this campaign closes?

**BJW:** It used to be that one had a campaign, staffed up for it, then cut the staff and volunteer structure at the close. That is not what fundraising is about anymore. Whether we have mini-campaigns, whether we decide not to use the term "campaign" and put more emphasis on annual giving—these are decisions we'll have to make. The concept of the campus renewal fund and the new facilities will be galvanizing events for fundraising. People will always want to give to financial aid; that will always be a priority.

**Q:** Since you are a fan of baseball, how is a campaign like a baseball game?

**BJW:** One of my staff members gave me a quotation from a story by Paul Auster that said: "A conversation is like having a catch with someone. A good partner tosses the ball directly into your glove." Our alumni are wonderful partners in this campaign. We hope they feel terrific about the game that's being played and want to participate again and again. The pleasure of the game lies in the strength of partnership. 🧤



Barbara-Jan Wilson is framed by Zelnick Pavilion, under construction in July and named in honor of Trustee Strauss Zelnick '79 for his generosity to the campaign.



# Candid Look at Social Scene Raises Eyebrows

Hanna Ingber '03 wanted to write a column for the student newspaper about social issues that really matter to students. Her fellow students let her know just how much they matter. **By Hanna Ingber**



I started writing for the Wesleyan *Argus* about a year ago. Now I am a syndicated columnist. Well, one paper in Massachusetts has agreed to pay me \$12 a week, but I'm ecstatic.

Who knows where this will lead, but here's how it began.

Last October I started writing a column in the *Argus*, "A Little Bit Shady," because I thought that students wanted to read what they talk about—friends, parties, relationships. Gossip! I decided to investigate a different social scene each week.

I started with a look at Middletown bars. I had lots of fun interviewing students while sipping on a beer. That article was nothing special and read like any other feature story. At the time I was taking a tutorial with the *Hartford Courant's* Town Editorial Editor Peter Pach. During our class he told me to "loosen up," to write about a party in a "party tone." He told me to be at the party, to describe to the reader what it looked like, how it felt, what I heard.

It had never occurred to me that I, as a journalist, could use my own eyes. Who knew! After that "A Little Bit Shady" completely changed—it had my voice, my presence, my own observations. I wrote openly and honestly about my own reactions to campus issues, about my own anxieties and difficult experiences.

When I interviewed people, I began writing down how they were sitting or playing with their hair. My questions made a couple start bickering about their relationship, and I caught it in print. My column became edgier, more provocative.

It also became more analytical. I asked students why they took ritalin that wasn't prescribed for them, even though it has side-effects. When I covered Wesmatch, an online compatibility service, I highlighted how much the seemingly inno-

cent game affects people's view of their friends and classmates.

And it worked. Students I knew told me they looked for my column in the paper each Friday. My Wesbox-mate left me a note, my professors mentioned it in class. I got fan e-mail!

I wasn't all that surprised that students read "A Little Bit Shady." Why wouldn't college kids want to read about other college kids?

The shock was that adults responded to it, too.

One column published in November was on the "walk of shame," the early morning trek back to one's own dorm room after a wild night with a lover. "Darting across campus at noon on Sunday, wearing a tube top and stiletto heels, with your hair disheveled and your mascara running, just is not cool," I observed. I asked a number of students, "What is it about night and day?" Many replied that daylight changed the ambience; behavior that doesn't raise an eyebrow in the evening catches a hard stare in the light of early morning. Both men and women told me that they make efforts not to be observed. I suggested that even though students are willing to practice casual sex, they feel the sting of social stigma.

It was embarrassing enough having to approach strangers to interview them on such a topic; I certainly did not want anyone above the age of 21 reading the story. But Wesleyan alumni found it on the Web, and to my shock, they liked it. Women told me that they nostalgically remembered when they, too, darted across campus, desperately trying not to be spotted in their heels and miniskirt from the night before.

As I wrote more columns, I avoided trying to provide answers or cast judgments. My goal was to get people to talk. That is why I wanted to be a journalist

in the first place. Not to facilitate gossip, but to bring up important issues that will be discussed around breakfast at the Campus Center. My column raised issues that often are not talked about, such as cocaine use or eating disorders.

And it was a lot of fun. Until, of course, I received criticism.

A student wrote a letter to the *Argus* tearing my column apart. She said that my "highly subjective reporting" fails to "accurately portray social culture at this school." At first, I was outraged. I thought that she was dead wrong and wanted to debate her point-by-point. I wanted to tell her and the whole campus, "I go to Mocon to interview freshmen!"

But I couldn't do that. Instead, I pulled myself together and tried to take it as professionally as I could. After her letter, I heard more criticism. On the one hand, this kind of difficult feedback makes me a better journalist. When I interview people, I listen carefully so I don't misrepresent them. When I write, I stress that my aim is not to convince my readers that my opinions are right, but to start discussion. I show that I am speaking for myself, not for my generation.

But criticism isn't easy to take, especially when it comes from my friends. I feel guilty. Did I unintentionally hurt their feelings? Am I too focused on my own experiences? Is everyone mad at me? It killed me that I was upsetting the very people I loved, so I called some Wesleyan alumni who are journalists and sought advice. The next week I wrote about how columnists strive to balance between writing with honesty and not hurting others.

As I attempt to begin a career in journalism, I'm sure that I will have to deal with more unhappy readers and challenging ethical questions. Since I just graduated, I still have a lot to learn. But I know I can always seek guidance. Maybe I'll put those alumni on speed-dial.

BILL BURKHART

## PICK OF THE SYLLABUS



ANN DUCILLE

Professor of English and African American Studies, and Kenan Professor of the Humanities, selects ***Clotel; or, The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States.***

Picking a single text from among the novels, short stories, essays, and poems I regularly teach is a little like trying to select a favorite relation from among my large extended family. But for as long as I have been teaching (which is now more than 30 years), I have particularly enjoyed introducing students to Williams Wells Brown's 1853 novel *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*. Although *Clotel* is generally held to be the first complete novel by an African American, few students are aware of the book or its significance to American literary history. The novel was originally published in London, where Brown, a runaway slave and abolitionist, was effectively trapped by the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.

Brown later published three other versions of the novel, each with a different title and slightly altered plot, but perhaps because they appeared in the United States, none of these later editions is as politically daring as *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*. The president is none other than Thomas Jefferson; the president's daughter is a 16-year-old quadroon named Clotel, who at the

# REIMAGINING HISTORY IN THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN NOVEL

start of the novel is sold at auction for \$1,500 to Horatio Green, a Virginia gentleman, who makes her his concubine and with whom she has a daughter, Mary. Although they play house comfortably for a number of years, the couple's happily-ever-after is derailed when Green attempts to further his political career by marrying the daughter of a wealthy white associate.

True to its sentimental form, the novel takes numerous twists and turns as it follows the reversals of fortune and heroic exploits of Clotel and her daughter. Sold down the river into the Deep South at Mrs. Green's insistence, Clotel twice escapes and heads back to Richmond, intent on rescuing Mary, who has been made a slave in her father's house. Mary ultimately will be liberated by love and marriage; Clotel is not so lucky. When slave catchers corner her on a bridge (symbolically near the White House once occupied by her father), she throws herself into the Potomac River, preferring a watery grave to slavery. "Thus died Clotel," Brown writes, "the daughter of Thomas Jefferson, a president of the United States."

In making his heroine the daughter of Thomas Jefferson, Brown took poetic license with the popular rumor that the third president had fathered children by a slave named Sally Hemings. Hemings, or "Dashing Sal," as she was known around Monticello, was not only Jefferson's slave, she was also his wife's half sister, part of the chattel Jefferson inherited from his father-in-law, John Wayles, who had fathered Sally and five other children by his long-time mistress, Elizabeth Hemings. Wayles's daugh-

ter Martha, whom Jefferson married in 1772, was several years dead and buried when her husband allegedly began bedding her 15-year-old colored half sister in the gay Paris of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI.

The story of Jefferson's all-in-the-family values made sizable waves during his presidency, inspiring poems, ballads, newspaper articles, and even a mock impeachment trial. But in those days there was no special prosecutor to out presidential peccadillos. For 200 years, the intimate master-slave relationship that Brown fictionalized in *Clotel* remained little more than a rumor, soundly debunked by most historians, even as Sally Hemings's descendants insisted on their Jeffersonian lineage. In 1998, a team of geneticists used DNA testing to establish a strong probability that Jefferson fathered at least one of Hemings's children, her youngest son, Eston. The founding father really was a founding father, it seems, with as many as 100,000 black and white descendants living today, according to some estimates.

In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson described black women as the preferred mates of orangutans and called upon genetic science to prove black inferiority. It's ironic that his own preference for black women (or at least one black woman) should be exposed by that very science. I have found in teaching *Clotel* since 1998 that students are fascinated by this scientific exposé. They want to believe that the novel really is about Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, and it's not easy to help them see that, while truth may be stranger than fiction, fiction is not truth.

