

UPFRONT



Writers Conference Celebrates Its 50th



Accomplishments of Participants:

Journalists Tom Hallman and David Marcus each won a Pulitzer Prize for feature writing.

Poet Judy Jordan won the National Book Critics Circle Award for poetry.

Fiction writer Paul LaFarge won a Guggenheim fellowship.

Wesleyan Writers Conference participants are featured in almost every volume of the *Best New American Voices* anthology.

In the years since manual typewriters and whiteout gave way to laptops, one fact of the writing life has not changed. Writers still need to learn from each other the old-fashioned way: in the flesh, one on one.

The desire of writers to seek out a professional community accounts, in part, for the success of the Wesleyan Writers Conference, celebrating its 50th year. The conference brings writers of all descriptions to campus every summer for an intense week that starts with classes early in the morning and extends through evenings with readings, and on into the night for as long as participants care to stay awake and talk with each other. It's not unusual to see a weary writer taking a nap in the shade of a tree during a few unscheduled minutes.

The conference has its share of young aspiring writers, but the mix is far broader—this year, for example, a senior corporate attorney who had already published highly regarded nonfiction, the vice chancellor of a medical school, and a large contingent of working journalists. Graduates of the conference have won Pulitzer Prizes, Guggenheims, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and other writing honors.

“It’s deeply important to people who aren’t in school to go back to literature and writing,” says Anne Greene, director of Writing Programs at Wesleyan and director of the conference since 1983. “They will do almost anything to have that experience.

“People come here to think about writing and to meet new friends who share their interests,” she says. “That’s a great draw. Attendees talk about being transformed, which really says some-

thing about literature, and it probably also says something about the world in which people work. The conference reminds people that they like to read.”

Of the more than 800 writing conferences that take place every year in the United States, Wesleyan’s is among the oldest and has a reputation based on the consistently high quality of the faculty and the rigor of the program.

This year’s faculty taught classes in the novel, short story, fiction techniques, poetry, literary journalism, and memoir. The roster included Alexander Chee ’89, winner of the 2003 Whiting Writer’s Award; Roxana Robinson, author of four “Notable Books of the Year” as designated by the *New York Times*; Croatian writer Josip Novakovich, whose fiction and poetry are widely anthologized; Honor Moore, a widely published poet and biographer; Katha Pollitt, award-winning columnist for *The Nation*; and Jonathan Schell, for many years a staff writer at the *New Yorker*, author of 11 books, including *The Fate of the Earth*, and MacArthur award winner.

In addition, Greene brings well-known guest speakers every year, such as award-winning fiction writers Ann Beattie, Robert Stone, and Jules Feiffer.

Dan Pope, whose novel *In the Cherry Tree* was published in 2003, spoke to the *Hartford Courant* about his experiences as a student and subsequently as a teaching fellow. “Wesleyan seems unique,” he says, “in that it strikes a nice balance between teaching and networking. Wesleyan has an incredible lineup of esteemed writers on the faculty—but the emphasis is on teaching and learning.”

Greene first took charge of the conference just before a number of universities started new MFA programs, which suggested the existence of a growing audience of people interested in writing. Since then, the conference has more than doubled in size, this year bringing 128 individuals to campus.

Donors have provided funding for eight separate scholarship awards, which have enabled the conference to help many young fiction writers, poets, and journalists attend. In 2006, the conference received 300 scholarship applications. One disappointing hitch was that two scholarship winners from Nigeria and Kenya were unable to obtain visas to enter the United States.

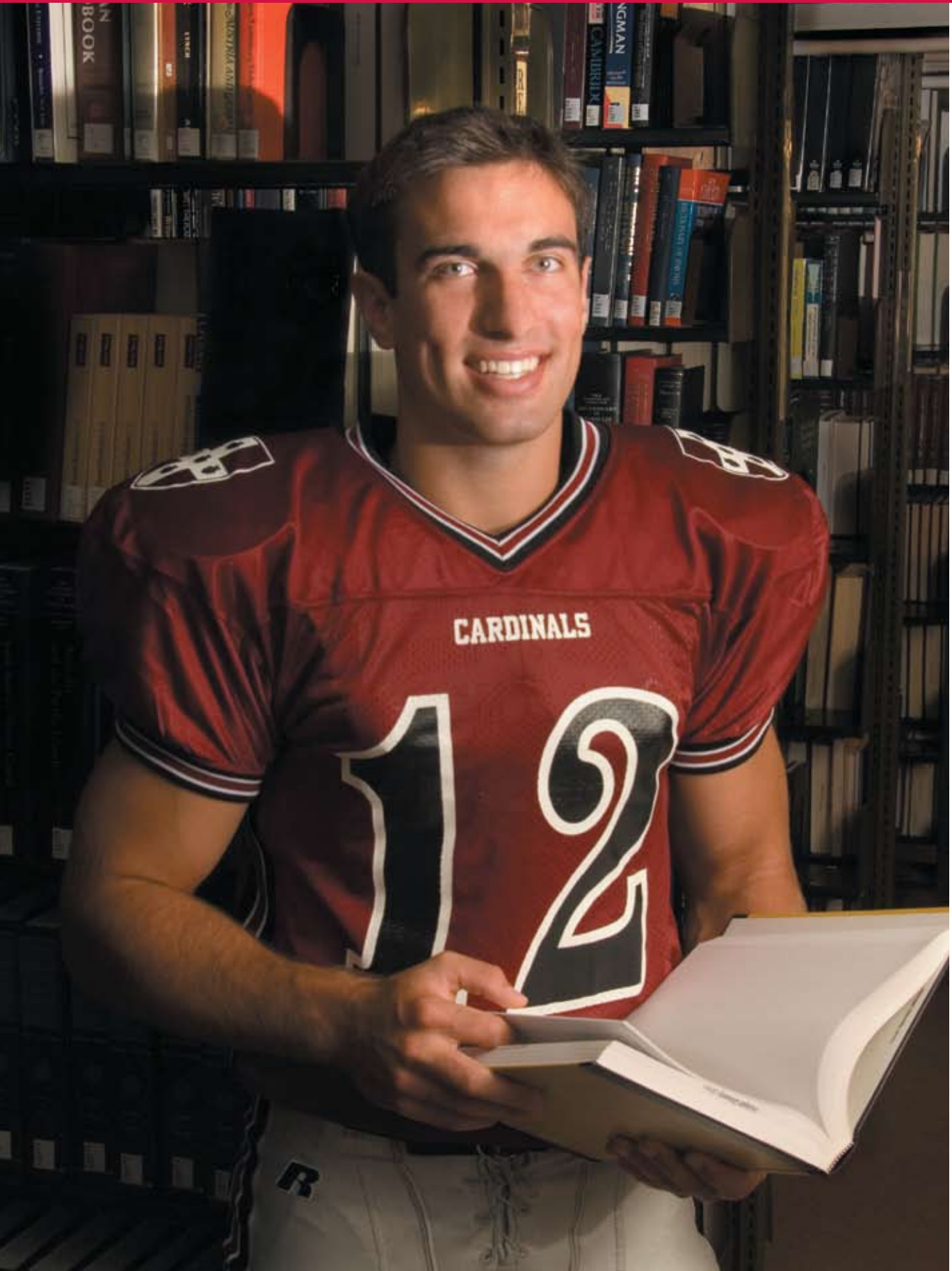
New topics also arise as the conference grows, including explorations of new media and new ways to think about publishing. Despite the changes, the heart of the conference remains in the opportunity for writers to hear thoughtful criticism from faculty and from fellow students.

“The conference is a miniature world,” says Greene. “People can find readers who understand what they’re trying to do and, for just a moment, they can see their audience right in front of them.”

SCHOLAR-ATHLETES

Disciplined Effort

Last year Wesleyan quarterback **Zach Librizzi ’08** led NESCAC in total offensive yardage (averaging 195 yards a game) while pursuing a major in biology. When he’s not soaking up organic chemistry, his favorite course so far, he also helps anchor the men’s lacrosse team as a defensive midfielder who has seen NCAA tournament action in both his years on the team.



ART & SCIENCE OF EDUCATION

Equipment Check

Assistant Professor of Earth & Environmental Sciences **Tim Ku** helps students assemble equipment for a trip to study bioluminescent unicel-luar marine organisms in bays off Vieques, Puerto Rico. This summer, these and other members of the re-search team sought to learn why the colorful creatures thrive in this spe-cial and fragile ecosystem.



ENGAGED WITH THE WORLD

Learning to Live in Harmony

己所不欲勿施於人

Yourself, what [you] don't want, don't do to others.

Analects 15:23
Confucius

Although the United States may go broke import-ing Chinese goods, our appetite for Chinese ideas does not extend much beyond acupuncture and Tai Chi.

That's unfortunate, says Associate Professor of Philosophy Steve Angle, because the rich tradition of Confucian philosophy has a lot to say about how to live in harmony—a quality that often seems lacking in American public life.

Angle, a lanky and affable academic who also heads Wesleyan's East Asian Studies Program, was scrambling in late June to prepare for a yearlong leave in China under the auspices of the Fulbright program. While there, he plans to finish his book titled *Sagehood*, which explores the applicability of Confucian ideas to the con-temporary world and to Western intellectual traditions.

"What is most exciting," he says, "is to do constructive, creative philosophy that draws on both traditions."

He brings to this task an unusual set of credentials: a deep back-ground in Western and Confucian philosophies, plus a high level of language skill that he can apply with versatility to both modern and historical Chinese texts.

In China, the topic of his research is timely. Interest in Confucianism has revived in China during the past two decades. Contemporary Confucian philosophers recognize the importance of legal and political institutions in a just society, although they bring a distinctly non-Western point of view to the subject. This perspective is important in China today since legal institutions are undergoing a rebirth after having been essentially wiped out dur-ing the Cultural Revolution, but the Confucian point of view also has significance beyond China's boundaries. Angle cites voting as a good example of the value of Confucian thought on a subject that has matured under Western democracies.

"Confucians think that ritual is important, private and public," he says. "Ritual, properly understood, is an expression of our com-



mitment to shared ideals. A Confucian would say that even though any one person's vote is irrelevant in an election, the act of voting is fundamentally a ritual that expresses reverence for the ideal of democracy, reverence for the ideal that we little people actually mat-ter more than those folks in Washington (or Beijing). Voting, as a ritual, helps to solidify our hold on the concept of democracy."

The title of his book comes from a tenet of Confucian thought: sagehood as a personality ideal. The sage is a person who brings out harmony. It is a state of perfection that can be sought but never fully achieved. Sagehood entails a moral obligation to assist every-one to become a better person. That idea is not confined by na-tional boundaries, according to Angle.

"Hard and fast national boundaries don't make sense from the Confucian view," he says. "It's not that everybody is the same, but it's never the case that some people don't matter because of a difference in nationality. This view is an attractive middle ground between a re-alist perspective that focuses on the interest of the state and a purely cosmopolitan view that we're all citizens of the world." UPFRONT

LETTER HOME

A Public Service Entrepreneur

Perspectives of an Independent Volunteer
Lindsay Clarke '05



DSCHANG, CAMEROON

Where I live, I am a rare specimen: *la blanche, ndege, white woman*, depending on which language you speak. Most people in my community are anxious to meet me, and when they do, an onslaught of the same tired questions is often launched. The first thing they want to know is whether I am French or American. When I tell them that I am American, they want to know if I am a Peace Corps volunteer. When I explain that I am not, the same question inevitably follows: What organization are you with?

When I arrived here in January, I represented the cliché of young, bleeding-heart American volunteers: an English teacher hoping to better the lives of my students and foster the potential for the democratic future of Cameroon. Upon my graduation from Wesleyan, I was a fortunate recipient of the Christopher Brodigan Award for public service in Africa. The Brodigan Fund helped me, financially, to get my foot in the door, so to speak, on my journey back to Cameroon, the country in which I studied during my semester abroad junior year.

My proposed project was the end-product of several semesters' worth of research on post-colonialism, imperial rivalries, globalization, and language as a manifestation of the contemporary impact of these subjects. Though Cameroon is officially bilingual in French and English, only a small minority in the southwestern region bordering Nigeria speaks English. (Let's not forget to mention the 240-plus non-colonial languages spoken throughout the country.) Cameroon at least feigns interest in the development of a functional, free, and transparent democracy. If there is ever going to be hope for the disenfranchised anglophone minority, English-speakers and the English language must become further incorporated into the Cameroonian public sphere and government. By promoting French-English bilingualism, the fissure between the anglophone and francophone populations can gradually be mended (or at least shrunk). It was on the premise of joining this fight for bilingualism that I first arrived in Doumbouo, a rural francophone village in Cameroon's Western Province.

Just weeks after my arrival, however, it became clear to me that the inadequacy of my school's language program was only a minor problem in the grand scheme of things. A lack of simple human necessities, such as clean water, adequate nourishment, and hygienic

learning facilities was far more pressing than the hope for national democratic freedoms.

The kids, ages 5 through 16, were crammed into dirt-floor classrooms in groups of 30 to 90 students. In addition to lacking basic textbooks and school supplies, the children were fighting a constant battle against the pervasive dust and the chiggers that live in it (small insects that burrow into and implant eggs in the bare or sandaled feet of the children). The school grounds lacked a water source, which made not only for thirsty students but also unsanitary conditions. School lunches are such a distant dream that the students would most likely be confused if you suggested that they eat between the hours of 7 a.m. and 2 p.m. The potential for improvements to the learning environment was, and still is, enormous.

I e-mailed family and many friends, explaining my concerns and making a simple plea for people to reconsider the money they spend at home and whether or not they might be able to contribute a small amount to the development of the primary school in which I work. The \$5 that an American might spend on a beer or a movie ticket or some unneeded item of clothing can buy two schoolbooks here. The cost of books, school supplies, cement, and other materials needed to equip the school might seem minimal in the eyes of many Americans, but relative to the economy here in Cameroon, it is enormous. In response to my request, we raised more than \$7,000!

With this money we provided painted cement floors and walls for the classrooms, cabinets for school supplies, and fresh, clean water running from a newly installed water tap right on the school grounds. Books and supplies are already being collected in the United States and France to establish and equip a library across the street at the local public high school. Our goal is to build a completely new, specialized building to house the library.

As the community of Doumbouo sings praises about the "acts of god" that have been taking place at their public primary school, I take from this experience an unparalleled feeling of satisfaction and empowerment. The charitable spirit of the simple, everyday people who have contributed to this project has been astounding. As grateful as are the beneficiaries of this project, the benefactors are equally excited by the opportunity to contribute to a cause directly.

Having been disillusioned from years of study of ineffectual, inappropriate, and unsustainable development, I was uplifted by these projects. "Development" doesn't have to be a dirty word. I hope others might be inspired to undertake their own projects that, like mine, change lives for the better. Just pack your bags, stamp your passport, and go! **UPFRONT**

Lindsay Clarke '05 can be contacted at breaking.ground.cameroon@gmail.com. For more information, visit <http://breakinggroundcameroon.blogspot.com>.

New Trustees Join Board

Six individuals are joining Wesleyan's Board of Trustees, including three alumni-elected trustees:

Stephanie Ivy-Beasley '92, vice president, investment management division of Goldman Sachs;

Michael Klingher '78, senior managing director of Westbridge Capital, a real estate opportunity fund; and

Thomas Wu '72, retired managing director, corporate development, Asia, Sara Lee Corporation.

Trustees elected by the Board include:

Jack Braitmayer '57 P'83, retired chairman and chief executive officer of Mona Industries;

Karen Freedman '75 P'05, executive director of Lawyers for Children; and

Brian Schorr '79, executive vice president and general counsel of Triarc Companies.



Teaching Award Winners

Director of Writing Programs and Adjunct Professor of English **Anne Greene** and Associate Professor of Philosophy **Steve Angle** are recipients of the 2006 Binswanger Prize for Excellence in Teaching, as well as Professor of Music **Anthony Braxton** (not pictured).

Do you have an opinion about our new **UPFRONT** section? Please write us at letters@wesleyan.edu.

Sun's CEO Blogger

Sun Microsystems is by far the largest company whose CEO, **Jonathan Schwartz '87**, writes a blog, according to USA Today. His blog averages 400,000 hits a month, and includes reader responses from gushing to serious griping. About 2,000 Sun employees maintain blogs and the company insists they are free to post whatever they want, bounded only by the law.

Frosh by Numbers



APPLICATIONS	7,241
ADMITTED	28%
MEDIAN SATS: VERBAL MATH	700 700
FIRST GENERATION IN COLLEGE	14%
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS	6%
STUDENTS OF COLOR	32%
MEN	51%
WOMEN	49%
ALUMNI CHILDREN	4%
GRANT AID	39%

CAMPUS PANORAMA

LONG LANE FARM

Long Lane Farm is a small, organic, sustainable farm operated by Wesleyan students who experiment and learn about organic farming. Cultivating less than an acre of land two years ago, the farm is now expanding to two acres this fall.

Programs open to the Middletown community run throughout the year and focus on topics such as sustainable agriculture and food security. This summer, three full-time Wesleyan interns are running the farm, along with some volunteers and two high school students.

Kevi Mace '07, one of the interns, says the farm is operating a community supported agricultural project funded by community members who receive the farm's produce in return. New this past summer was the Saturday morning farm stand located on Main Street. The stand seeks to provide residents in the low-income North End of Middletown with high quality organic produce at affordable prices. Any surplus is donated to St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen.

For new students who wish to participate in a community service project, the farm planned to offer a day of farming activity during orientation week, notes intern Margaret De Bona '06.