Poet for the Ages
Emeritus professor Stephen Stepanchev celebrates his 100th birthday and 13th book
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If it weren’t for you, Queens College wouldn’t be in this position. Thank you for your support.
Nuclear-weapons workers handle some of the most dangerous materials in the world. It takes trained people and organized programs to detect work-related illnesses early so that these workers can receive treatment. One of the first lines of defense has been provided by the Worker Health Protection Program (WHPP), under the Barry Commoner Center for Health and the Environment at Queens College. The U.S. Department of Energy has just awarded it $40.5 million in renewed funding to continue screening these high-risk workers another five years.

Working with the United Steelworkers, unions affiliated with the Atomic Trades and Labor Council, and regional medical providers, WHPP already has provided free medical screenings to more than 30,000 nuclear-weapons workers from 14 nuclear facilities in New York and seven other states. Physicians trained in occupational medicine examine workers for evidence of work-related conditions like asbestosis, chronic pulmonary obstructive disease, cancer, hearing loss, and chronic beryllium disease. WHPP conducts extensive outreach to workers, and completes a written evaluation that they can submit to the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program for monetary relief. In 2014, WHPP provided general occupational medical screenings to over 4,200 workers (more than 1,000 of them for the first time), representing the screenings to over 4,200 workers (more than 1,000 of them for the first time), representing the largest number in its 17 years of operation.

Most famously, WHPP has developed one of the largest occupational lung cancer screening programs in the world, with more than 13,000 workers screened already. Its pioneering use of low-dose chest CT scanning facilitates early detection.

WHPP is run by Dr. Steven Markowitz, a distinguished occupational medicine physician and epidemiologist as well as director of the Barry Commoner Center (formerly known as the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems). The center was founded by the late Barry Commoner—the world-famous scientist, teacher, and environmental advocate who worked closely with citizen groups.

The Aspen Institute has announced that Queens College President Felix V. Matos Rodríguez has been selected to join the 2015 class of Aspen Institute Ascend Fellows. The Ascend Fellowship invests in leaders from a wide range of professions who have breakthrough ideas to build economic security, educational success, and health and well-being for low-income families. Poverty and inequality are the central economic, political, and moral issues of our time,” according to President Matos Rodríguez. WHPP’s efforts to improve the health and occupational safety of nuclear-weapons workers specifically address the academic losses that low-income K-12 students typically experience due to “summer slide” (the loss of academic skills over the summer break). “I am grateful to the Aspen Institute for making it possible to implement a program that provides much-needed support to parents working toward a college degree,” says Matos Rodríguez.

For the second consecutive year, Queens College has been recognized by Washington Monthly as the #2 college in America for doing “the best job of helping non-wealthy students attain marketable degrees at affordable prices.” The magazine analyzed 1,540 U.S. colleges and selected 386 that delivered the “Best Bang for the Buck.”

A college’s “value” is now receiving extra scrutiny. The Obama administration has declared that the federal government would begin to rate colleges to determine “who’s offering the best value, so students and taxpayers get a bigger bang for their buck,” in the president’s words.

Because student debt is so high nationwide, colleges are increasingly being ranked for their affordability and students’ earning power after graduation.

For instance, Forbes magazine recently published a list of the “Top Best Value Colleges 2014,” and QC makes the grade, ranking #9. These are “top colleges and universities that deliver the goods without picking your pocket,” advise the editors.

Along the same lines, Money magazine’s new best colleges list focuses on quality, affordability, and outcomes (how much the diploma will be worth in salary after graduation). QC was evaluated among 665 higher education institutions, ranking in Money’s top 30 percent.

The college was also recognized as a top producer of students who receive the prestigious Fulbright grant from the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Chosen for their academic merit and leadership potential, students receive grants to study, teach English, and conduct research in over 140 countries.

“We are very proud that our students are being recognized so frequently by the Fulbright program,” notes President Félix V. Matos Rodríguez. “These honors speak highly of both the quality of the students Queens College attracts and the skill and dedication of the faculty members who teach here.”

President Named an Aspen Institute Ascend Fellow

More Kudos for the College

Shuttle Bus Gets into Gear

For commuters from Queens, Long Island, and even Brooklyn and Manhattan, the trip to QC has gotten appreciably easier: The college’s new shuttle bus provides daily nonstop service between campus and two major transit hubs, Jamaica Station and Flushing-Main Street Station. The bus also provides cross-campus service between Queens Hall and the Student Union.

Launched last August after a three-year pilot, the shuttle has won converts among students, who must display a current QC ID card in order to board. All students pay for the bus through their Student Activity fee. (Faculty and staff must buy a sticker to ride the bus.)

“It’s very good,” said upper junior Domishal Purnell last fall. “I get to class faster.” Her one-hour trip from Brooklyn had shrunken to less than 45 minutes. For second-senior Freshman Emmanuel Rodriguez—an early adopter—shuttle bus travel proved easier, as well as faster. “I worry less about my destination,” he noted. “It’s my last stop.” He hasn’t been the only passenger supplies, and folding chairs, all featuring the distinctive QC logo. For motorists, there’s a highway safety kit that includes jumper cables, a siphon, a blanket, a flashlight, and a tire gauge. What could be more appropriate for—or from—people affiliated with a commuter campus?

New QC Shop Clicks with Patrons

As director of the Barry Commoner Center, Steven Markowitz oversees multiple research projects; he’s seen here with (from left) technicians Steven Vanderpool and Rolando Munoz, and principal investigator Holger Eisl, who are monitoring New York City’s air quality.

If you want to purchase official Queens College apparel and accessories, you’ve got a surprise in store: The QC Shop is now open for online business at www.thecunystore.com/queens_college. As the URL suggests, the shop is part of a venue that gives virtual shelf space to every school in the CUNY system. Merchandise ranges from T-shirts, sweatshirts, and hoodies to key chains, office supplies, and folding chairs, all featuring the distinctive QC logo. For motorists, there’s a highway safety kit that includes jumper cables, a siphon, a blanket, a flashlight, and a tire gauge. What could be more appropriate for—or from—people affiliated with a commuter campus?
JIN-XING "JX" YU ‘14 is already a veritable sensation. After only three years of classical training at the Aaron Copland School of Music, she gained admission to the Yale School of Music’s opera department, a program so exclusive that it accepted just six singers last year, giving all of them full scholarships. She also won a 2014 Graduate Arts Award from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation; recipients are eligible for as much as $50,000 a year for up to three years, to cover tuition or living expenses.

“When I’m 70, I will look back and still be amazed at this opportunity,” says Yu. “I’m going to take it from here and run with it.”

Born in China and raised in Japan, the future diva grew up in a musical household; her father plays the erhu, the two-stringed Chinese violin, and her mother plays piano and the Chinese duktar. Nonetheless, when Yu came to New York in 2007, she thought of herself as a dancer. She completed a two-year certification program at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in 18 months and subsequently hit the road with regional companies.

A year later, to keep her student visa, Yu enrolled at Mercy College as a communication disorders major. She was then recruited to play volleyball for the QC Lady Knights. Benchmarked by injury in her first year here, she took up classical music as a raw beginner; indeed, she had to audition twice before being accepted as a vocal performance major. “Queens College is the kind of place where even if you don’t come in with all the tools, professors are able to see your potential and give you a chance,” she observes.

Yu also completed a major in linguistics. She’s fluent in Mandarin and Japanese, studied Spanish at the international school she attended at home, and at QC immersed herself in other European languages. Her senior recital featured selections in Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, and Russian. But when the artistic director of Yale’s program called Yu to notify her of her acceptance, she found herself at a loss for words. “I didn’t sleep in that morning, so I was pretty sure I was dreaming,” she recalls. “I said, ‘You’re kidding, right?’ The director answered, ‘I’m not kidding, dear.’

That’s success, in any language.

Raising Funds in Memory of a Poet

Hoyt Jacobs ‘11, a talented poet and teacher, was hit and killed by a truck while bicycling in Long Island City on January 17.

A recipient of an MFA in poetry from the college, the 36-year-old Hoyt had taught creative writing and composition here as an adjunct, and went on to receive certification in teaching English as a Second Language at QC.

A native of Georgia, he was living in Brooklyn at the time of his death and working as a reading and writing tutor at New York City College of Technology, CUNY.

“Hoyt’s death sent shock waves through our MFA community, and our students, alumni, and faculty are broken-hearted,” says Nicole Cookey (English). “In the wake of this senseless accident, Hoyt’s friends and fellow MFA alumni have established a scholarship that covers most of Hoyt Jacobs Poetry Prize. This will be given every May to a Queens College MFA poetry student, since the MFA program brought Hoyt to us and brought all of us together.”

For more information and to make a donation, visit www.qc.cuny.edu/jacobs.

JACQUELINE WILLSON ‘70 invests herself in the Queens College Foundation

Each year the Office of Institutional Advancement hosts distinguished alumni as speakers in a special lecture series called Professionals on- and off-Campus. Now experts in their fields, these alumni serve as role models for today’s students, who hope to achieve their own career success.

The series lists students not only hear talks but also interact directly with accomplished professionals from a variety of industries and sectors.

We would like to thank the following alumni for their participation.

In Fall 2014, the speakers were:

MICHAEL COHEN ’83, President and Executive Producer, Baz Luhrmann Entertainment

DAVID ROSEN ’80, President, spMedia Inc.

FREDA JOHNSON ’84, Former President, Government Finance Associates

RONA SCHNEIDER ’79 (MA), Owner, Rona Schneider Fine Prints

SUSAN TELLER ’75 (MA), Owner, The Susan Teller Gallery

In Spring 2015, the following alumni were featured speakers:

GARY KATZ ’81, President and CEO, International Securities Exchange

DAVID KRELL ’68, Chairman, International Securities Exchange

KAREN DALY ’77, Senior Managing Director, Kroll Bond Rating Agency

RONALD FRANK ’68, Managing Partner, IMF Global Consulting Services

MICHAEL ROSENBERG ’67, Senior Vice President, Bank of America Merrill Lynch

DR. ARTHUR ASHMAN, Founder, Adams Department of Periodontology and Implant Dentistry, New York University College of Dentistry

FRANK BOCCHI ’74, Chief Administrative Officer (Retired), New York Life Insurance

ANDREW A. KIMLER ’74, Partner, Volkert McGovern Milstone LLP

JOSEPH TROTTI ’60, Partner, Volkert McGovern Milstone LLP

RICO VINAY ’79, Founder, The CarmelBloc

GERARD PASSARO ’79, Vice President of Network Operations and Distribution, MSG
In FitzGerald Gym's women's locker room, head coach Elizabeth "Bet" Naumovski displayed a huge photo of the 1974–75 women's basketball team, with a banner: "Restore the Glory." "It wasn't even something that I could imagine," says Orender often tells audiences, "I stand before the regular world, where you're wearing skirts and high heels and not high tops." Instead, the psychology major went to graduate school in finance. Financial Services. In 1975, Kyvallos brought 16 teams to FitzGerald for the national tournament held by the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women, QC finished second to Immaculata College's Mighty Macs. A year later, in home court, the Knights beat the two-time U.S. champs. The campus was electrified," she notes. "There was an energy coming from the QC basketball court, going out all over the city." The national press frenzy led to an invitation for QC to become the first women's collegiate basketball team to play in Madison Square Garden. Kyvallos knew just which opponent she wanted: the Mighty Macs, coached by Cathy Rush, who had played for Kyvallos at West Chester. The 11,969 spectators, many of them female, were ecstatic.

The 1975 game proved that "Women were ready—overdue in fact—to compete anytime, anywhere, including on the country's biggest basketball stage," noted Harvey Araton in the New York Times. His article glowingly previewed the Knights and Mighty Macs' 40th anniversary match-up in the Garden on January 4. In 1975, QC lost 65–61. This time, Division II QC beat Division III Immaculata (now a co-ed university) 76–60 in a game one of the Maggie Dixon Classic, named in honor of a celebrated collegiate roundballer and coach. The anniversary game "was a mental turning point for them," says Naumovski. "It just kept climbing from there." For the second year in a row, the Knights won at least 20 games (22–8). For the second time, they became East Coast Conference champions and reached an NCAA tournament.

"Our team was on Cloud 9," Naumovski says of the rematch. Used to 100 to 200 fans at a regular season game, they experienced the roar of 7,419. "We're here to win," their coach assured them, but first she urged them to look at all the alums, including eight of the 13 teammates from 1975. "You got that game back for us," Naumovski says alums told the current team. "It's vengeance for 40 years ago." Sophomore Madison Rowland (ECC Player of the Year) tied two Maggie Dixon records and her sister, junior MacKenzie Rowland, tied another. A half-time ceremony saluted the two 1975 teams and coaches, and a panel discussion followed the game. The glory kept growing. Team captain Donna (Geils) Orender ’78 went on to head the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) and teammate Gail Marquis ’80 brought home a silver medal in the summer of 1976 as a member of the United States’ first Olympic women's basketball team.

Naumovski, who lives in New Jersey, had asked Naumovski if she could spend January 4 with the Knights. "But I wanted to make sure the day belonged to the young ladies," she emphasizes. As she walked through the Garden's tunnel with them, Marquis reflected how "it was unbelievable that 40 years later what we did would stand up to the test of time."

After the Montreal Olympics, Marquis competed professionally in France and the United States, then completed her degree in education and psychology. "I had a lot of competitiveness in me that never wore off," she explains. Among her next challenges were jobs at JP Morgan Chase, Mass Mutual, and UPS; an MBA; and work as a broadcast commentator. “I often find myself where women or minorities are not seen. I find myself as an ambassador,” she notes, including for New York’s Olympic bid. “Wall Street wouldn’t let me be a trader or go into sales. Somebody had to get the ‘no’s’ until finally Wall Street turned around. Today women and minorities get in there and get a ‘yes.’” A member of the Queens College Foundation, she is president/CEO of G. Marquis World Financial Services.

Orender, based in Jacksonville Beach, Florida, also arrived early on January 4. After a QC game in 1975, Phyllis George, then a CBS sportscaster, asked the game’s high scorer if she’d ever considered turning pro. “I was totally taken off guard,” Orender recalls thinking. “It wasn’t even something that I could imagine.” Instead, the psychology major went to graduate school in social work. “Little did I know,” she says, “that it would be in sports that I would be given such a wonderful opportunity to positively impact people.” Orender did turn pro, playing in the Women’s Professional Basketball League (1978–81). She worked in sports television before being recruited to the PGA TOUR. For 17 years, golf became her game as the guided PGA TOUR television, production, programming, and digital businesses to new heights globally. She returned to her passion for basketball as the second president of the WNBA (2006–2011). A member of the QC Sports Hall of Fame, the National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame, and the recently announced International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame, she is CEO of Orender Unlimited and founder/CEO of Generation W.

Naumovski, Marquis, and Orender are thrilled to see “Ms. K” catch the limelight. QC is renovating a court in FitzGerald and naming it for Kyvallos. “I think my impact was that whatever happened in women’s basketball happened sooner than it would have happened,” she says modestly. All four excel at guiding young women into what Marquis calls the “regular world, where you’re wearing skirts and high heels and not high tops.” Orender often tells audiences, “I stand before you because of the lessons I learned about playing basketball at the highest level at Queens College.” She credits Kyvallos not only with coaching her to master those “superior fundamentals,” but also teaching her “to dig deeper into myself to get what I wanted, more than I ever thought possible.”
QC students make a life-changing pilgrimage to places associated with Dr. Martin Luther King

by Leslie Jay

When students go out of town for spring break, they usually head to a beach. But future teacher Sharice Richards ’16 (Childhood Education) went instead to Ferguson, Missouri, a magnet for protest since Darren Wilson, a white local police officer, fatally shot Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager. From April 4 to 10, Richards tutored children in reading, worked on downtown cleanup projects, and attended training sessions in community organizing. “After I finish my master’s degree, maybe I’ll teach in Ferguson,” she says.

Figuratively speaking, Richards is following “In the Footsteps of Dr. King,” a pilot program that brought her and 17 other QC students to Georgia and Alabama during winter session. “I needed something to give me a push to be a part of the struggle,” observes Richards, who says the insights she gained on the trip influenced her decisions.

That was the goal, says Adjunct Professor Moshe Shur (History). Shur thought up the program in response to his experience as a guest lecturer for a history class on civil rights. While talking about the movement and his involvement in it, he felt his audience grow detached. “The students were born after Martin Luther King died,” explains the rabbi, who surmised that events from nearly 50 years ago must have seemed like ancient history. “So I had the idea for a program that would take them to the places King had been. It would be experiential and spiritual education.”

Shur’s idea evolved into a five-day journey dedicated to the memory and vision of his friend David S. Taub, a philanthropist and founder of Palm Bay International Fine Wine and Spirits. QC’s Student Association endorsed the project, publicizing it through flyers and allocating $20,000 for student travel and lodging. All QC students who had a GPA of at least 2.5 and carried a minimum of six credit hours were eligible. Applicants submitted an essay addressing specific points, such as the relevance of King’s message today, and were interviewed by a committee.

Eighteen students were chosen; each had to pay a $100 nonrefundable fee. Few knew each other, so at an orientation session before winter break, they played games to get acquainted. Instructions were mixed in with the fun. “I gave everyone a packing list that included two business casual outfits,” reports Kayla Marley, QC’s coordinator of Student Life, who managed and—with co-worker Soranna Ramsey—accompanied the trip. “Some students had traveled extensively; others had never been on a plane.” The contingent was varied in other ways, too, involving a wide range of ethnicities and religions. “It just worked out that we had an extremely diverse group,” continues Marley.

The travelers assembled at LaGuardia on Sunday, January 18, 2015, for the flight to Georgia. Shur was already in Atlanta. Fresh from a gathering where he ran into fellow civil rights veteran Andrew Young. “Serendipity? That was no coincidence,” says Shur—the rabbi met the group at the airport for the bus ride to their hotel. The first item on their agenda was a presentation by Peter Geffen, a QC alumn. Geffen spoke about Summer Community Organization and Political Education (SCOPE), a campaign that enlisted volunteers like himself and Shur in the 1960s. Created by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the civil rights organization once led by King, SCOPE recruited nearly 50,000 new African American voters in the summer of 1965.

Monday, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, was devoted to action. In the morning, members of the trip served meals and beverages at a program run at the Georgia World Congress Center by Hosea Feed the Hungry, an international aid organization founded by King. Shur and his colleagues Hosea and Juanita Williams. “This was a huge event, where people could get haircuts, clothes, legal help, and medical attention in addition to food,” says Marley. “We built it into the trip because of its connection to King’s mission.”

That afternoon, the QC group joined the SCLC in its annual march through town. This year’s observance was shadowed by cases across the country in which unarmed black men died in encounters with law enforcement. “I heard people chanting, ‘We still have to fight, we still have to win,’” recalls political science major Zashye Kenstebaum ’15, who appreciated the opportunity to experience the march with people of different backgrounds.

The next day was spent at the Center for Civil and Human Rights, a museum that links the U.S. civil rights movement to broader campaigns around the world. Afterward, students sat down at the hotel with Hosea’s daughter, former QC Associate Provost Barbara Williams Emerson, an activist who lived in St. Albans for about 50 years before moving back to Atlanta.

Wednesday involved a day trip to Alabama to see the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and iconic locations nearby. The group went to Kelly Ingram Park, site of 1963 protests against segregation and, at one corner of the park, the 16th Street Baptist Church, bombed by the Ku Klux Klan in an infamous crime that killed four little girls. “Walking around Kelly Ingram Park was one of the most emotional parts of the trip for me,” comments Richards.

The Birmingham schedule included a visit with U. W. Clemon, an activist and lawyer who became the first African American federal judge in Alabama. (Glenade Grace, chief of staff to QC President Felix V. Matos Rodriguez, had interned with Clemon.) “The students met people who were in the movement and saw the fruition of their work,” says Shur. Another extra—because students, who were responsible for meals other than breakfast, didn’t eat together—was a dinner that the rabbi arranged through Chabad of Alabama, accommodating all dietary requirements with kosher Southern fried chicken and vegetarian options.

Maintaining a whirlwind pace on their last day, the group went to the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, exploring his boyhood home and Ebenezer Baptist Church—which King and his father had served as pastors—as well as the King Center and the visitor center. En route to the airport, in a detour arranged by Shur, they stopped at the office of a celebrated activist–pastor–legislator–diplomat. Andew Young made time for them.

As memorable as that conversation was, the unplanned discussions students had with each other may be even more important. “I heard different opinions,” says Kenstebaum. “People were very forward about what they felt. I gained perspective.”

“Sometimes people don’t get along on campus,” notes Richards. “Is it age? Gender? Culture?” Claim the Mahatma Gandhi exhibit she saw at the King Center, she adds. “We are all one. We need to remember that we all belong to each other.”

Gathered behind the banner of civil rights, a QC contingent observes Martin Luther King Jr. Day by participating in a march through downtown Atlanta. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization associated with King, holds this event every year.
Stephen Stepanchev
The First Hundred Years

by Donna Shoemaker

“I write about things that I see, the world surrounding me,” Stepanchev relates. “I like living out here. It’s very, very good being in the countryside.” As we converse by phone, he gazes from an armchair in his apartment out across the Hudson, “a source of some of my best work.” The river’s ice is “moving slowly south”—and north—so what the Algonquins called “a two-way stream, a place of ambiguity,” as he described it in “A Crack in a Palisade.”

There are more life-affirming lines in his latest volume than “death’s opening door” thoughts, though certainly any centenarian has earned the right to reflect on those, and he does. In “Uptown,” he upends a death cliche:

But this is the season of the resurrected bulb,
When the dumb awake, stretch, and speak in color.
Someone is pushing up tulips.

One poem in River Reveries recalls his “dream-swept years” in the Serbian village of Mokrin, from which he and his mother emigrated to Chicago when he was seven. “I didn’t know a word of English,” he notes, but ensconced in poetry and the public library, soon he knew thousands. On a scholarship, he graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Chicago and stayed for a master’s degree. Drafted during World War II, he served in the Army’s Adjutant General’s Office, returning from Europe with a Bronze Star, then earning his PhD at New York University.

For QC’s 50th anniversary in 1987, Stepanchev edited The People’s College on the Hill. He found it marvelous that Walt Whitman “had such a close connection” to QC. In 2005, QC dedicated a plaque on the spot on campus where the 19th-century poet-journalist-humanist had taught in a one-room schoolhouse.

In “The Resurrection of Saw Mill River,” Stepanchev declares:

...The time is right.
A river of April promises
Runs through my stirring, winding blood,
Energized by a love of light.

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Stepanchev took part in the ceremony. In “Words for Queens College,” he summoned his kindred spirit:

Walt Whitman rises from my boot-soles, takes
My hand, and shows me waves of immigrants
Come to renew the land...
He shows me that life, not death, is permanent.

Stepanchev recalls of his 36 years teaching at QC that “the students were very bright, very able. I taught them how to write poetry and a course in the history of American literature.” Joseph Caruso comes to visit his former teacher. “We talk about his poetry and my poetry, and world events,” says Stepanchev.

Each Tuesday, at the James V. Harmon Community Center, Stepanchev engages a wider audience in discussing current affairs, drawing upon his thorough reading of the New York Times. “My students are very active in discovering what’s been going on,” says Stepanchev: “We’re tough on many of the grave issues.”

Very little deters Stepanchev from rising well before dawn to read and write. It’s not insomnia, he explains, but that love of light. He clearly foresees a 14th volume. “I just feel it’s necessary, because I want to make a really complete oeuvre to leave behind about things I’ve experienced. There isn’t much that I haven’t experienced.”

The words he would leave to alumni are these: “Find a way of living honestly, to be colleagues living good lives. That I try to do. That’s about all I can tell you.”

Along the top: Stephen Stepanchev through the years, with his mother (far left) to the present, near a water tower that intrigues him and will likely be the subject of an upcoming poem.
After the New York State Military Museum (NYSMM) found encrypted passages in one of its Civil War diaries, the staff searched online for expert help. “We Googled ‘Civil War ciphers,’” says Jim Gandy, librarian of the Saratoga Springs-based museum. “We saw that Kent Boklan (Computer Science) did similar work.” Indeed, breaking historic ciphers is something of a hobby for Boklan, a cryptanalyst trained by the National Security Agency. (A QC faculty member since 2004, he teaches mathematics and cryptography. His coolest office toy is a working replica of the Enigma machine familiar to fans of The Imitation Game.)

The future QC professor was still at the NSA in 1999, when he saw an intriguing item in a catalog from Sotheby’s—the auction house was selling a letter that a Confederate soldier wrote in code. Boklan volunteered to crack it. His success with that project led people to bring him other mysterious texts: a diary kept by a U.S. surgeon during the War of 1812, a letter sent from one Union officer to another. “I’ve broken four historical ciphers,” says Boklan, including the NYSMM diary. “It’s a step-by-step process based on deductions. I imagine myself a detective and channel my inner Sherlock Holmes.”

The deciphered texts involve gossip—one soldier in his camp was caught in flagrante with another soldier’s wife—as well as the author’s sexual fantasies or experiences. Another section disparaged Varina Howell Davis, wife of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. (During her years as First Lady of the South, Mrs. Davis spoke fondly of her northern relatives and friends, and visited hospitalized soldiers from both sides of the conflict, in a form of coded social communication, her critics mocked her olive complexion.)

None of this material is terribly surprising to Boklan. In his Malbone paper, he notes that ciphers by military personnel tend to cover a handful of topics: sex, opinions the writer doesn’t want others to see, and matters of military import. The Malbone diary had all three, as well as a fourth: matters of religious observance.

“Despite the advances of technology, we’re not all that different now,” Boklan muses. “We have the same interests, the same thoughts, the same problems.”
Students pack the Campbell Dome to hear the stories that Michael Weisman ’71, Michael Cohen ’83, and their special guests have to tell as part of the new Media Studies course, Introduction to Sports Broadcasting.

Today at the head of the class is Ken Aagaard, executive VP for operations, engineering & production services at CBS Sports. He is recalling working on Super Bowl XXXVIII in Houston, a great game between the New England Patriots and the Carolina Panthers that few remember for the quality of play on the field.

Aagaard remembers thinking at halftime how months of intensive planning had paid off in a flawless broadcast so far. As the halftime show began, he confidently left his control room perch in a production truck to enjoy a moment’s rest outside. He was stunned by what he saw.

“It looked like Armageddon. People were going crazy, running all over the place.”

Aagaard had just missed Janet Jackson’s now famous “wardrobe malfunction.” Quickly returning to the truck, he requested a slow-motion replay and immediately concluded that this was no accident. Then, came the call.

“Leslie Moonves, the chairman of CBS, is up in the press box and he hadn’t seen it either,” said Aagaard. “He has to see it, and all they have up there is a VHS machine. He’s sending runners down and he hadn’t seen it either,” said Aagaard, “He has to see it, and all they have up there is a VHS machine. He’s sending runners down and he hadn’t seen it either.”

Aagaard has received 24 Emmy Awards in a career spanning more than three decades. He is revered for his innovations in the production of such marquee events as the Olympics, World Series, Wimbledon, and the Super Bowl.

Weisman made headlines recently when he was drafted by NBC to come out of semi-retirement and take over as executive in charge of MSNBC’s ratings-challenged “Morning Joe.”

Winner of eight Emmy Awards, Michael Cohen is also renowned as a producer of sports programming at NBC, ABC, CBS, FOX, and ESPN, where his credits include the Olympics, the World Series, the Super Bowl, the Kentucky Derby, and the U.S. Open Tennis Tournament. As executive producer for Major League Soccer and its marketing arm from 2001 to 2010, he waged a successful effort to grow the American audience for the sport the rest of the world prefers to watch.

Though Cohen and Weisman both grew up in Queens, neither had initially planned to attend their local college.

In Weisman’s case a personal tragedy, the sudden death of his father in 1969, saw him transfer from Queens to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he was on a baseball scholarship. Returning to his family’s Douglaston home, he enrolled at nearby Queens College as a communication arts and sciences major, with his sights and weekends to help support his mother.

Cohen, who grew up in Kew Gardens Hills, had been accepted to study economics at colleges in Maryland and Florida; Queens was his safety school. While in high school, he had secured an internship working weekends at WNBC TV, the local NBC affiliate. As graduation approached, the sports and news department offered him the opportunity to continue working weekends—including working with the network’s production team—provided he remained in New York. Queens College suddenly became his first choice.

It was at NBC in the 1980s that the two first met in a hallway, says Cohen. Weisman, who began work at NBC as a page, had since risen to become coordinating producer of baseball for NBC Sports and was about to be named executive producer of NBC Sports. Standing with a baseball bat in his hand and seeing Cohen approaching, he yelled, “Hey, Theismann,” because of Cohen’s curly-haired resemblance to Washington Redskins quarterback Joe Theismann.

Their paths crossed many times in subsequent years, and they became friends as well as colleagues. Last fall, when Cohen was the featured speaker at one of the Professionals on Campus forums regularly presented by the college’s Office of Institutional Advancement, Queens College’s new president, Félix Rodríguez, was present. It was a large, enthusiastic gathering, and it offered Cohen a chance to raise with the college’s new executive officer an idea he and Weisman had been playing with for several years: an introductory course on all aspects of the sports broadcasting business.

With the president’s support, the project quickly moved forward, and in February Professors Cohen and Weisman began teaching for three hours every Thursday morning.

With his new “Morning Joe” responsibilities, the schedule has presented a bit of a challenge for Weisman, who emphasizes his commitment to the class by noting, “When I signed the contract...”

If class attendance is the equivalent of television ratings for the pair, Introduction to Sports Broadcasting is a hit.

“We may be the only class at Queens where students are dropping in,” says Weisman, with Cohen confirming that they’ve exceeded the 35 enrollment cap.

“We wanted to create a curriculum which scratches the surface of the business, and came up with 12 different topics for the 14 classes,” says Cohen.

“For a final project we’re going to have the students form groups and create and pitch an idea for a sports television show. By that time they should have learned about programming, producing, management, technology. We’re pretty excited to see what they come up with.”

Besides Aagaard, other guests to Campbell Dome have included Mets and Islanders announcer Howie Rose ’77, media consultant and former Twitter executive Ben Grossman; former president of HBO Sports and MSG Network Seth Abraham; ESPN announcer Bob Ley; and many, many more.

Weisman proudly observes that “Every time someone appears, they always ask Michael and me the same question: ‘Who was here before?’” And they all say: “Wow!” I would say that Queens College, with this cast of speakers, has arguably the best sports broadcasting course in the country.”

Weisman and Cohen both acknowledge that, as students, they had no sense of how good a job Queens College was doing in preparing them to take on the opportunities that came their way. Citing his initial feelings of inferiority competing in an industry with so many individuals who came from Ivy League schools and schools with big sports programs, Weisman says, “I came to realize as I rose up to become the head of NBC Sports that I take pride in being from Queens College. . . . And I want these Queens College kids to know that they can be anything, and I’m proof of it.”

Cohen’s motivation derives in part from his economics background. “We did some research and found that sports broadcasting and sports in general is over a billion-dollar industry for universities. . . . So, I wanted to help bring the real world back to Queens College and help it compete with these other universities that have focused on sports media, broadcasting, and management.”

“Our obligation to our students is to give of our time and our effort, and bring these guests in and expose students to people who can give them phone numbers that can lead to interviews and jobs,” says Weisman. “And if a couple of them become the next Cohen and Weisman, or if someone gets a job as a technician or publicist or any job in the sports business because of what we’ve exposed them to, then we’re impacting people’s lives, and we’d feel great about it.”

Weisman, it should be noted, has previously impacted a student’s life in a less visible and more personal fashion. Working with Institutional Advancement, he agreed to fund a four-year scholarship covering all expenses for someone who, like him, had experienced a personal tragedy that would have derailed the student’s college plans. Expressing profound gratitude to Weisman and the college, that student recently reported an achievement that might otherwise not have been possible: acceptance to study medicine at Johns Hopkins University.

Wow.
is events maven for the recognition of his valor during the founding of the Resistance and the membership chair of the QC foundations.

Mitzi surrendered and enabled the capture actions forced 400 enemy troops to lushing, where he produced the church, which is observed in London (where Peter lives) “a city within a city.” Returned to civilian control after the war, it has received national honors for its composition, the American Holocaust Center, becoming a trustee of the company, writes musicals, and posts a polymath with a bird as famous as he’s totally hilarious and with Michael’s widow Dorothy, where he told the American Inklings, “There is so much love and friendship in this community.”

Jeffrey Geiger (M77) published his second book, Camp Cape and Vandenberg Air Base Force, 1941–1945 (McFarland), a portrait like in an army camp and during a polymath's book about verruca, which has won a number of awards, including the National First Book Award. . . . Monia Scott published a book by Phyllis McGlory Haygood, which has been majorly of Jean’s. “There was something so beautiful about her, Peter, who retired after 35 years as a teacher and practicing attorney, and for many years old. This is her third book in a series on his own modest estimation, “Besides teaching literature, music, and current events. But after thousands of articles and an equal number of deadlines met, it was time to set back and start enjoying what I was doing.”

Sam Edelman, the son of 11 children chosen in an international competition to be featured on volume 2 of ALABAZ Records' Orchestral Masters dials, for world-wide release in a book about the Victorian era—sisters, the story of how they changed the map of New York, and writing, the book draws on Cynthia's long experience in social work—as professor emeritus at Bryn Mawr College and former co-director of the Bryn Mawr College Center on International Studies.
The Queens College community mourns the loss of all of our alumni and friends who have passed away since our last publication. Included here are several of our supporters of our mission, who through their generosity and spirit, have left Queens College a better place.

Lois Alferbach ’42
A member of the Chemistry Department from 1946 until her death in 1990, Ms. Alferbach coordinated book sales for the queen’s Corner礼品店, worked to empower women, and raised thousands of dollars every year.

Robert Bittman ’62
A member of the Chemistry Department from 1964 until his death in 2009, Mr. Bittman graduated from high school at the age of 16. He enrolled in QC in 1945 and then went to the Max Planck Institute in Göttingen, Germany to work with Nobel laureate Markis Eigen. Named a distinguished professor in 1988, Dr. Bittman served as a collaborator as it was generally known that his approach to solving chemistry problems was the best approach available. The Dr. Robert Bittman Scholarship Fund has been established in his memory to support research projects by students in the Chemistry and Biochemistry Department.

Constantine Brown
A dear friend of Queens College, Mr. Brown was born to Greek immigrants. He served in WWII, using his fluency in Greek to assist the CIA after running a long career with the NYC Housing Authority Police, he remained active in the Queens community. Mr. Brown was predeceased by his wife, Olga, 49, and daughter, Thaisa ’92, in their honor; he established the Olga and Constantine Brown Professor and Director for the Center for Byzantine & Modern Greek Studies at QC, and funded a named lecture series for his daughter.

John V. Conti ’61
Mr. Conti has a distinguished career in counseling, university teaching, and rehabilitation administration. The first recipient in his family to attend college, Mr. Conti always remained grateful for that opportunity. To honor the education he received at Queens College, he has established the Dr. John V. Conti Award for graduate students in psychology or a related field.

Lawrence Rosenfeld ’48
He received his degree from the Queens College Foundation for his work in a number of ways. He is a long-time member of the School Lunch series of paintings created with the backing of a Princeton Arts Grant, and based on observation of lunchrooms across metropolitan schools, colleges, and universities, his painting explores interpersonal relationships, social, and political settings. The series has been exhibited widely in the United States, including in solo exhibitions... 1993: Patricia Quigley’s (jazz legal practice with services on the boards of the Shelter Island Parent-Teacher Association and Community That Care, an anti-addiction organization. Having stepped down as town justice, she is enjoying her time with her sons and husband Mike Dunberg... Deborah Riegel was an assistant in the department of the alumni association of Brooklyn Law School. She is a trial lawyer at Rosenberg & Esteis... 1991: Rita Plass (QC ’94) has gathered her shoes and moved to the Department of Art at Tennessee Technological University. In her dedication she thanks her teachers, classmates, and the administration. Her enthusiasm supporter of her alma mater; Ms. Plass attended numerous QC events throughout the years.

Paul R. Ligon ’60
Mr. Ligon graduated from Queens College in 1960 with a B.A in French and went on to receive a Ph.D in Romance Languages from Johns Hopkins University. A beloved member of QC’s Romance Languages Department for many years after a long and illustrious career. Mr. Ligon is survived by his wife, Cyndy, his children, and his grandchildren. His colleagues and students established the Dr. Paul R. Ligon Scholarship Fund at QC to support research projects by individuals who intend to serve individuals with development disabilities.

Linda Lamel ’64
A respected member of the Queens College Business Advisory Board, Ms. Lamel was an attorney in the field of insurance law entering the world of long term care when she was appointed the deputy superintendent of the New York City Insurance Authority Police, he remained active in the Queens community. Ms. Lamel was predeceased by her husband, Constantine Brown (QC ’41) and family to attend college, Mr. Brown was predeceased by his wife, Olga, 49, and daughter, Thaisa ’92, in their honor; he established the Olga and Constantine Brown Professor and Director for the Center for Byzantine & Modern Greek Studies at QC, and funded a named lecture series for his daughter.

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IN MEMORIAM

Dorothy Amos '68
Betty L. Armstrong '46
J. Donald Bader '72
Audrey E. Schrader Barnes '41
Robert W. Bass '58
Lawrence Baronson '64
Colin P. Bolger '78
Lucy Madura Bramanti '54
Jerome D. Bren '54
Dorothy Caparano '42
Charles Clowdell '73
Barbara Cohen '67
Marta Scarlottio D'Angelo '84, MSEd '86
Shelley DeWitt '71
Daisy Deneberg '76
Ruth B. Dvor '82
Sister John Eudes Duffy (Ruth Duffy) '46
Ben Edler '69
Elane Fair '69
Ray Feyelkstein '55
Ruben M. Foku '47
Onah L. Warrick Fogla '45
Alexis France '69
Frederick Gil Gieraw '68
Marvin J. Griffin '50
Barbara H. Grothman '55
Leonard Grossman '64
Jeanne Huss '05
Sandra Harris Heyman '75
Raphael Hoffman '56
Michael D. Howard '71
Dorothy Horibe Ford '44
David J. Jacobs '47
Heyt Jacoby MA '11, MA '13
John C. James '55
Pearl M. Kamen-Bloomfield '60
Evelyn F. Kasuba '70
Wilma J. Kasey '50
Loulou A. Knight '67
Joel M. Kramer '45
Evelyn A. Krepasky '86
Marvin Kuehn '90
Patricia Booth Lever '67
Mona Fitzpatrick Laflay '56
Lucia Lemmond '76
Irving Men '55
Lona Markstall '80
Thomas A. Monte '43
Betty J. Moud '61
Ellis Minus '95
Edwin Fearon-Huber '73
Mary Mouradou '69
Thomas P. Murphy '52
Ruthfield Sansone Nino '48
Virginia R. Olofry '73
Apa Inna Obote '61
Joyce Keller Quane '61
Spera A. Parker '13
Emmet J. Pace '50
Gabriel E. Perle '43
Betty L. Powers '45
Michelle Caputo Prindiville '96
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Caroline Kupferberg Sparr '46
Leslie Scher '59
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Leo Shear '53
Isadora Ruffino Sherman '44
Allen A. Sherman '72
Mabel Lammabch Sloum '47
Herbert M. Slinger '51
Doris Johnson Sommerfeld '49,
MA '53
Alexander Sosak-Wolsens MA '86
Kerreeth J. Stazy '62
Enda Sweeney Sherman '44
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Andrew E. Taute '78
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Arnold L. Teitel '57
Gloria Tortora '79
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Theresa D. Tjer '47
Barbara M. Van Buren '51
Alan J. Verdel '67
Henry J. Walker '51
Doris Wantely '62
Lillian J. Watson '77
Neil S. Wolf '58
Arthur M. Wolfe '61
Helen V. Vesper '73
Norbert Zwander '60
Hancine Pomerance Zinker '56
Morton Zissn '45

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A donation of outstanding American and European photographs from the 19th and 20th centuries is on exhibit alongside Masters of American Photography, on loan from the Reading Public Museum in Pennsylvania, at the Godwin-Ternbach Museum through June 6. The donated work, Photographs from the Matthew R. Bergey Collection, includes remarkable images ranging from pioneers of the medium to modern and contemporary photographers. “In this age of digital photography, it is rare to see so many famous photographs and photographers in one venue,” says GTM Director and Curator Amy Winter. “This is the most important donation of photographs ever received by the museum and one of the most meaningful in its history.”