

SPRING 2011, VOL. XVI, NO. 1

# QUEENS

THE MAGAZINE OF QUEENS COLLEGE



## Finding Success in a World of Fantasy

**Jeff Gomez '85, Co-Founder and CEO of Starlight Runner Entertainment,  
Shepherds Hollywood Movies into Transmedia Franchises**



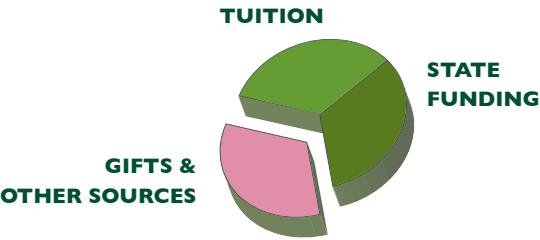


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SPRING 2011, VOL. XVI, NO. 1

## MAILBAG

### HOW MANY GRADUATIONS?

I write with some puzzlement and seek clarification.

On the back of *Queens Magazine*, Summer-Fall 2010 issue, we see a full-page photo with text which says “The College’s 86th Commencement.”

86th???

Queens College was founded in 1937, and its first Commencement was in June 1941. I know, because I entered QC in September 1941, as was thought of by some of us as “the second round.” After three years away to fight WWII, I graduated in mid-year: January 1948 with a BS in physics from the recently formed physics department. (I had to major in chemistry initially when I entered because there was no physics department.)

I then went on to an MA and PhD in astronomy (1949 and 1956) from Harvard University, although life has taken unexpected turns since. [For some of those unexpected turns, see Alumni Notes, p. 28.—*Editor*.]

So how do you come up with 86 Commencements? If they were annual, that would take us back to 1924, long before there was a QC. Or are there multiple commencements each year now? I figure that there could only be 69, as of 2010, if they remained annual.

Explanation, please. Thanks.  
**Franklin E. Kameny ’48**  
*Washington, DC*

*From 1942 to 1959—excluding 1944 and 1945—the college also held a commencement in February.*—*Editor*

### NEWSPAPER WARS

Your Summer-Fall 2010 issue carried a letter from my classmate Richard Richter stating that the Queens College student newspaper, launched in 1937, was called the *Crown*. An article printed earlier had erroneously given it another name.

Political feelings ran high on campus during my time. Around 1949 or 1950 a student named Walter Moomjy ’52 started a rival to the *Crown* with the aim of bringing a conservative voice to the college. It was called *Ramparts* (or maybe the *Rampart*—it’s been 60 years). I graduated in January 1951 and never found out how much longer either paper was published.

In those days the college also boasted a humor magazine called the *Queen’s Garter*. Its editorial board consisted of Paul Berman, Herb Gussack, Jerry Lavin, Hank Levine, Ivan Levine, Dick Ruffine, Joan Veit, and Willa Witkin. I recall that the faculty adviser, Dr. Dwight Durling of the English Department, was highly amused by the apt motto the editors put on the masthead: *Honi soit qui mal y pense* (“Shame be to him who thinks evil of it”). I still have a copy of the May 1950 issue (Volume 1, No. 2).

**William Hyder ’51**  
*Columbia, MD*

Send your letters to *Queens: The Magazine of Queens College*, Queens College, Kiely Hall 808, Flushing, NY 11367 or [qmag@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:qmag@qc.cuny.edu).



### ON THE COVER

*Adore*, painting by Jasmine Becket-Griffith. Jeff Gomez and his production company Starlight Runner Entertainment have teamed with Witchfactory

Productions to create a cross-media fantasy world for young girls appropriately dubbed *Adore*, inspired by Griffith’s popular artwork. The project is the first of many original productions that will be coming out of Gomez’s studio. (See story p. 16.)



From left: Prof. Mark Rosenblum meets with student facilitators Mohiba Nasimi and Jamar Whaley and CERRU Assistant Director Steven Appel (see p. 22)

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## Positive Reception

Through the generosity of a QC professor, a wedding-that-wasn't raised thousands of dollars for a Brooklyn soup kitchen.

Robin Rogers (Sociology) and her fiancé, Boston-based investment banker George Overholser, had set a date. They had



At the Greenpoint Reformed Church's soup kitchen, Bernard Chadwick and Robin Rogers season food preparation with laughter.

booked space at Dressler, an elegant eatery in the bride's Williamsburg neighborhood. But about half a year before the big day, they came amicably uncoupled. In a gallant gesture, Overholser told Rogers that she could keep the \$4,500 they'd spent on the restaurant reservation and save-the-date cards. So she decided to sell tickets at \$99 apiece and hold a gala fund-raiser on December 5 for the Greenpoint Reformed Church soup kitchen, also in Williamsburg.

"I've been lightly involved with the soup kitchen since its founding a few years ago," explains Rogers, who evaluates anti-poverty and anti-homelessness programs. "It's in my community and it's well run. I knew everything I'd give would actually go to needy people." Meanwhile, the soup kitchen's own needs had risen; by last summer, it was distributing more than 400 bags of groceries a week, a greater than tenfold increase since it began operations.

Upon learning of Rogers's plans, plenty of people offered their support. Cheree Berry Paper, the company that had designed Rogers's save-the-date cards, reworked them gratis into invitations that volunteers cranked out on a manual letterpress; the cards were mailed to community activists. For an auction to be held at the dinner, Jane Wilson-Marquis donated a wedding gown. Rogers's wedding planner put together awards to honor several individuals who had helped the soup kitchen.

Other donors wrote checks. Jim Cramer, the host of CNBC's "Mad Money," sent in \$200. All told, the fund-raiser brought in more than \$13,500, with roughly a third of that from ticket sales and the rest from contributions.

For her efforts, Rogers got a lot of media attention—"very embarrassing"—and praise from Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, who asked her to stand up at his state-of-the-borough address on February 3. "Since the dinner, there has been a little more attention to issues in the immediate neighborhood," says Rogers. "The event itself was fun." And the food at Dressler, which has earned a star from the Michelin Guide's New York City edition four years in a row? "I don't know," laughs Rogers. "Like any good hostess, I didn't eat it."

## Children's Author Experiences Crazy Success

Rita Williams-Garcia '97 has written six critically acclaimed novels for young adults. But *One Crazy Summer* (HarperCollins)—her latest title and her first for middle-grade readers—may be her biggest success yet. It's been cited as a best book by the *Boston Globe*, the *Horn Book*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *School Library Journal*; it was named a Newberry Honor Book; it received the Coretta Scott King Award and the Scott O'Dell Prize for Historical Fiction; it's an NAACP Image Award nominee and a National Book Award finalist. "Summer is my lucky number seven," says Williams-Garcia. "I'm still grappling with all of this. I'm kind of speechless."

Unfolding in 1968, *Summer* is a compelling mix of the personal and the political, told from a child's perspective: Three young girls visit their absentee mother in Oakland, California, where she enrolls them in a camp run by the Black Panthers. "I knew the Black Panthers had served children, but that angle hadn't been pursued," Williams-Garcia explains. "I approached a little-talked-about subject in recent American history and made it accessible to young minds."

To research her previous novel, *Jumped*, about contemporary urban teens, she hung out in New York City high schools. When writing *Sum-*

*mer*, she relied instead on her memories of the book's time and place. "I was 11," says the author, a Queens native who grew up in California. "I kept a diary and remembered the climate of things." For additional inspiration, she immersed herself in African American art and literature of the period and read transcripts of the murder trial of Panther co-founder Bobby Seale. The results feel authentic. "I hear a lot from people who either connect with the truth of the book or are curious about the 1960s," she continues.

Now at work on her next project—"a gaming novel set in an alternative future, written with boys in mind"—Williams-Garcia plans to revisit the characters in *Summer*, but not yet. "I didn't want to go directly to a sequel," she says. "First I want to rediscover what is new and what I love about the story."



## Year of China Celebration Continues



Halfway through the Year of China, the college is looking forward to a second semester of Sino-centric activities. "This has been an extremely successful program that has reached into every pocket of the campus, involving students, faculty, and staff," says Director of Asian Initiatives Marleen Kassel. "We've presented lectures, seminars, performances, exhibitions, and student-sponsored events. Some of the most distinguished experts on China have given talks and met with faculty and students privately. This program has solidified existing collaborations and opened new channels."

This spring promises more of the same. Chinese New Year was celebrated with a luncheon in the Student Union on

February 2. A show by classically trained Chinese artist Mansheng Wang opened February 15 in the Godwin-Ternbach Museum. (At left is his work from the *Memory of Autumn* series.) The rest of the schedule includes lectures, performances by the New Shanghai Circus (right) and pianist Joel Fan, and the U.S. premiere of a ballet choreographed by Yin Mei (Dance).

At the end of the semester, two different groups will travel to China for an in-country experience. QC students will go to Szechuan University, and some faculty and staff members will visit sites in the provinces of Szechuan and Beijing as part of a professional development seminar.

Based on the success of the Year of China, QC is already planning similar multidisciplinary programs that focus on other nations. Turkey, India, Brazil, and South Africa—chosen by consensus from a list of nearly 20 countries—will be the subjects of the next four Years to come.

## Tackling Tough Environmental Issues

In December in one of his last acts as governor, David Paterson vetoed legislation that would have imposed a moratorium on the use of the controversial hydraulic fracturing method of drilling for natural gas in New York State. Of particular concern to environmentalists have been plans to use this method to drill in the vast geologic region known as the Marcellus Shale that includes much of the watershed area from which New York City receives its water.

At about the same time, a class run by Distinguished Professor George Hendrey (Earth & Env. Sciences) in Environmental Problem Solving was putting the finishing touches on a 241-page report of its own analysis of this issue: *An Assessment of Natural Gas Extraction from the Marcellus Shale in the New York City Water Supply Region*.

With extensively researched text, charts, graphs, illustrations, and photographs, Hendrey's 19 students provided an in-depth look at one of the most compelling environmental issues of the day—which is something his classes have been doing

year after year. Previous classes have tackled Mayor Bloomberg's call for "greener" practices at all city institutions and the feasibility of converting to all renewable energy sources in 10 years.

Hendrey is an engineer. Consequently, he says he tends to approach every problem as an engineering problem, deconstructing it backwards from the stated objective. This is the process he teaches his students.

"The underlying objective of the course is for students to learn something about how projects are created and managed. I run the class like a small consulting firm: Our little firm has just received a contract to produce a report, and it has to be delivered by December 1.

"Then," he continues, "there has to be a process, not just of writing but of the project's management," including editing and determining the format of the report, devising a flow chart, and more.

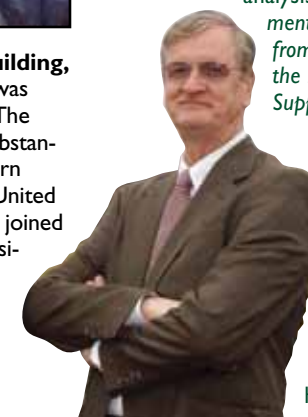
"They deliver to me a preliminary outline and develop that into an expanded outline together with what sources of information they're going to draw upon.

"With such a broad topic," says Hendrey, "the trick is to constrain the class so they can write something and get something done."

They have. And given their record to date, Hendrey's classes will continue to do so for years to come.



Now on display in the Music Building, this painting of Karol Rathaus was recently donated by his son, Bernt. The early years of music at QC were substantially shaped by Rathaus, a Polish-born composer who immigrated to the United States during World War II. Rathaus joined the faculty as a professor of composition in 1940, a position he occupied until his death in 1954. In 1961 the music department moved into its own building, Karol Rathaus Hall.





## College Obtains Personal Library of Civil Rights Leader Forman

The announcement in November that Queens College's Civil Rights Archive had acquired the library of one of the major figures of the Civil Rights Movement marked not only a major coup in efforts to build the collection, but also significant recognition of the commitment the college has made to seeing that materials related to this chapter of the nation's history are preserved for future study.

James Forman, who died in 2005, is best known for his work as the executive secretary of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). His collection contains roughly 2,000 books, over 2,100 pamphlets, academic journals, and printed ephemera, as well as a variety of audio and moving image material. Many of the boxes in which they were received have not been opened since Forman sealed them himself over 25 years ago.

"The acquisition was a textbook example of how to build an archive," says Ben Alexander (Graduate School of Library & Information Studies), explaining how the school's creation of the archive—which began with acquisitions from alumni who were active in the civil rights movement—along with a related website have generated considerable interest among historians.

"It was a combination of word of mouth and the demonstration on the part of the department and the institution that we're serious about this," he continues. "We're getting these materials made public quickly and democratically, and they're

entering our curriculum from the moment of acquisition as our graduate students are working with them."

Given Forman's stature, interest in the archive will expand considerably with this acquisition, says Alexander. "Until now, we've had this tremendous resource, but it was largely from a northeast liberal perspective. We've now advanced to a much more national presence. We can advertise to a much broader audience and a much broader group of scholars. And once you break that ice, it's really exciting."

Julian Bond, one of the founders of the SNCC, spoke at QC on February 17 about his friend and colleague Forman. Members of Forman's family were also present.



## Calandra Institute Busy on Two Continents

Italian Americans—the most prevalent European ancestral group in New York, and perhaps the rest of the tristate area—are simultaneously everywhere and nowhere, visible in government and television, ignored by academia. The John D. Calandra Italian American Institute strives to correct that imbalance. "Calandra is the Italian American research institute par excellence," says Anthony Tamburri, its dean. "It's the only game in town, and the town is the western hemisphere."

Since his arrival in 2006, Tamburri has strengthened the institute's connections to communities here and abroad. Stateside, Calandra supports research projects, archival material on the Italian American experience, publishes books and a journal, the *Italian American Review*, and presents a wide range of public lectures, readings, and screenings.

Tamburri himself hosts "Italics," a CUNY-TV show about prominent Italian Americans. In addition, the institute gets involved in educational issues, such as the successful

campaign to preserve Italian as part of the College Board's Advanced Placement programs in European languages, previously limited to French, German, and Spanish. Its annual conference on April 28–30 addressed *The 3 F's in Italian Culture: Critical Approaches to Food, Fashion, and Film*.

Meanwhile, Tamburri has been promoting a dialogue with his counterparts overseas. "Except for a few historians in Italy, Italian American culture did not get the attention of Italian scholars," he observes. "My own work drew me to see what Italians were and weren't saying about Italian American culture."

Last spring was especially productive. In April Americana, the Italian-language book series Tamburri edits for the Florentine publisher Franco Cesati Editore, released its first two titles: a study of the work of Italian American novelist John Fante and Tamburri's own *Una semiotica dell'etnicita. Nuove segnalature per la scrittura italiano/americana* (*A Semiotic of Ethnicity: New "Directionals" for Italian/American Writing*).

Last May Tamburri delivered the keynote at *Italia—USA: lingua, cultura & identita*, a conference presented in Siena by the Italian Language Inter-Cultural Alliance, Calandra, and the local University for Foreigners. An agreement he worked out with the University for Foreigners in Perugia will allow it to collaborate with Calandra on research related to migration.

Tamburri's efforts are winning him recognition on both sides of the Atlantic. The Garibaldi-Meucci Museum in Staten Island paid tribute to him last August at its annual fund-raiser. And he was named a Cavaliere dell'Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana. "Knighthood, basically, though no horse," says the honoree, who received a pin from the Italian ambassador in a ceremony last fall.

## The "Jeopardy"-Winning Voice of Watson Speaks



Developing speech skills in Watson, the machine that trounced top human competitors on "Jeopardy," was anything but elementary, says Andrew Rosenberg (Computer Science). He should know: In December 2009 he became part of the team that prepped the IBM computer for its television debut.

IBM had invested three years in programming a computer to play the game; as originally designed, the artificial contestant could display answers on a screen. But Sony, the owner of "Jeopardy," thought a talking computer would make for better television. That's why Rosenberg, a new QC faculty member specializing in speech and language processing, was asked to join the project. Once a week, he went to IBM's TJ Watson Research Center in Yorktown Heights, NY, to collaborate with research scientist Raul Fernandez and his staff. "Everyone at QC was very supportive and farsighted enough to realize that this would not only promote Queens, but also establish

a relationship between the college and IBM," says Rosenberg.

As far as the computer was concerned, "IBM already had a very good speech synthesis system," he observes. "Watson could read free text very well. But the words it would make a mistake on were 'Jeopardy' words—foreign words, foreign-derived words, proper nouns, medical terms. We had to identify those types of words and either improve the pronunciation rules, or just tell the computer how to pronounce the word. Our fear was that Watson would generate a correct answer that became incorrect through mispronunciation." Puns and category names such as "Rhyme Spr'ee," in which every answer ended in "ee," were also problematic. Nonetheless, the machine's only lapse in speech was to say "Deng fever" instead of "Dengue," an answer that wasn't considered wrong.

"Watson did just fine," concludes Rosenberg. So did he. "The responses after the fact have been great," the professor says. "It's remarkable to be getting emails from department heads and deans a year and a half into my stay here." But the experience will not inspire him to follow his automated protégé on to "Jeopardy." A regular participant in bar trivia contests on Wednesday nights, Rosenberg would never dream of entering a quiz show himself.

## Armstrong Archives: Now Available Around the World

Louis Armstrong, one of America's jazz greats, lived for almost three decades in a modest house in the working-class neighborhood of Corona, just four miles from Queens College. After the death of his wife, Lucille, in 1983—a dozen years after Louis' passing in 1971—the house became the property of NYC's Department of Cultural Affairs. Queens College was given the job of administering the property, which opened to the public as a museum in 2003.

When caretakers entered the house, they discovered a treasure trove of materials left by Armstrong in the attic and closets: photos, home music tape-recordings, scrapbooks, manuscript band parts, and five trumpets—several of them gold-plated.

That collection, along with three other Armstrong-related collections subsequently acquired by the museum, forms the world's largest archives devoted to a single jazz musician. The museum recently put a catalog of its three largest collections online at:

[www.louisarmstronghouse.org/collections/online\\_catalog.htm](http://www.louisarmstronghouse.org/collections/online_catalog.htm). The archives include more than 5,000 sound recordings, 15,000 photographs, the 30 films Armstrong appeared in, 100 scrapbooks, and 20 linear feet of letters and papers.

The museum's holdings offer "an intensely personal look at who he was," says Michael Cogswell, a one-time professional jazz saxophonist turned archivist who directs the Louis Armstrong House Museum. The archives are routinely used by jazz scholars, authors, and documentary filmmakers. All the Armstrong photos in Ken Burns's epic 2000 film *Jazz* came from the LAHM.

The painstaking work of combining the various paper and computer catalogs into one, and putting them online along with generous amounts of digitalized photos and text, was funded by a \$105,384 two-year grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

## How to Succeed in Show Business

Actor Danny Burstein '86 (second from right) visited his alma mater in November to break bread with students who aspire to achieve the success he has had on Broadway (*The Drowsy Chaperone*, *South Pacific*), in film, and on television, where he can currently be seen in HBO's "Boardwalk Empire." He will appear in May with Bernadette Peters at the Kennedy Center in *Follies*. His father Harvey is a long-time member of the QC philosophy department.



## Polar Attractions

A Korean tradition was introduced on campus when four *jangseungs*—wooden totem poles erected by villages to mark boundaries and repel bad spirits—were installed near Renée Kroll Zarin Alumni Hall on October 7. Working on site, sculptor Jong-Heung Kim carved the poles out of trees that had been damaged by a tornado three weeks earlier.



# A GLOBAL LOOK FOR COLLEGE'S Winning Women's Tennis Team

By Bob Suter

Asked to explain why his team has so many foreign-born players, QC women's tennis coach Alan Nagel doesn't hesitate to concede that it doesn't hurt to be located in one of the world's great cities.

"In many cases, such as with Maria Perevezentseva who's from Moscow, coming to New York is their prime objective," says Nagel, whose powerhouse nine-member team currently boasts four foreign-born players.

That, combined with QC's high academic standing and willingness to provide scholarship assistance, makes for an unbeatable recruitment package, he boasts. "If you want to play tennis in New York, there are only three schools: NYU, Columbia, and Queens. And NYU and Columbia don't give scholarships to tennis players."

Some players, notes Nagel, will even forgo scholarship offers for the opportunity to play in New York. "Take Andrea Salvetova," he says of the Czech junior who has impressive academic credentials (4.0 GPA) in addition to being an accomplished flutist and painter. "She had a full scholarship at Texas-Pan Am, which is a Division I school. Yet, she wanted to come to New York, and when she looked us up and saw we had a strong academic program and good tennis team, she got a release to come play here."

Senior Maria Mendes from São Paulo, Brazil, who had a full scholarship at the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith, also chose to transfer to Queens, says Nagel.

With both players, he notes, the Knights' reputation as a perennial contender was a significant draw. "Every year, when you look at the rankings—and these kids do—they see that we're either number one or number two in the East. And right now we're also ranked 35th in the country. So the players see we're not only in New York, we're also ranked in the country. And last year we made it into the final 16 in the country."

Somadi Drucker, a South African and one of the players who helped get the Knights to last year's Sweet 16, forged such strong ties to the people and the place that she has stayed on with the team as a coach while doing graduate work, says Nagel.

For one native-born player, junior Taylor Barber of Salt Lake City, coming to Queens was initially like coming to a foreign country as it was her first experience living in a place where everyone wasn't a Mormon. But Nagel is happy to report that "Now, she's like a native New Yorker all the way."

Though temporarily lost to storm damage, QC's impressive indoor tennis facility has also aided recruitment—as has the new residence hall, The Summit. "All our student-athletes room together in a suite that has two bathrooms, a living room, kitchen, and dining area."

And yes, reports Nagel, the players practice sprints in the halls.



QC's Women's Tennis Team (front, l-r): Andrea Salvetova, Daniela Celi, Taylor Barber, Erika Goldsmith; (back): Head Coach Alan Nagel, Kim Xiong, Maria Mendes, Maria Perevezentseva, Laura Mocodeanu, Assistant Coach Somadi Drucker. Above, Perevezentseva in action.



## ROUNDUP

### SOCCER

Reaching the East Coast Conference Championship game for the first time in QC history, the women's soccer team lost 1-0 in an overtime heartbreaker to C.W. Post, the country's 15th-ranked team. They concluded their season with an overall 12-6-1 record, winning all seven of their home games. Post also proved the nemesis for QC's Men's Soccer Team, dashing their playoff hopes by defeating them 2-0 and leaving the Knights one tie short of an ECC playoff berth. The men finished their season 5-12-1.

Four QC soccer players were honored by the ECC for their accomplishments. Both senior Brian Buckmire and sophomore Danny Stoker were First Team All-Conference selections. Team captain Buckmire lived up to his billing as 2010 ECC Preseason Defensive Player of the Year by earning the same distinction in the end of the year honors. On the women's side, senior midfielder Kirri Bolton was named to the All-ECC First Team, while forward Lorena Russi was honored on the All-ECC Second Team.

### BASKETBALL

Seeded third, the Men's Basketball Team advanced to the East Coast Conference semifinals, falling 73-67 in overtime to second-seeded C.W. Post on their home court. The Knights finished the season with a 20-8 record. Senior Lamonte Lans (right) was named the inaugural ECC Defensive Player of the Year and joined classmate Anderson Labase on the all-conference second team. Junior Khalil McDonald was tabbed to the ECC all-conference first team.

The QC Women's Basketball team's season also ended in Brookville in a 67-61 ECC Quarterfinal loss to C.W. Post. Their record was 10-20 for the season. Junior Amanda Bartlett was named to the ECC all-conference first team after leading the league with a 20.2 point-per-game average. Freshman center Caitlin Hopkins earned a spot on the All-Rookie Team.

### CROSS-COUNTRY

The Women's Cross-Country Team completed the season with a sixth-place finish at the ECC Championship 5K Race. Indira Avila led the way with a fifth-place finish overall. Five runners, including Avila, posted personal bests for the C.W. Post course: Kailin Kuo, Cadie Chu, Michelle Martin, and Lauren Esposito. Avila was also selected for the All-Conference First Team.

The Men's Cross-Country Team finished their season placing sixth overall in the ECC

Championships at Post with two runners, Max Gazzara and Robert Gaertner, finishing in the top 30, placing 17th and 30th, respectively.

### WATER POLO

The Men's Water Polo Team placed seventh in the Collegiate Water Polo Association's Northern Division Championship. The Knights, who were seeded sixth entering the tournament, completed their season with an overall 9-11 record. When the CWPA announced the 2010 Men's Varsity All-Northern and All-Southern Division teams, QC claimed two of 17 titles, with Nemanja Milijanovic (#13 at right) earning a place on the Second Team and coach Or Gil receiving Coach of the Year award. Queens received two of only four awards given to teams that did not qualify for the Eastern Tournament.

### SWIMMING AND DIVING

The Women's Swim Team concluded their season competing in the Metropolitan Swimming Championships, where they placed a respectable 12th out of 19 teams, with each swimmer posting her best time of the year.

The men's swimming and diving squad placed 13th at the championships, with numerous personal-best marks achieved in the process.

### VOLLEYBALL

The Women's Volleyball Team will have to wait until next year to make a run at the postseason. They wrapped up their 2010 season with a 3-0 loss to C.W. Post, falling to 9-16 overall, one spot out of playoff contention.

### FENCING

The women's fencing program sent eight competitors to the NCAA Northeast Regional Championships, after a 13th-place showing at the National Intercollegiate Women's Fencing Association Championships in Baltimore. Sophomore Haley Ward was a standout this season for the Knights, placing 10th at the NIWFA meet and 28th at the NCAA regionals in the foil discipline.

### DANCE TEAM

Ranked 13th nationally, the QC Dance Team (above right) traveled to Orlando, FL, in January to compete in the Universal Dance Association's College National Dance Championships on the Disney World Sport Pavilion stage. Before a packed house, the team came away with a fourth-place finish in the Open Pom division.





# SNAPSHOTS FROM HOMECOMING 2010

Alums visit campus for a refresher course in the friends and activities they treasured

By Alan Krawitz

## FOR SUSAN ISAACS '65, IT'S BEEN A WRITER'S LIFE

*New York Times* best-selling author Susan Isaacs has been a frequent on-campus guest since the late 1980s, returning periodically to speak to students about the ins and outs of publishing.

But, at Homecoming on October 3, Isaacs delivered the keynote address in Armstrong Alley before an eclectic mix of returning classes dating back to the 1940s. Ironically, Isaacs, a Queens College Foundation board member, never actually received her degree from the college although she attended school from 1961 to 1965. A

leave of absence and a job at *Seventeen* magazine were ultimately her undoing.

Nevertheless, Isaacs recalled having a "great time" writing for QC's *Phoenix* student newspaper, offering up her love of the paper's "collegiality." "I felt about my colleagues the way you feel about family," she said. "I preferred being in the newspaper office to being anywhere else."

What's more, she recollected writing "impassioned" defenses of fraternities and sororities. "It was my first taste of getting noticed for my writing," she said. Isaacs also spoke about her turbulent freshman year in '61, the civil rights movement, and of classmates such as Andrew Goodman, who made the ultimate sacrifice for his beliefs. Goodman was a civil rights activist who was killed for his activities by the Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi in 1964.

After leaving QC, Isaacs landed a job at *Seventeen* magazine writing an advice column for the lovelorn. Her career would progress from there as she began to write political speeches for NY politicians, including Herman Badillo and Mayor John Lindsay.

But, when her career at *Seventeen* ended abruptly due to pregnancy, Isaacs admitted, "I was a loose end. I didn't know what to do." She went on to detail an unlikely journey from housewife to published author. As



Surrounded by delighted family and friends—including (l-r) Susan Isaacs '65, Vice President Sue Henderson, and President James Muyskens—Renée Kroll Zarin '54 cuts the ribbon at the Homecoming ceremony renaming Alumni Hall in her honor.

she began to read mysteries, she recalled, a character formed in her head. "I was a Long Island housewife with gum problems, so who better to murder than a periodontist," said Isaacs, referring to her mid-1980s best-selling book *Compromising Positions*, which centered around the murder of a Long Island dentist. The book would ultimately be made into a movie starring Susan Sarandon and Raul Julia.

Demonstrating her well-developed and self-deprecating humor, she said a woman approached her at a recent book signing in Denver and said, "I'm so glad you're not dead."

Speaking on current trends, Isaacs noted that more and

more celebrities and politicians are writing nonfiction books and memoirs. "Women are no longer the large sales base for books they once were," she said. "Technology is partially to blame with the advent of the Internet, iPods, and the myriad ways people entertain themselves these days."

Expressing shock at how our culture has changed in the past five years, Isaacs noted that Simon & Schuster has just offered a book deal to Snooki from the MTV reality show "Jersey Shore."

"Snooki could get a Pulitzer for fiction," she quipped. "The only thing I can do is keep writing."

**Novelist Susan Isaacs, who was a big hit at Homecoming last October, will be receiving the Alumni Award at the college's annual Gala on May 3.**



With caffeinated beverages in hand, or nearby, former *Phoenix* reporters swapped stories. Some of the paper's staffers went on to careers in publishing.

## NEWSBEAT GOES ON, PHOENIX RISES AGAIN

While author Susan Isaacs lays claim to her roots as a former *Phoenix* reporter, QC's other student paper, *Newsbeat*, had its former reporters on-hand as well with fond memories of student life.

"Working for *Newsbeat* was a great experience and I made tons of friends while at the paper," recalled Donna Balopole '74, who worked for *Newsbeat* from 1969 to 1975. "I did book reviews, entertainment, campus news and lots of other interesting topics."

Balopole, who still lives in Queens and now works in medical publishing, said that working at *Newsbeat* helped her career. "I think that the experience was really invaluable . . . I still have most of my clips!"

Meanwhile, former graduates who worked for the *Phoenix* were not only recalling the good old days but were discussing the current turbulent state of media and where things are headed in the coming years.

Recalling that he came to the *Phoenix* because he "loved to write," Jim Ostroff '73, now an editor with *Kiplinger's Personal Finance*, said that he learned invaluable lessons at the paper. "I learned reality and I learned

to work with people." He also spoke about people making a difference, one by one.

But, he added that journalism is going through unprecedented changes regarding revenue streams and vital funding. "Things are a bit scary right now. News media is not what it once was."

Barbara Brotman '78, now an editor with the *Chicago Tribune*, worried that "quieter stories," or stories that take more time to develop, may suffer in the future. "Many of my favorite stories have been those that were the result of sustained reporting and attention," she said.

## HOMECOMING BRINGS DEAD END BOYS BACK TO LIFE

Membership in the Dead End Boys fraternity was determined by some very exacting criteria, according to group chairman Vince Algeri '57. "The basis of being accepted was if they thought you were an OK guy," said Algeri, who claims the group traces its roots back to 1939 when a bunch of guys wanted to play basketball but needed to be part of some type of group.

Algeri, who laments that there are no more fraternities left on campus today, said that the Dead End Boys were ahead of their time regarding diversity. "There was no hazing and the organization was open to all racial and ethnic groups."

Charles Fine '48, another Dead End Boys member, recalled his service during WWII in Guam and the South Pacific. As a Jew, Fine recalled that other Jewish soldiers learned to identify themselves to each other during the war by using the code, "MOT," meaning Member of the Tribe. "During those days, it wasn't real popular being Jewish

and we had to be careful," he recalled.

Since retiring from a successful drapery and cleaning business, Fine now gives lectures on Jewish immigration at synagogues and senior centers across Queens. "But, I loved my time here at QC," he adds. "So many great friends have come and gone through here."



save  
THE DATES!

THURSDAY  
JUNE 2  
Reunion for the Classes  
of 1951 and 1961

SUNDAY  
OCTOBER 23  
Homecoming 2011

Both events will  
take place on campus.  
Check the Alumni Relations  
website for updates.



The Dead End Boys pose at Alumni Plaza, where they have generously donated many a brick. 1st Row (l-r): Nick Fiore '61, Fred Shapiro '53, Jack Herschlag '53, John Rafferty '59, Vincent Algeri '57, John Pagarliotas '54, Manfred Korman '53, Melvin Schlechter '53, Charles Fine '48; 2d Row: John Fava '48, Raymond Porfilio '55, Dominick Benvenuto '56, Paul Giovinco '70, Morton Peritz '51; 3d Row: Jerry Haller '53, John O'Brien '59, Dominick Lamontanaro '57 & '65, Jerry Matejka '63, QC President James Muyskens, Frank Capodacqua '60, Bob Zifchak '61, Art Cohen '50, Roger Aquino '61.





*In the classroom and in his books, veteran political science professor Andrew Hacker focuses on important issues; his latest title looks at Higher Education*

# An Institution In His Own Writings

BY DAVID MCKAY WILSON

Regina Hirsch  
Andrew Hacker's (Political Science) books target hot-button topics in American society: racism, gender differences, and the concentration of wealth among the economic elite.

His latest book, coauthored with Claudia Dreifus, is *Higher Education?: How Colleges Are Wasting Our Money and Failing Our Kids—And What We Can Do About It* (2010). It takes a provocative look at higher education, exploring the lives of privileged tenured professors as well as the inner workings of elite institutions that have given second-class status to undergraduate education. The authors believe these institutions are engaging in a costly competition over sports, research, and campus amenities to attract students to their campuses.

"It's the students who suffer," says Hacker. "They end up at the bottom of the list."

Hacker, an unlikely 81, knows first-hand about the perquisites that come with tenure, which he had for decades at Queens College. In 1996, he says, he had an epiphany while sitting pretty with a hefty salary and a comfortable retirement account. So he decided to retire, which allowed the college to hire two assistant professors for what they were paying him.

He remained in the classroom, however, as an adjunct professor,

**Claudia Dreifus and Andrew Hacker's book *Higher Education?* has been hailed as "a lucid, passionate and wide-ranging book on the state of American higher education" by the *New York Times*.**

getting paid by the course. "I wanted to continue teaching," he says.

Last fall he was teaching American Politics 100, an introductory class that Hacker tackles by prodding his students to wrestle with the differences between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton.

There's a hint of Old School in Hacker. One morning in December, he arrives at his classroom in a brown sports jacket, a tie knotted snugly at his neck. He is slight, with thinning gray hair. Hacker peers through dark-rimmed glasses when calling on students, typically choosing those who haven't raised their hands. He scribbles abbreviations of his points into a grid on the blackboard, then ignites a discussion about what these founding fathers said about slavery.

"Starting with Hamilton and Jefferson, our leaders were talking about race," he tells the class. "They worried about race, they emphasized it."

That leads Hacker to a discussion of racial identity and the power race still has in 21st-century America. He notes that more than one of every five Americans identify themselves as Hispanic or Asian, which denotes ethnic heritage, but not race.

"Over 20 percent of Americans get by without having a race," says Hacker. "Then why do we still talk about it? Because it was so much a part of our history for 258 years and the effects still persist."

The class was vintage Hacker: fast-moving, dipping in and out of American history, brimming with data and concepts, and spawning a discussion that made American history and politics come alive.

Hacker says his classroom hasn't changed much over the years. He's still teaching in Powdermaker Hall, and many of his students are immigrants or the children of recent immigrants. Forty years ago, many were Italian, Irish, and Jewish; today, many are Indian, Pakistani, and Chinese.

"Students are students," says Hacker. "And I've been using the basic format for my classes for a long time. I adapt and tinker, but





it's not broken, so I don't fix it."

At a celebration of Hacker's long academic career, friends, faculty, and former students from Queens and Cornell University gathered on November 5 at a midtown Manhattan townhouse. Among those who spoke was Owan Tulloch '88, who recalled how Hacker mentored him.

"He took me to intellectual maturity," says Tulloch, a supervisory survey statistician for the U.S. Census Bureau. "Dr. Hacker would put the questions out there, allow you to weigh the pros and cons, and come up with your own conclusion. It didn't matter if it was in line with his view, as long as you made a sophisticated argument and could defend it. It taught you thinking skills. He taught me to think on my feet."

**T**he son of a Columbia history professor, Hacker grew up in Morningside Heights by the Columbia campus on Manhattan's Upper West Side. He earned his undergraduate degree at Amherst, then went to Oxford for his master's degree, before nabbing his doctorate in politics at Princeton. He spent 16 years teaching at Cornell before coming to Queens College in 1971.

For Hacker, teaching the class in political science keeps him active in the academic world, where he has taught for

55 years. Hacker is prolific. While his father, Louis, wrote regularly for the *New Republic* and the *Nation*, Hacker has thrived as a regular contributor to the *New York Review of Books*, writing about race, politics, higher education, and the moneyed classes.

His acclaimed 1992 book, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*, is taught at campuses across the country. Six years later he wrote *Money: Who Has How Much and Why*. His 2003 book, *Mismatch: The Growing Gulf Between Women and Men*, explored the gender divide.

*Higher Education?* was written with *New York Times* writer Claudia Dreifus, an associate professor at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs and Hacker's domestic partner. A dogged reporter with a nose for good sources, Dreifus provided stories from the trenches of higher education, where she interviewed students and professors.

"I'm a writer who teaches, and he's a professor who writes," says Dreifus. "We have different approaches to how we gather information. We went back and forth, with up to seven drafts on each chapter.

We fought a lot, but we came out with a joint voice we both liked."

The book takes special aim at what Hacker and Dreifus call the Golden Dozen—the 12 institutions they call the top in the nation, which include two of Hacker's alma maters (Princeton and Amherst). He asserts that undergraduate instruction at these institutions is spotty, with top faculty involved in esoteric research while teaching fellows grade their students' papers.

He urges universities to limit sabbaticals for professors, arguing that they should be able to write their books in the evenings or on weekends, as he did throughout his career. And he questions the value of the huge volume of academic research generated each year by the professorial ranks. Over a 14-year period, he discovered 2,784 published papers on the work of novelist William Faulkner. "There's too much research going on," says Hacker. "Some of it is knowledge we don't need."

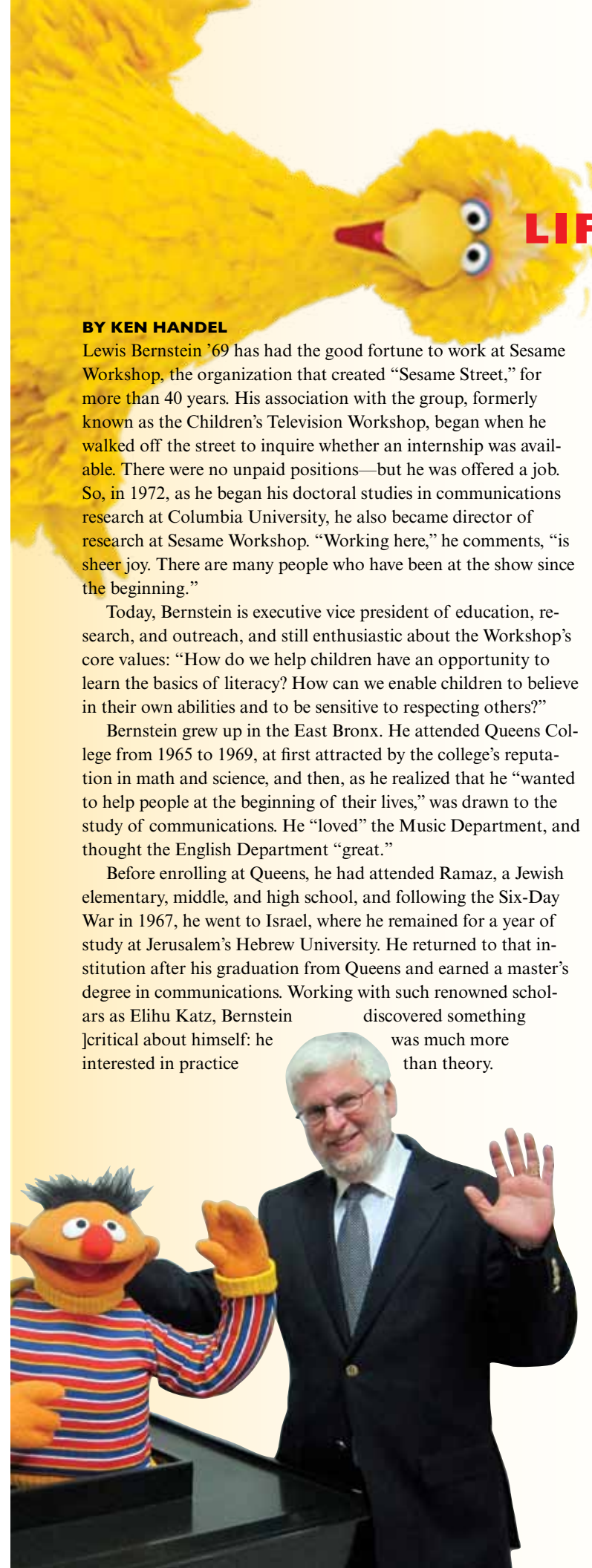
Hacker and Dreifus are now working on a project that's been on Hacker's back-burner for more than a decade. They call it *The Math Myth*. It will question the academic establishment's belief that American teens need to master algebra to obtain a high school diploma.

Algebra, notes Hacker, often trips up inner-city youths seeking a foothold in the academic world. Frustrated by their inability to grasp polynomial equations, they drop out, into a world where a high-school diploma is the bare minimum required for gainful employment.

"It's unjust," says Hacker. "We've been shooting ourselves in the foot with these policies for too long. Now it's time to get this book out."



**Left: When the weather was fine it was not unusual to see Andrew Hacker on his bike, having cycled the 18 miles to campus. Above: At the November 5 celebration of his 40 years at QC, Hacker received some encouragement in cutting the cake from President James Muyskens, Claudia Dreifus, and VP Sue Henderson.**



## LIFE WITH BIG BIRD

**BY KEN HANDEL**

Lewis Bernstein '69 has had the good fortune to work at Sesame Workshop, the organization that created "Sesame Street," for more than 40 years. His association with the group, formerly known as the Children's Television Workshop, began when he walked off the street to inquire whether an internship was available. There were no unpaid positions—but he was offered a job. So, in 1972, as he began his doctoral studies in communications research at Columbia University, he also became director of research at Sesame Workshop. "Working here," he comments, "is sheer joy. There are many people who have been at the show since the beginning."

Today, Bernstein is executive vice president of education, research, and outreach, and still enthusiastic about the Workshop's core values: "How do we help children have an opportunity to learn the basics of literacy? How can we enable children to believe in their own abilities and to be sensitive to respecting others?"

Bernstein grew up in the East Bronx. He attended Queens College from 1965 to 1969, at first attracted by the college's reputation in math and science, and then, as he realized that he "wanted to help people at the beginning of their lives," was drawn to the study of communications. He "loved" the Music Department, and thought the English Department "great."

Before enrolling at Queens, he had attended Ramaz, a Jewish elementary, middle, and high school, and following the Six-Day War in 1967, he went to Israel, where he remained for a year of study at Jerusalem's Hebrew University. He returned to that institution after his graduation from Queens and earned a master's degree in communications. Working with such renowned scholars as Elihu Katz, Bernstein discovered something critical about himself: he was much more interested in practice than theory.

So when he was invited to join Sesame Workshop, he leapt at the opportunity. " 'Sesame Street,' " he says, "is still pretty much alone as a full, whole curriculum for pre-school children that deals with everything from literacy to social reasoning." He notes that after 9/11, the show also had to take account of the question: "How do you teach children about intolerance?"

For three years, Bernstein was the executive producer of "Sesame Street." He was able to improve an already beloved institution—for example, by introducing a narrative story at the beginning of each episode—and was rewarded for his efforts with three Emmys.

In another executive role, VP of global Sesame Street productions, Bernstein trained production teams from France, Spain, Holland, Germany, and Kuwait. But possibly his greatest triumph internationally was the development of Israeli and Palestinian versions of "Sesame Street." At first, he thought one show would suffice for both cultures. But then, he says, there were "changes in our thinking based on political realities. The Intifada broke out, and we realized we needed a separate show [for Palestinians]."

In Israel, "Rechov Sumsun" premiered in 1983 and has been on and off the air in a number of versions ever since. "Shara'a Simsim," the Palestinian show, made its debut in 1997. Both broadcasts have had to cope with the Middle East's explosive politics, such as the violence in Gaza. Yet, rather than be dissuaded from production by these catastrophes, Bernstein sees them as the *raison d'être* for being on the air. "We're going to produce 'Rechov Sumsun,'" he explains, "because this violence is going on."

He sees the positive values communicated by "Sesame Street" as an antidote, a healthier alternative for kids, "a vision of the future." At the launch of "Shara'a Simsim," Bernstein commented: "We together, artists and educators, academics and animators, are only limited by the scope of our imagination and vision. I ask all of you to dream big for the sake of your children, and mine, and the world's. I urge you to dream of making the entire Middle East a more tolerant neighborhood."

Bernstein has been no stranger to the Queens College campus in recent years, participating in the Jewish Lecture Series and talking to students enrolled in Mark Rosenblum's (History) course, "The Middle East and America: Clash of Civilizations or Meeting of the Minds." Most recently, he was here last May when the Center for Ethnic, Racial and Religious Understanding honored him at its first annual Evening of Uncommon Courage for his work in trying to bridge ethnic and religious divides.

**Ernie and Lewis Bernstein have been helping generations of children learn their numbers and important lessons about tolerance.**





# MASTER OF THE DIGITAL UNIVERSE

**PART TOLKIEN AND PART BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN,  
JEFF GOMEZ '85 HELPS HOLLYWOOD AND  
FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES TELL THEIR STORIES  
ACROSS MULTIPLE MEDIA PLATFORMS**

**BY DONNA SHOEMAKER**

You can't hide in your bedroom and "play with your plastic dinosaurs forever," muses the boy inside Jeff Gomez '85. Instead, through his imagination, this lonely Latino child from the Lower East Side morphed into a globe-trotting storyline universe creator, consultant, and producer. From a gritty childhood and an adolescence of playing Dungeons & Dragons in the Queens College Student Union, he has shaped a professional life immersed in dozens of fictional worlds.

President and CEO of Starlight Runner Entertainment in Manhattan, Gomez is a guru of transmedia storytelling, which involves creating a narrative robust enough to span animation, ads, films, web content, and books to video games, toys, and theme parks. He guides Hollywood and Fortune 500 companies as they incubate or expand their epic fictional realms of branded entertainment, such as Disney's sci-fi *Tron: Legacy* and Microsoft's \$2-billion Xbox game Halo. The fantasy universes Starlight Runner has been involved with generate millions of fans eager to interact with that world—as well as megabucks for the companies.

Starlight Entertainment springboards a company's intellectual property into enormously profitable transmedia franchises. Marketing experts seek the CEO's expertise to broaden their entertainment brands through these story franchises. Coca-Cola, for example, came to Starlight Runner to expand its animated "Happiness Factory" ad featuring a fantasy world inside a Coke machine.

**G**omez, who co-founded Starlight Runner in 2000, guides a lean creative team—about a dozen freelancers. Their first project was to create the narrative that propelled Mattel's Hot Wheels die-

cast metal toys through mini-comic books, a video game, a website, action figures, and an animated television series. Clients also include Hasbro, Sony Pictures, Showtime, and 20th-Century Fox.

"What I do for a living," Gomez notes, "is not creating alternate reality games or devices that sell more movie tickets. Transmedia narrative techniques give us a new way of expressing ourselves artistically that is just starting to come into its own. It all starts with a story."

A Gomez biopic would be peopled with superheroes and legends of the imagination, beginning with Godzilla. Later, as a teen, *Star Wars* and the Hobbit realm of Middle-earth fascinated him. "You can basically sum up my life," says Gomez, "by combining Tolkien with Bruce Springsteen."



**Above: Gomez's Starlight Runner created an elaborate mythology for Coca-Cola's "Happiness Factory" global ad campaign. Below: Gomez's hunch that the card game Magic: The Gathering would be wildly popular paid off handsomely. He drew from his own life experiences to create the character Shadow Mage.**

**A**s a youngster, Gomez spent a thrilling year in Honolulu, Hawaii, "discovering Japanese superheroes that jumped from one media platform to the next." He soon came back down to Earth, returning to New York in the late 1970s. As he's told some of his audiences, "My life became less like Power Rangers and more like *Midnight Cowboy*" as he wandered the streets of Times Square. When his mother could finally afford to move to Flushing, he discovered QC's campus. As a 14-year-old needing "an outlet for my imagination," he says he sneaked into the Student Union to play Dungeons & Dragons. Then as an undergraduate, he became "a popular gamer," drawing dozens of onlookers as he infused drama into this fantasy role-playing game.

That campus hub, Gomez says, is also where he first noticed "the young lady who sneered at us because we were such nerds." Years later, she would become his wife. He and Chrysoula Artemis-Gomez '85 now have a daughter, age 8.

Through fantasy role-playing games on campus, Gomez says he discovered "a group of people where I felt I genuinely belonged." In classes, majoring in film studies and communication arts and sciences, he continues, "I finally felt not talked-down to. Listening to my fantastic professors was



© Hasbro



**AS A CHILD, JEFF GOMEZ LIVED IN THE BARUCH PROJECTS ON MANHATTAN'S LOWER EAST SIDE. "A DREAMY KID" WITH "A MOM WHO LOVED TO READ TO ME," HE SPENT A PIVOTAL YEAR IN HAWAII, WHERE HE MARVELED AT HOW THE FICTIONAL WORLDS IN JAPANESE MANGA CAN DRAW A FAN FROM COMICS TO TELEVISION TO MOVIE THEATRES.**

completely eye-opening. They taught me story. They opened up the hood of the car," revealing "all the pieces that comprise the engine" in the language of film. He especially cites film studies professors Jonathan Buchsbaum, Royal Brown, and Robert Kapsis as well as Edgar Gregersen (Anthropology) as influencing his development. Notes Gomez, "One course on persuasion I've used on a daily basis ever since."

A year out of college, Gomez and other QC graduates began to desktop-publish *Gateways*, which became a national magazine about fantasy and adventure games. Chrysoula did the illustrations. Kissena Park Press, his company's publishing imprint, pays homage to this Queens park where Gomez proposed to Chrysoula. Starlight Runner's name, its CEO explains, originated in *Gateways*. "It's a euphemism for your best friend, someone who would 'come to you at night.'"

Before Starlight Runner, Gomez had made a name for himself writing for the adventure and video game industries. At Acclaim Entertainment's comic book division and as a Valiant Comics editor, he "steered the lives of several superheroes for a few years," he notes. "I became aware of the Magic: The Gathering trading card game and had a hunch of how popular it was going to be." He says he convinced his bosses to put him in charge of writing the comic book and producing a video game that became "smash hits."

Those boyhood plastic dinosaurs weren't forgotten. Gomez turned a comic superhero into the Turok: Dinosaur Hunter video game for Nintendo. He is amused that "all those hours that people told me I had wasted playing D&D earned me my first \$100,000 check."

Gomez's first job after college—teaching creative writing in a Bedford-Stuyvesant elementary school—ignited a commitment to inspiring others. Today, through his Life Adventure System curriculum and "Never Surrender" talks, Gomez coaches students in how to lead while following their bliss in what he calls "that Joseph Campbell manner." In more than 1,000 venues, he has drawn upon his street smarts and entrepreneurial lessons to help 120,000 young people face their own dark days. With Operation Respect, a foundation created by Peter Yarrow (of Peter, Paul and Mary fame), Gomez devised and

produced the anti-bullying video "Don't Laugh at Me," featuring hip-hop star Baby Jay.

**A**t Starlight Runner, the CEO has come to know James Cameron through working on *Avatar*, Johnny Depp through *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and Will Smith through *Men in Black III*. He notes, however, "It's not so much that we hobnob with movie stars and directors." What intrigues Gomez is "playing a hand in twirling these enormous entertainment franchises, fostering the universe of the intellectual property so that it continues to have something important to say about life, even though it's about crazy, fantastical creatures."

For Gomez, "the act of thinking about these rich universes"—the style of their proper names, their geography, the continuity of their narratives—aids him in bringing his obsessive-compulsive disorder "down to a low roar."

He now plans to devote more time to telling his own story and to "the social and international components of what I do," he says. "We'll always have fun with the next *Avatar* movie, but

we're really getting into things that are truly impacting people's lives. I'm a person who is very interested in shifting people's perceptions about themselves and their world."

From Frodo Baggins despairing at the Black Gate of Mordor to Luke Skywalker battling the Galactic

Empire, Jeff Gomez loves succumbing to the spell of a well-spun yarn. "I'm evidence,"

he says, "that a good story can improve a person's life."



**Gomez is the co-creator of Kristina of the Woods, a powerful "Planeswalker" from the world of Magic: The Gathering.**



**Choral Society conductor James John**

receive no pay. Members (students excepted) pay \$85 annual dues. Last fall's two-for-one dues deal, along with excitement about the society's 70th anniversary season, boosted membership from 100 to 147. What inspires John is "the joy that comes forward in that amateur spirit."

QC sponsors his position as director and provides rehearsal space. However, the community organization must raise about \$10,000 a year to cover expenses, including hiring an orchestra for the winter concert.

Braine, the longest-serving member, joined as a QC student in 1954 because his mother, Hetty, so enjoyed singing with the group. Not long after, he laughs, "I was dragooning everybody," foremost among them his wife, Barbara '57, right after their marriage in 1958. Three of their five children—Theresa, Kathryn, and Jennifer—also have joined the chorus at various times. "My dragging Barbara into the chorus cemented our relationship," he recalls.

While favoring Baroque and Renaissance pieces, Bob Braine also enjoyed the medieval *Carmina Burana*. Barbara Braine loves "the challenge of singing something different—*Porgy and Bess*, *Die Fledermaus*, Verdi's *Nabucco*," to cite several of her QCCS favorites. The operatic excerpts and choruses presented by soprano Erika Sunnegårdh '99 (MA), who has sung at the



**Bob Braine '57**

Met, were a highlight for both retirees.

As a conductor, John "wants the music to be authentic," explains Bob Braine, including making sure that their 17th-century Latin has a Germanic accent where appropriate. "Professor John is very good. He teaches. He has patience," he observes, and the music director was a wonderful counselor for *Messiah*. "A complicated four-part fugue like that is difficult to execute," Braine notes.

For its 70th annual Spring Concert on May 14, the QCCS takes on Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. The Queens College Choir and Chorus will amplify vocal power to over 200, accompanied by the QC Orchestra.

"There are two sides to the Choral Society in terms of its traditions: performing the standard repertoire like *Messiah* as well as expanding the group's horizons into new areas, like premiering works by QC faculty members, or taking on new repertoire that has never been performed before at Queens College, like Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*," John explains. His mentor, Maurice Peress (Music), "encouraged me to program some of the greatest, most demanding works in the repertoire, like Britten's *War Requiem*, because of the significant artistic and spiritual rewards for everyone involved," John says. "I took his advice. The *War Requiem* was an exceptional challenge, and turned out to be one of our best concerts. On this occasion of our anniversary, to have another monumental project like *Missa Solemnis* is very exciting for everybody."

Recalling how at *Messiah* "things seemed to click," Barbara Braine is eager to resume the couple's almost-an-hour commute to Wednesday rehearsals. "You get up on the stage, and everyone's best comes forward," she says. "You amaze yourself."



**Barbara Braine '57**

## SOMETHING TO SING ABOUT

### Choral Society Celebrates 70th Anniversary

By Donna Shoemaker

It had been a long wait—since 2006. But on December 11, 2010, those soaring hallelujahs resounded once more in Kupferberg Center's packed Colden Auditorium. Poised to conduct 171 performers in Handel's *Messiah*, Queens College Choral Society musical director James A. John was relaxed, centered, smiling.

"There's a lot of subconscious communication between the podium and the group," reflects John. "People pick up on that confidence and joy, and I really felt that was present. They were singing new energy into the piece." John, who has guest-conducted several times at Avery Fisher Hall's annual *Messiah* Sing-In, has directed the QCCS since 2002. He also is director of QC's choral activities, associate professor of music, and director of the Manhattan-based chamber choir Cerddorion.

Handel's 1741 masterwork launched QCCS's 70th anniversary season. The oratorio had been its inaugural offering in December 1941, a dozen days after Pearl Harbor and four years after QC opened its doors. "Born in World War II, the Choral Society gave significant support to community morale," wrote Bob Braine '57 in its website history ([www.qcchoralsociety.org](http://www.qcchoralsociety.org)), and that still holds true.

John based the anniversary *Messiah* on the version inaugurating Colden Center. That 1961 concert was one of 25 consecutive *Messiahs* conducted by founding director John Castellini. QCCS now presents the oratorio approximately every four years.

In their two annual concerts, members beautifully blend voices that range from 16 years to 80-plus. Community residents, many of them alumni, sing side-by-side with QC students, faculty, staff, and a small number of talented students who participate in the Choral Society's high school outreach program.

These polished singers are amateur in one sense only: They



# Setting High Goals

by Alan Krawitz  
After serving as press secretary on Team Giuliani,  
Matt Higgins '98 went to work for the New York Jets



**Top:** Three former Jets stars—quarterback Joe Namath, defensive tackle Marty Lyons, and running back Curtis Martin—get ready to huddle with Higgins, who suited up for the team's business operations seven years ago. Higgins was recently named to the "40 Under 40" list of top sports executives in *Sports Business Journal*, which also praised the Jets for being one of the most innovative teams in the National Football League. At far right, Higgins meets with former Governor George Pataki and Mayor Michael Bloomberg.



**NO ONE CAN EVER ACCUSE** Matt Higgins '98 of being a slacker. Since graduating from Queens College with a degree in political science, Higgins has gone from the Office of the Mayor of New York City to the front office of the New York Jets.

Now 36, Higgins credits his time at QC for much of his current success. Indeed, he refers to the school as his "path out of poverty."

Higgins grew up poor in a working-class neighborhood in Bay-side. His parents divorced when he was nine. Raised by his mother, Linda, he fondly remembers sitting in on Saturday classes she was attending at QC. "She was a great writer and she also became a per-petual student," Higgins says of his mother, who earned a BA from the college and also pursued two master's degrees there.

A self-described "scrappy kid," Higgins dropped out of Cardozo High School at age 16 to help care for his ailing mother, who battled chronic illnesses. But, taking a cue from her, he completed his GED and SATs all within a few months and enrolled at the college in 1991. At one point in the early 1990s, Higgins and his mother were both attending classes at QC.

At the college, Higgins and his older brother Todd helped revive a then-moribund speech and debate team, each serving as president. He became such a skilled debater that he competed nationally against other schools. "The debate team gave me the confidence and polish I had lacked," Higgins says. "It taught me to think on my feet."

Higgins's first foray into politics would come soon after, working on the congressional campaign of another QC graduate, Gary Ackerman '64. He then landed a position with Community Board 8 in Fresh Meadows, where he dealt with issues from tree pruning to pothole repairs.

Like his mother, Higgins was a strong writer. While still at QC he wrote a column for the *Queens Tribune* called "The Action Desk." "I would tackle local problems and basically do investigative-type journalism," he says. His column garnered several New York Press Association awards, as well as a Pulitzer Prize nomination for a story he helped uncover about a major asbestos problem at Terrace on the Park.

Not long after that, a profile of Higgins in the *Daily News* grabbed the attention of staffers in Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's administration. "I gave an interview about what I liked about the mayor, and that led to another interview and a subsequent job offer," Higgins recalls. He would become, at 26, the youngest press secretary in New York City history.

But his first day on the job would also be one of the saddest days of his life. "That morning mom called my office and told me she'd called an ambulance," he said. "She died later that day of congestive heart failure."

Underscoring the importance of the college in his mother's life, Higgins noted that instead of having the funeral procession go by the family home, Mayor Giuliani arranged for a motorcade, and the procession went by QC en route to the cemetery. "That's what she would have wanted," Higgins says.

Thinking back on his career, Higgins notes, "I was lucky that there was always one special person who would look past my age, upbringing, or lack of credentials—such as not having attended an Ivy League college—and could see what I had to offer the world in terms of talent."

Higgins says Giuliani was one of those special people. "Rudy

cared that I could write, I was smart, that I would work my tail off for him, and I'm grateful for that." He also recalls the mayor's strong work ethic and that he "rarely slept or took a break." Higgins was not far behind the mayor, as he attended Fordham Law School at night while working as press secretary.

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Higgins assumed control of communications for the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC). During this time he wrote numerous Ground Zero speeches for then-Governor George Pataki, who remembers Higgins fondly. "Whether it was his leadership in helping New York recover from the tragic impact of September 11 or quarterbacking public affairs for the New York Jets, Matt Higgins is a proven, innovative, and effective leader," Pataki said recently.

But despite the opportunity to work with top political leaders, Higgins says the LMDC was an "emotionally charged environment where no matter what you did, you were roundly criticized." And while he says it was a privilege to work there, he felt it was time to move on to a "less weighty" position. So after years of dealing with hot-button political issues, Higgins switched teams.

"The New York Jets are big, they're in the public domain, but at the end of day it's not life and death," says Higgins, who joined the Jets in 2004 in a business operations capacity. "It's a nice change of pace."

Now an executive VP with the team, Higgins has helped revitalize the New York Jets' brand by overseeing the team's efforts in marketing, sponsorships, merchandising, broadcasting, social media, and human resources. He also helped transform the team's website, created a host of new TV shows centered around the team, helped build a production studio, created a cheerleader squad, and was instrumental in bringing the Super Bowl to New York/New Jersey in 2014.

Higgins clearly enjoys the challenge of the Jets, and the Jets clearly feel strongly about him. "For me, leadership is about trust—trust in a person's ability to make sound, sometimes difficult, decisions and to continually innovate, driving the Jets to new heights," says Jets Chairman and CEO Woody Johnson. "I have seen nothing but both of these leadership qualities showcased by Matt time and time again since the day he joined the organization."

Things were going well for Higgins and then, in April 2007, he was diagnosed with testicular cancer. He chose to see this as a wake-up call that forced him to re-examine his life. "Knowing that I had another chance, I wanted to make sure that I would live my life the way I had hoped I always would," he explains.

So Higgins changed the way he ate and vowed to exercise more. He dropped more than 50 pounds and in 2009 ran the New York City Marathon in just over five hours. "I love running because it forces me to be deliberate and thoughtful. It forces me to slow down and apply a constant rate of speed and not try to rush things all the time. I have family and kids now, so I have an incentive to take care of myself," he says.

As something of a reformed workaholic, Higgins offers advice to those still obsessively answering every last email into the wee hours of the night: "If you don't have vision, then all you have is execution. You need to look at the road ahead instead of just always driving."



# Meeting in the Middle

*The Center for Ethnic, Racial and Religious Understanding helps different cultures find common ground.*

By David McKay Wilson

Batya Septimus '12 grew up an Orthodox Jew, attending Jewish schools, studying for a year in Israel, and socializing within her close-knit community in Queens. So when she arrived at Queens College and was the only Jew in her introductory class in Arabic, she was confronted with many preconceptions she had about her Muslim classmates.

They were Muslims, so they hated Jews, she figured. She was Jewish, so they hated her.

But that all changed as Septimus and her classmates hung out and discussed their religious and cultural backgrounds at sessions held by the college's Center for Ethnic, Racial and Religious Understanding (CERRU), recently founded by Mark Rosenblum (History).

She soon became involved in Rosenblum's training sessions in conflict resolution, in which students with differing points of view come to understand each other better through role-playing, guided conversations, and learning how to listen to those who hold diametrically opposing views.

"There's such a need for this kind of dialogue, and Queens College is the perfect place for it to happen," says Septimus. "You start talking to people as you walk home with them, and you realize they are pretty much the same as you. And they may have had the same preconceptions about me that I had about them."

CERRU is founded on the concept that dialogue and shared experiences are essential to combating intolerance, overcoming stereotypes, and promoting understanding. It has also reached out to myriad clubs and groups across campus—such as

Hillel and the Muslim Student Association—to foster more cross-cultural exchange.

Queens College President James Muyskens believes that the center has shown that students can get beyond their divisions and embrace diversity. "We can celebrate our differences and make certain we understand what we have in common," he says. "And there's no better place than Queens College to take advantage of such diversity."

Muyskens was among over 400 people from the QC community who saw the center in action one evening last November. CERRU students had arranged for an evening of dialogue about the controversial plan to build an Islamic center a few blocks from the site of the September 11 attacks in lower Manhattan. The high-rise Islamic center, called Park51, would include a community center and prayer space. Many politicians joined the 9/11 families to denounce the project, while others countered that it was wrong to discriminate against a religious group with a right to build there.

On the podium that evening were Daisy Khan, executive director of the American Society for Muslim Advancement, and a former deputy chief of the New York City Fire Department, Jim Riches, whose son died in the attack. Riches himself spent 16 days in a coma due to injuries he received as a first responder.

Rosenblum welcomed the audience and told them the evening was an opportunity to initiate, and

sustain, respectful dialogue on this difficult topic. He noted that after Khan and Riches spoke, a panel of students would question them about the issue as part of the center's process of finding common ground on tough issues.

"We're hoping to get something of a win-win here tonight," Rosenblum said.

Khan, who was born in Kashmir, India, and raised a Muslim, said she welcomed the dialogue, noting that she has long honored all religions: from her childhood attending Catholic schools in India, to her arrival in Jericho, NY, where she lived in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood.

"We're here to pave the way across the divide," she said. "When we proposed the project, we didn't realize it would create such pain. There's a national conversation we haven't had yet, and we need to have it."

Almost a decade after his son's death, Riches said the pain is ever-present. He asked Khan to consider relocating the project farther away in recognition of the feelings of some 9/11 families. He strongly believes that the site two blocks from the World Trade Center towers is "sacred ground."

"We are the victims too," Riches said. "We lost our loved ones. They will never come back."

The CERRU students then helped focus the discussion. Alexandra Ruiz '07, now a history graduate student, asked the opposing sides how they might find a compromise that wouldn't compromise either group's rights. Sahar Khatri '12 asked how society could stop the demonization of Muslims. And Charlie Wohlberg '12 asked Riches just how far away from Ground Zero was far enough.

Riches said he'd be satisfied if it moved a few blocks away. "That would be fine with me, but I know it might not be possible," he said.

Khan, meanwhile, stressed that Americans should support moderate Muslims like herself, who are looking for common ground and want to become more a part of our nation's fabric. "A center like this [Park51] will amplify voices of Muslims involved in peace-building," she said. "Otherwise, we'll be drowned out by the extremists."

The consensus among the participants at the end of the evening was what Rosenblum had hoped it would be: a win-win situation, with both sides agreeing that they should talk together again.

For Rosenblum, that evening of dialogue on Park51 was the kind of event he thought might unfold when, in the fall of 2009, a core group of 18 facilitators learned his process of promoting understanding, which puts participants in role-playing exercises in which they take on the argument of the person most different from themselves.

"They have to study the pains and claims of the other," says Rosenblum. "They have to stand in the other side's shoes."

The center's student dialogues, held on campus throughout the spring and fall, attracted scores of students. Participants had to agree to certain ground rules: They would speak for themselves, not criticize or comment until the proper time, be mindful of historical patterns and power relations, not interrupt, honor requests for confidences, and listen to what emerged in the conversations.

They learned the process of reflective listening, in which participants quietly listen and only ask clarifying questions. They then paired off to address issues of identity, asking about key events in each other's lives, and the genesis of their involvement in social issues. They spoke about their core values and their hopes for societal

**Ongoing dialogue (l-r): Student Alexandra Ruiz, Muslim community leader Daisy Khan, retired NYC Fire Department Deputy Chief Jim Riches, and QC students Sahar Khatri, Charlie Wohlberg, and Batya Septimus are among the people who participated in discussions organized by CERRU Director Mark Rosenblum.**





change. They later shared their findings with the larger group.

Most powerful for students like Batya Septimus were the exercises in which participants listened to each other as they talked about issues over which they disagreed. They were instructed to listen intently, and not respond with a counter-argument.

"It sounds so simple, but it's not so easy to do if you feel strongly," she says. "Instead of it turning into a shouting match, you realize that it's OK if you don't agree, but you can listen and respect the other's side."

At the center's opening event for the 2010 fall semester, students from myriad ethnic and religious groups set up booths in the Student Center ballroom. While some munched on a wide variety of ethnic foods, others performed dances from India and Africa while Catholic students sang hymns.

"We witnessed how diverse Queens is, and in that spirit, how people can retain their own identities and celebrate other cultures," says Wohlberg, a political science major from Yonkers.

Wohlberg and Khatri also participated in sessions that paired Orthodox Jews and Muslims who strictly follow the Qur'an. Both found the conversations illuminating. Khatri says it revealed a common misconception: That both tight-knit communities were so insular that they only cared for their own.

"We discovered that while both communities identify strongly in a religious and cultural sense, the Muslims and Jews also care about others in the broader community," Khatri says. "We both feel a responsibility to serve humanity."

That sharing also took place in several events late last year. In October Ruiz organized a panel on immigration reform. On another night, students gathered to discuss their response to the massive floods in Pakistan. Jewish and Muslim students also screened the

film *Arranged*, and later discussed dating practices in both cultures.

November events included a student dialogue on religious faith and sexual identity in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism; a production of *Warsaw: A Musical Drama*, which was followed by a discussion on genocide and hate; and a screening of the Bollywood film *New York*, with an ensuing discussion on post 9/11 prejudice. There was also a commemoration of Kristallnacht—the pogroms in Nazi Germany and Austria in 1938—that featured six students from diverse backgrounds reading the personal stories of six Holocaust survivors and making specific commitments to combat hatred.

The events in November came six months after the center's first annual Evening of Uncommon Courage, held at LeFrak Concert Hall. The event honored three activists involved in bridging ethnic and religious divides while reflecting on the growing influence of Rosenblum's work on campus among students committed to reconciliation.

The honorees included Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, a Palestinian physician who advocates peace with Israel despite the fact that three of his daughters and a niece were killed by an Israeli tank shell in Gaza in 2009; Lewis Bernstein '69, executive vice president at Sesame Workshop (see p. 15); and Dear Aunaetitrakul '10, president of QC's Political Science Club and coordinator of the school's War on Hate events.

"We've seen amazing successes," says Wohlberg of the work of the still-new center. "I'm a pragmatist who takes a realistic view of the world, and I see that this process works. Engaging with each other is far better than cutting yourself off and indulging in stereotypes."

For more about the center, visit [qccenterforunderstanding.org](http://qccenterforunderstanding.org)

## CERRU Student Facilitators Learn How to Cope with Conflict

A discussion about breakfast choices proved surprisingly complicated when three QC students, all of them volunteers with the Center for Ethnic, Racial and Religious Understanding (CERRU), presented an impromptu skit on campus this January. "Hard-boiled eggs are very healthful," declared one woman, a little too forcefully. "Omelets are better, because they

come in different flavors," insisted the second with equal zeal. As they argued, the man trapped between them maintained his neutrality, trying without success to get both parties to listen to each other, and him, without interruption. The "audience"—a mixture of CERRU staff, observers, and fellow volunteers—watched and laughed.

This gastronomic metaphor for irreconcilable conflict emerged during a weekend training

exercise for CERRU's experienced student facilitators. As part of the day's agenda, they created mini-dramas about problems they had encountered as mediators.

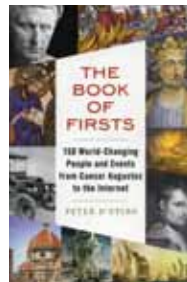
"These improvisations are effective dress rehearsals for real conflicts in life," explains CERRU Director Mark Rosenblum. "Students are often imbued with confidence as well as practice techniques for steering difficult dialogues into productive ones."

Then, after a discussion led by John Vogelsang, the center's dialogue initiative coordinator, the 13 participants revisited the skits and came up with new strategies for handling difficult situations. "Change can happen because the conversation changes," observes Vogelsang.

Since CERRU's launch in fall 2009, more than 300 QC students have been schooled in conflict mitigation. Like the QC population, facilitators come from a wide range of backgrounds and major in everything from anthropology to mathematics; the only prerequisite for their involvement is a commitment to participate in the center's training sessions and educational events on and off campus. New volunteers join the team every semester, completing at least eight hours of training before being deployed to build cross-cultural bridges.

"I appreciate the emphasis on promoting dialogue and conversation," said student Adam Kisting at the end of the Sunday session. "I'm expecting a lot from people and I'm getting it."—Leslie Jay

As part of a CERRU exercise, students Charlie Wohlberg (representing the British Mandate authorities) and Batya Septimus (representing the Arab Higher Committee) assume the roles of historic figures while re-enacting the deliberations of the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine.



Previous titles by Peter D'Epiro '72, '77, include *What Are the Seven Wonders of the World?* and *100 Other Great Cultural Lists—Fully Explicated* and *Sprezzatura: 50 Ways Italian Genius Shaped the World*. His latest is **The Book of Firsts: 150 World-Changing People and Events from Caesar Augustus to the Internet** (Anchor Books). Covering 20 centuries in the equivalent number of chapters, D'Epiro poses questions that range from religious and military topics to "What is the first surviving European cookbook?" Then he and his editorial team provide the answers in thoughtful essays, presenting even familiar subjects—Martin Luther's 95 theses, the Jamestown colony, World War I—in new ways. Fun reading for anyone, *The Book of Firsts* holds particular appeal for fans of quiz shows and knowledge-based games like Trivial Pursuit.



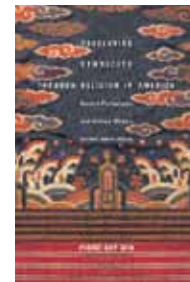
Standing an inch too short to qualify for the New York City Police Department, **Louis Diaz '74** ended up working instead for the feds, in the Drug Enforcement Administration. A stand-up guy from Brooklyn, he was a natural undercover operative: multilingual, street smart, and—courtesy of his childhood in the rough Red Hook neighborhood—savvy in the ways of gangsters and wannabes. **Dancing with the Devil: Confessions of an Undercover Agent** (Gallery Books) is his memoir of his two hair-raising decades in the field. Diaz's career began in New York, where he infiltrated the organization of Nicky Barnes, a lethal Harlem drug lord who modeled himself after mob boss Joe Gallo and beat so many charges that he was nicknamed "Mr. Untouchable." After Barnes's conviction, Diaz moved on to dangerous assignments as far away as England and Latin America. For a change of scenery, he transplanted himself and his family to sunny California, eventually turning in his shield and launching a second career in the film industry.



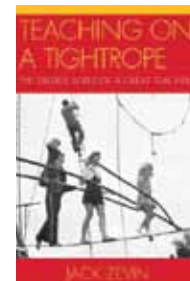
**Winner of a 2010 National Jewish Book Award. The Rebbe: The Life and Afterlife of Menachem Mendel Schneerson** (Princeton University Press), **Samuel Heilman** (Sociology) and Menachem Friedman's (Bar-Ilan University) exhaustively researched volume on the life of the charismatic late leader of the Lubavitcher Hasidim—revered by his followers worldwide as the Rebbe—has garnered praise from reviewers for the *Forward*, *New York Jewish Week*, and *Publishers Weekly*, among others. And, as reported in the *New York Times*, it has also stirred up controversy among some who are disturbed by its account of Schneerson's more worldly endeavors as a student in Berlin and Paris. Yet, as this book makes clear, these experiences, coupled with his embrace of American-style modernity, may well be what allowed Schneerson to be so successful in helping the Lubavitchers evolve over the four decades of his leadership from a small sect based in a gothic mansion in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, into a significant force in modern Jewish life.



When ultra-activists have a family, how can they balance their commitments to causes and children? Which gets sacrificed? That's the rich terrain explored in **Layla** (Plainview Press). After the death of her mother, the title character, an apolitical type, gets a surprising bequest: travel instructions and a packet of letters. The papers lead the protagonist on a cross-country trip that teaches her about her parents' secret past—and about the father she never knew. Debut novelist **Celine Keating '71, '74**, a music and environmental writer who has published shorter fiction in literary magazines, drew on notebooks she kept from her QC classes to recreate the tense atmosphere of the 1960s and 1970s.



**Winner of the Best Book Award from the Association for the Studies of Overseas Koreans.** Researchers have long considered religious cohesion to be critical to an ethnic group's identity in the United States. For proof, they point to the country's Irish, Italian, and Eastern European Jewish communities, in which culture is closely linked to rituals and holidays. But to what degree does the history of white Europeans and their descendants apply to other immigrants? **Pyong Gap Min** (Sociology) asks that question in **Preserving Ethnicity Through Religion in America: Korean Protestants and Indian Hindus across Generations** (New York University Press). Using data gathered from surveys of congregations and individuals, as well as extensive telephone interviews, Min sheds light on two Asian American groups with very different ideas about the relationship between faith and ethnicity.



With politicians of every stripe advocating school reform, the demand for gifted teachers has never been greater. But according to **Jack Zevin** (Secondary Education & Youth Services), our understanding of the teacher-student relationship is based on archaic notions. "Contrary to the popular dictum about gender, the world's oldest profession really must be teaching," he writes in his latest book, **Teaching on a Tightrope: The Diverse Roles of a Great Teacher** (Rowman & Littlefield Education). Dispensing with authoritarian models, Zevin encourages educators to understand their work in the context of an interactive relationship that involves five interlocking factors: actor and audience, theory and practice, process and content, art and science, and cognition and emotion. Chapters on each of these factors include examples and questions designed to help teachers find the most effective way to promote lasting student learning.



# Internships: More Important than Ever

Internships are intended to give students a taste of a permanent job.

But sometimes they lead to a permanent job.

By **Burton Bollag**

In recent years internships have become more important in preparing students for their work life, says Tesfaye Asfaw, director of QC's Office of Career Development and Internships. "I've heard recruiters say, 'When I read a resume, if I don't see an internship, I don't take the resume seriously,'" says Asfaw. "A comment that strong is unusual, but it shows how important internships have become."

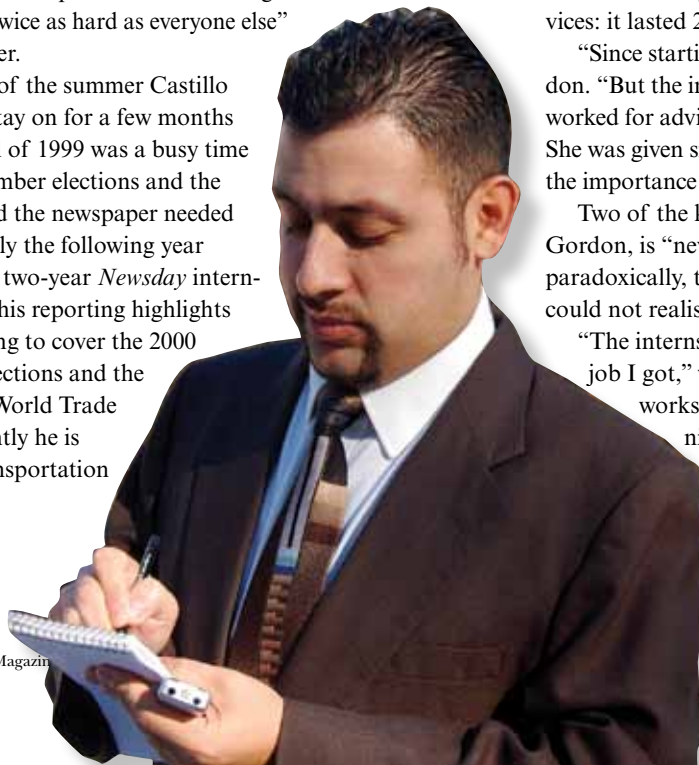
Many QC students hold part-time jobs. But an internship is typically more enriching and chosen for its relevance to a student's field of study. Students learn about teamwork, the latest in modern technologies, and other skills. The typical internship lasts one semester and involves 20 hours of work per week. The majority, including all jobs at for-profit enterprises, are paid. About a third of the 80 to 100 internships organized through Asfaw's office each semester carry academic credit. (A number of individual departments also arrange internships; some, like urban studies and media studies, require them.) Below we highlight three students whose lives were changed by an internship.

**Unusually, Alfonso Castillo '99** did his summer internship at *Newsday* just after graduating with honors from Queens with a major in studio art and a minor in journalism. "I was very young, very green," he recalls.

In fact, he had few clippings to show the newspaper when he applied; most were online obituaries for practitioners of professional wrestling, a sport with which he has long been fascinated.

"I didn't think I was entitled to anything," says Castillo, who was born in the Bronx to parents who had emigrated from Latin America. "I worked twice as hard as everyone else" at the newspaper.

At the end of the summer Castillo was asked to stay on for a few months more. That fall of 1999 was a busy time with the November elections and the Y2K scare, and the newspaper needed extra help. Early the following year Castillo won a two-year *Newsday* internship, in which his reporting highlights included helping to cover the 2000 presidential elections and the attack on the World Trade Center. Currently he is *Newsday's* transportation reporter.



**Alfonso A. Castillo '99**, who started as an intern at *Newsday*, several years later won the *Newsday* Publisher's Award for Best Deadline Reporting.



**Kaysian C. Gordon** got an internship with a large financial advising company in 2000.

**Kaysian C. Gordon graduated** from Queens in 2002 with a major in accounting. In her junior year she was accepted for an unusually long-term internship with UBS Financial Services: it lasted 2½ years, including one year after graduation.

"Since starting college I had always been working," says Gordon. "But the internship was definitely different." The service she worked for advised wealthy clients on how to invest their money. She was given small jobs to do by investment advisors and learned the importance of doing those tasks well and on time.

Two of the key lessons she learned from the experience, says Gordon, is "never to take 'No' for an answer," but also, perhaps paradoxically, to say "No" if asked to do something she felt she could not realistically accomplish.

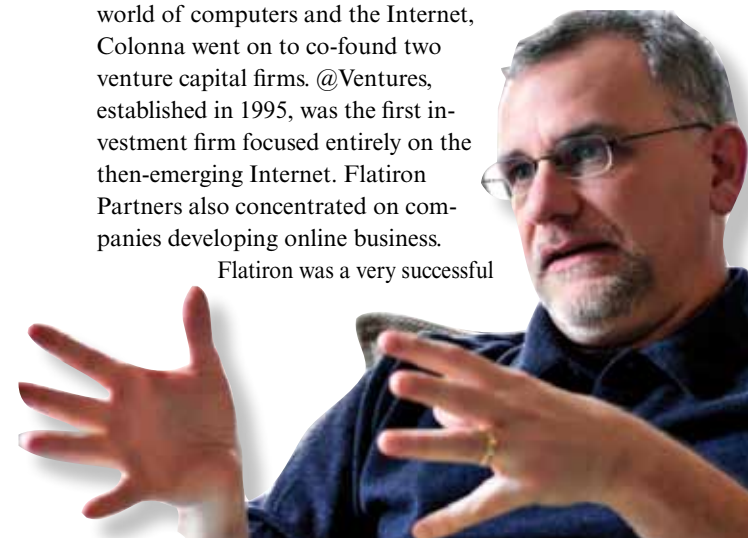
"The internship definitely opened the door for me at the next job I got," which is advising wealthy clients at UBS. She works hard but enjoys it. "You'd be surprised just how nice the clients are."

**In 1983 Jerry Colonna** was on the verge of dropping out of Queens. He was living on his own and couldn't afford even the modest tuition payments. Then one of his professors nominated him for an award from a fund for deserving but needy students set up by the Leeds family—including Lilo Leeds '48—who ran a magazine publishing company in Nassau County.

The award he won included financial support and a summer internship as a proofreader at one of the family's publications, *Information Week*. "At the end of the summer I went to the publisher and said good-bye." But instead, he was invited to stay on. So Colonna worked two to three days a week at the magazine while continuing his studies. After graduating with a major in English literature, he stayed with *Information Week* as a reporter for another eight years, and then worked two more years for the publisher, where he was responsible for launching an Internet version of the magazine in 1994.

After more than a decade writing about the fast-developing world of computers and the Internet, Colonna went on to co-found two venture capital firms. @Ventures, established in 1995, was the first investment firm focused entirely on the then-emerging Internet. Flatiron Partners also concentrated on companies developing online business.

Flatiron was a very successful



**Jerry Colonna '85** says that his internship became a job that "led to my work as a venture capitalist and to the rest of my life."

early stage investment operation, says Colonna. During its six years of active investing, from 1996 to 2001, Flatiron invested more than \$500 million and has, to date, returned more than \$1.8 billion.

Today Colonna works as a life coach, helping about 55 clients, mostly young CEOs, deal with work and life issues related to their demanding jobs. He is also active with various nonprofit projects. The most recent involves frequent travel to Tibet, where he helps a program aiding micro-businesses.

Colonna also is passionate about serving as co-chair of the QC Scholarship Committee, along with fellow QC Foundation Board Members Kathy Hu '01 and Renée Kroll Zarin '54. They are asking former scholarship recipients to give to current students the support they received when attending the college.

If you would like to offer a student an internship with your company, please contact the Office of Career Development & Internships at 718-997-4465.

## A THOUGHTFUL GIFT

If you believe in the work of Queens College and want to ensure it will continue to serve generations of students to come, you may wish to consider a planned gift. Regardless of your age or income, you can benefit from estate planning, and a planned gift can be an important tool in your overall financial strategy.

There are many creative ways to make a meaningful gift to Queens College while enhancing and safeguarding your own financial situation. Whether you choose to include the college in your will or establish a Charitable Gift Annuity that would provide you income during your lifetime, we can help you maximize the tax benefits of your charitable giving while allowing you to create a gift you may not have thought possible. Please contact the Queens College Foundation at 718-997-3920 for more information.

## WHO'S ON THE PHONE?

For the first time in over 20 years, the Queens College Phonathon is back on campus and student staffed. Five nights a week since October (excluding winter break and some treacherous snowstorms), undergraduate and graduate student callers gather in a calling room in CEP 2, put on a headset, and reach out to alumni, staff, faculty, and friends to ask them to support the Queens College Annual Fund. As of early March they have logged 975 calling hours, made 9,078 phone calls, and have surpassed pledge dollars raised last fiscal year. And they still have 10 weeks to go! Not only are these students gaining transferable, real-world skills, but they are also helping to raise essential unrestricted dollars to keep quality education affordable and accessible for future Queens College students. Additionally, they are realizing the importance of private contributions at Queens and are on the road to becoming alumni supporters themselves.

But it's not just about the dollars. Student callers update alumni on college activities, encourage campus visits, and respond to questions. So the next time your phone rings, pick it up ... it might just be a student from QC!





**1941: Irwin Stein**, who recently turned 90, would like to hear from other members of the Class of '41. You can reach him at [irwin01@optonline.net](mailto:irwin01@optonline.net) or 914-779-2158 . . . **1948: Franklin Kameny** writes: "I entered QC in September 1941 and (with three years out to fight WWII) graduated in January 1948, with a BS in physics; I went on to obtain an MA (1949) and PhD (1956) in astronomy from Harvard University. I have been a resident of Washington, DC, since September 1956. On June 10, 2010, in a formal public ceremony conducted by our Mayor Adrian Fenty, a two-block section of 17th Street, NW between Q and R Streets (near Dupont Circle) was permanently re-named 'Frank Kameny Way, NW.' By way of an extremely terse summary of the half-century of personal history leading up to this: Life takes utterly unanticipated turns. Although I certainly didn't expect it or even conceive of it when I was at QC or when I came to Washington, I am now widely nationally viewed, up to and including President Obama personally, as one of the Founding Fathers of the Gay Movement. I initiated gay activism and militancy locally and nationally in 1961. I coined the slogan 'Gay is Good' in 1968. In the years since then, I have been deeply involved in the activism which has led to the vastly improved status of gay people in ways which would have been unthinkable back then, and while, at age 85, I am pleased to pass the torch, I remain involved. It was in recognition of that that I was honored on June 10, and will remain so remembered. My best to Queens College. I remember it fondly" . . . **1949: Matilda DeLise** informs us that she taught math in New York City schools for over 35 years, most of the time at JHS 125. After retiring in 1987, she and her husband traveled to Europe and across the United States. A mother and grandmother many times over, Matilda notes that since she became a widow in 1996, she has "tried to remain strong—and active." She lives in the Bronx . . . **1953: Wilbert S. Aronow**, clinical professor of medicine at New York

Medical College, received last July the Walter Bleifeld Memorial Award for distinguished contributions to clinical research from the International Academy of Cardiology. A pioneer in many areas of cardiovascular research, Wilbert has edited eight books and is author or coauthor of 1,148 papers. He is co-chairman of the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association/National Heart Lung Blood Institute Committee on writing guidelines for the treatment of hypertension in the elderly. He graduated from Harvard Medical School in 1957 . . . **Ernest Giglio** notes that the third edition of his book *Here's Looking at You: Hollywood, Film & Politics* (Peter Lang) is now available. It examines the relationship between the film industry and Washington from *The Birth of a Nation* to Michael Moore's *Capitalism: A Love Story* . . . **1954: Mario Monti** wrote to say that the third of his books on diners, *Diners of New York* (written with Mike Engle), has just been published by Stackpole Books. His previous books are *Diners of Long Island* and *Diners of Florida* . . . **1957: Barton Bernstein** retired after 45 years at Stanford University, where he taught history, was the Mellon Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies, and chaired American Studies and the International Relations and International Policy Studies programs. History buffs certainly know his many highly respected and influential books and articles. Over the years he has received numerous awards and fellowships and, despite "retirement," he continues to write, lecture widely, and teach at Stanford. Barton writes that he remains "deeply grateful to QC for the education he received" and that he feels "especially indebted to J.H. Hexter and Richard Emery in History, to Jack Noone and Ralph Sleeper in Philosophy, to Israel Baroway in English, to Saul Engelbourgh in Contemporary Civilization, to Elizabeth Nottingham in Sociology, and to Josef Soudek in Economics." He is also "grateful for the support and guidance he received in the 1950s from Dean George Pierson and Dr. Emily

Philpott; for the admonitions of Coach Al Feld, who insisted on better swimming and ball handling by the water polo team (especially Bernstein); and for being selected in summers 1960–62 to teach the fourth semester of CC (on contemporary social thought) at QC." He is married to Pamela Hen . . . **Herbert Gresser** is the inventor of the first laser surgical device: the retinal cauterizer using coherent light. Prior to Herb's invention, the laser was primarily thought valuable as a weapon and as a light source. An electronic engineer who holds a number of patents, Herb spent a number of years as a professional musician, playing both popular and classical music . . . **Eric Gustafson** notes that after a lifetime with the Beautiful People—from Joan Crawford, Elizabeth Taylor, and William Hurt to Andy Warhol, Rudolf Nureyev, and Leonard Bernstein—and as a writer, performer, art dealer, and arts administrator, he has turned toward spiritual regeneration and personal fulfillment in India. He is traveling, lecturing, and publishing extensively about his experiences (including *India: Paradox and Treasures*, 2005, and *Expect the Unexpected*, 2009) . . . **1959: Marlene D. de Rios** is a medical anthropologist retired from teaching at California State University, Fullerton and an associate clinical professor of psychiatry and human behavior at the University of California, Irvine. She recently published three books: *An Hallucinogen Tea Laced with Controversy* (Praeger Library Series, 2008), *The Psychedelic Journey of Marlene Dobkin de Rios: 45 Years with Shamans, Ayahuasqueros and Ethnobotanists* (Inner Traditions, 2009), and *Fate, Fortune and Mysticism in the Peruvian Amazon* (Inner Traditions, 2011). "I had a wonderful education at Queens College!" she says . . . **Gabriele Kathryn (Heimberg) Libbey** recently retired as executive director of the Nassau County Dental Society. She was honored at a gala dinner held in January 2010 where



she received the society's highest award. She lives in Harbor Isle, NY, with her husband, Fred. She is the mother of three grown children . . . **Carolyn (Cooper) North** recently published three books: *In the Beginning: Creation Myths from Around the World* (ICRL Press, 2010), *Voices Out of Stone: Magic and Mystery in Megalithic Brittany* (Findhorn Press, 2010), and *Serious Fun: Ingenious, Low-Tech Ways of Addressing Everyday Issues of Money, Food, Waste, Water and Home* (Findhorn Press, 2011). You can find out more about Carolyn by visiting her website at <http://www.healingimprovisations.net> . . . **1960: Janet Grossbach Mayer** writes: "I graduated from Queens College 50 years ago and began teaching English 50 years ago and I still am teaching English! I lived on 148th St. and 61st Rd. in Flushing and walked to QC every day for four years. During those years I worked daily in the 'new' Paul Klapper Library, earning 80 cents an hour. I taught English in NYC schools for 45 years, 33 in two Bronx High Schools. I am still teaching part-time in Port Jervis, NY, and have semi-retired to Hawley, PA, with my loving husband of 52½ years, Larry. My students were my heroes and I have just finished a book, *As Bad as They Say* (Fordham University Press), to change the stereotype of Bronx H.S. students, who, despite enormous obstacles, are capable of attaining the highest achievements" . . . Merrill Lynch financial advisor **Sybil Sternlieb** was recognized in the June 7, 2010 issue of *Barron's* magazine as one of "America's Top 100 Women Financial Advisors." She joined Merrill Lynch in 1981 and has been the top female producer in their Garden City, NY, office since the early 1990s. Sybil spent the first 20 years of her working life teaching calculus and higher mathematics at the high school and college levels. A resident of Upper Brookville, NY, Sybil and her husband, Peter, a physician, have four children and four grandchildren. Sybil and Peter are avid ballroom dancers and lifelong jazz buffs . . . **1961: William McArdle** is not only a QC graduate but was also a



professor in the college's physical education department from 1965 to 1999. There he developed and chaired the Laboratory of Applied Science. Research funded by the National Institutes of Health, the Office of Naval Research, and the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command led to his publication of papers in many scientific journals. William is senior author of several exercise physiology textbooks, one of which, *Exercise Physiology: Nutrition, Energy and Human Performance*, 7th edition, was awarded First Prize Medicine in the 2002 British Medical Association medical book competition. William earned his PhD in 1965 from the University of Michigan. Last October he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from Michigan's Department of Kinesiology. Now retired from QC, William is a Fellow Emeritus of the American College of Sports Medicine. He remains active in his field, revising his textbooks and acting as exercise physiologist for Weight Watchers International and advisor to the Office of the Chief Scientists of Weight Watchers International. He and his wife, **Kathleen '61**, have four children and 13 grandchildren . . . **1963: After** teaching English for 35 years, **Edward Butscher** retired to East Hampton, NY, where he continues writing. His latest book of poems is *Eros Descending*. His 1976 literary biography of Sylvia Plath, the first such, appeared the same year as his initial volume of poems, *Poems About Silence*, followed over the years by several other collections, including *Child in the House* (Canio's Editions). He also wrote the first biography of Conrad Aiken, *Poet of White Horse Vale*, which won the Poetry Society of America's Melville Cane Award in 1988 . . . **Larry Stempel's** 30 years of hard work on his book *Showtime: A History of the Broadway Musical Theater* (Norton, 2010) has paid off as the *Washington Post* praised it as "a brilliant book . . . large in spirit as well as scope." Larry is an associate professor of music in the

department of art history and music at Fordham University . . . **Rosalyn Terborg-Penn** was awarded the 2010 John Blassingame Prize for Distinguished Scholarship and Mentorship in African American History by the Southern Historical Association. Currently, she is university professor emerita, Morgan State University in Baltimore, where she taught for 40 years. She received her PhD in history from Howard University . . . **1964: Hal Ackerman** published his first novel—*Stein, Stoned* (Tyrus Books, 2010)—last summer, and has a second—*Stein, Stung*—due out this spring. These forays into detective fiction follow upon a career as a playwright, screenwriter, fiction writer, and member of the faculty at the UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television. Hal's play *Testosterone: How Prostate Cancer Made a Man of Me* won the William Saroyan Centennial Prize for drama. His book *Write Screenplays that Sell . . . the Ackerman Way* (Tallfellow Books) is in its third printing. Hal tells us that "Jeff Bennett ('65) and I wrote a musical called *Robin*, which was the first full-length musical production completely student written-directed-produced at QC (1963)" . . . **1965: Joyce Gold** is an expert on New York history who has become one of the best-known tour operators in the business. Unlike the typical blockbuster tour guide, she offers visitors guided tours of the city's historical neighborhoods and sites, educating as she goes (she also teaches New York history at New York University and the New School). In response to popular interest in the paranormal, for the past 15 years she has added ghost tours to her repertoire, meaning excursions to haunted sites (especially popular at Halloween). Right behind her is **Phil Schoenberg '69**, also a historian who has taught at Queens College



and who conducts tours year round devoted entirely to ghostly spirits . . . **Robert Rubinstein** recently published *Zishe the Strongman*, a story of Jewish immigration written for grades K–3 (Kar-Ben, 2010). A middle-school teacher for 32 years, he also practices the art of storytelling. His performances, recordings, and books and stories have won many awards, and his book *Who Wants to Be a Hero!* was made into a movie for Showtime . . . **Bennett Stark** is a visiting scholar at Agnes Scott College in Decatur, GA . . . **1966: George Brooks** teaches in UC Berkeley's department of integrative biology, but hasn't forgotten his days running track at Queens College. Working with neuroscientists at UCLA, he researches lactate metabolism. Comparing muscle and brain, he believes that tapping into the same biological mechanism that helps athletes develop endurance on treadmills may someday help patients with traumatic brain injuries . . . **1967: Lew Tesser** is the editor-in-chief of *The New York Rules of Professional Conduct* (Oxford University Press, 2010). The treatise provides attorneys with the most current case law, opinions, and in-depth commentary governing ethical conduct. Lew, the director of the Ethics Institute of the New York County Lawyers' Association, is a partner in Tesser, Ryan & Rochman, LLP, New York, NY . . . **1968: Rob Brownstein** is the vice president of intellectual property and innovation at LitePoint Corporation, Sunnyvale, CA. He works closely with the research and design and new-product engineering groups to identify patentable inventions. Once they are identified, he oversees the application and prosecution of patents . . . **1969: Mark Maxwell-Smith** was named Volunteer of the Year by the Association of Fundraising Professionals as a part of National Philanthropy Day



2010. For over 25 years he has performed magic shows to cheer up sick children in hospitals in California. He notes that many of his volunteer activities actually began while he was at Queens and a member of State House. Emmy-nominated Mark has sold over a dozen of his own game show formats and developed elements for "Name that Tune," "Truth or Consequences," "Let's Make a Deal," "Beat the Clock," and other shows . . . **1971: Nicholas J. DiMichael** was selected for inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in America* 2011. Lawyers are selected for the list based on votes received in a survey of their peers. Nicholas works for Thompson Hine in Washington, DC . . . **1972: Alvin Goldfarb** has been president of Western Illinois University since 2002. He is the child of parents who escaped from Europe during World War II with nothing but their lives while the rest of his family—grandparents and others—died in hiding or in concentration camps. His book *Theatrical Performance during the Holocaust*, coedited with Rebecca Rotit, was a finalist for the 1999 National Jewish Book Award. He holds a master's in theatre and cinema from Hunter College and a PhD in theatre from CUNY . . . **Leslie G. Leach**, a former state judge, is now Governor Andrew Cuomo's appointments secretary. Prior to this, Leslie was executive deputy attorney general for the Division of State Counsel and the administrative judge of the Eleventh Judicial District, Supreme Court, Queens County . . . **Richard Sgroi** and **Robert Gerver** ('76) recently published *Financial Algebra*, their seventh high school mathematics textbook. Their textbooks have been sold in all 50 states, Canada, and several European countries . . . **1973: Sharon Potts** had, it seems, too much order in her life. Not content to be a CPA and business executive, she turned her hand to murder. Her debut work of crime fiction, *In Their Blood*, won top honors in Mystery/Suspense at the 2010 Benjamin Franklin Awards, and was quickly followed by *Someone's Watching* (Oceanview, 2011) . . .



**1974: Leonard Friedlander** is retired now, but feels that he followed in his father's footsteps: Gabriel Friedlander, a policeman, was among those who did the hard work of salvaging the Pacific fleet after Pearl Harbor, which later was key to winning the Battle of Midway. Leonard worked as a high-rise firefighter in lower Manhattan, where he ended up assisting on 9/11; he became part of the Funeral Desk, which organized funerals and memorials for the 343 firefighters who died that day . . . **1976: Maryanne Verbil** Walter gives a lot of time to community organizations. A teacher at PS 89 in Elmhurst, she has won many awards for her work for the Girl Scouts. She led a troop in Maspeth for almost 30 years and, as the service unit manager of southwest Queens, she organizes Girl Scout community service projects. As a member of the United Veterans and Fraternal Organizations of Maspeth, she also chairs its essay contest. Maryanne and her husband, Michael, have four daughters and one son-in-law . . . **1977: Julian Fortuna** was



selected for the 2011 edition of *The Best Lawyers in America*, a peer-reviewed national survey. Julian is an expert in tax law and a partner in the Saylor Law Firm LLP, based in Atlanta . . . **1978: Laura Carr Bandrowski** is the president of Laura Carr Fine Arts, LLC, which specializes in post-war abstract expressionism and pop art . . . **Anita Farrington** is enjoying life as freshman dean in the College of Arts and Sciences at New York University, where she helps students with everything from academic questions to housing and financial concerns, besides advising the student council and directing the freshman convocation . . . **Eugene J. Flynn** was named the "Dallas Best Lawyers" Immigration Lawyer of the Year" for 2011. He has also been identified as a "Super Lawyer" by *Texas Monthly* magazine every year since 2003. Eugene is secretary of the Libertarian Party

of the state of Texas . . . **1979: Mario Macaluso** (Specialist Diploma in School Administration & Supervision) has just published his seventh book, *Sicilian Myths and Legends*. He has retired from his position as chair of world languages at Syosset High School, but remains an active writer and lecturer . . . **David Perrick** is a board-



certified allergist/immunologist who has been in private practice for 21 years in Columbia, SC. He wishes "to express his gratitude for the educators at Queens College who were a continuous source of inspiration" . . . **1980: 2010** was a prolific year for **Susan Behrens** as she published two books: *Grammar: A Pocket Guide* and a linguistics text for non-linguists called *Language in the Real World*, which shows how language study is the basis of many liberal arts disciplines. The latter is a contributed volume, including chapters by **Ann Jablon** '73, '76 and Helen Smith Cairns, longtime QC professor and one-time dean of graduate studies. Both books were published by Routledge . . . **Leslie Dunner** (MA) is principal guest conductor of the Louisville Orchestra. Though he has stepped down as music director and principal conductor for the Joffrey Ballet, he is busier than ever with a full schedule of international guest conducting engagements. He also continues to compose and perform as a clarinetist. Leslie makes his home in Chicago, where he received the 3Arts Award last year for his contributions to that city's musical life . . . **1981: Michael Schementi** is senior VP/COO of the American Technion Society. ATS is the leading American organization supporting higher education in Israel, with offices around the country. Prior to joining the ATS in 1989, Michael held positions at the American Express Company. He lives with his wife, Joanne, in Garden City, NY . . . **1983: Pauline Spatafora** writes: "After graduate school I became a professor at

LaGuardia Community College. I have been there for almost 25 years, but am now retired and working as an adjunct. I published three books, the latest a book of letters entitled *Dear Sister: Letters Home to Sicily from Wartime America*. It has been well received and I currently do book talks at various institutions and colleges" . . . **1984: Howard Fertig** (MSEd) was named regional vice president of RiseSmart, a web-enabled outplacement and job search service based in New York. Previously, Howard was a global account director for Globoforce Inc., a sales director for BrassRing, and a sales executive at Berlitz International . . . **1989: Iris DeLutro** is vice president of the Professional Staff Congress, which represents faculty and staff at CUNY, and is senior counselor and coordinator of the LEAP to Teacher Program of the Murphy Institute, a CUNY program that helps women paraprofessionals transition into teaching. She enjoys living close to her daughter Antoinette Hafner and grandson Joseph . . . **Joseph Foy**, an IRS special agent in the New York field office, was the lead instructor for the Adrian Project, a day-long crash course in IRS criminal investigations for students from QC and Pace. This was the fifth such event held at the college, where students acted out executing search warrants, taking in suspects, and so on, with IRS special agents playing the part of criminals being investigated, pursued, and arrested. Among the special agents on hand for booking were **Charles Hyacinthe** '88, also from the NY office, and **Eric Rennert** '82, from the NJ field office . . . **1990: Gary Vollo**, in association with the Greater Astoria Historical Society, has published *Long Island City: Then and Now* (Arcadia, 2010), a heavily illustrated survey of Long Island City and the surrounding neighborhoods of western Queens. The book incorporates a wealth of historical photographs as well as Gary's own photos of contemporary scenes. He has been working in photography

for more than 35 years and has had exhibits at many galleries and museums, including the Paul Klapper Library . . . **1992: Mary McDonald** (MA '98) has become a sought-after speaker on autism, the subject of her research on technology-based interventions. Mary, a certified behavior analyst, directs outreach, consulting, and research at the Eden II School/ The Genesis Programs and Rutgers University. She also is an assistant professor in special education at Hofstra University . . . **1993: Odera Odenyo** has completed and elaborated on his late father Amos Otieno Odenyo's memoirs, *Staring at the Nyanza Sun: A Kenyan-American Memoir* (Spear and Shield Publishing, 2010). When his father passed away in 2007, he left behind an unfinished autobiography, scrapbooks, photographs, and 20 hours of oral history interviews that Odera had taped with him. The resulting book is Odenyo's story from his modest background in colonial Kenya, through the Kennedy-Mboya airlift that brought him to the United States, and on to his long career as chairman of social sciences at York College, CUNY, in Jamaica, Queens. Odera also reflects on growing up Kenyan American, including accounts of his sister **Dina Odenyo** ('92) and his QC education . . . **1996: Robert Bedrossian** ('97 MSEd, '01 MLS) had an exhibition of photographs at North Shore Public Library. A real estate consultant, Robert also is a serious photographer who studied with Neil Slavin at QC. His photographs document everyday life in New York and around the world, notably in Mexico, Peru, and China . . . **Chris Ferraro's** (MS '01) essay "Teaching the Long Nineteenth Century (1750-1914) in World History" was recently published in the book *Teaching World History in the Twenty-First Century* (M.E. Sharp). He is studying for his doctorate in modern world history at St. John's University while teaching history on the high school level in the Hudson Valley . . . **2000: Barry Wyner** (MA) received the 20th Annual Kleban Prize for the most promising

musical theatre librettist. Barry writes prolifically—most recently, the book, music, and lyrics to the musical *Calvin Berger*, which had critically acclaimed productions. He previously won the Richard Rodgers and the Jerry Bock Awards . . . **2002: Ben Gryzman** writes: "I graduated from QC in February 2002 with a bachelor's degree in psychology and a minor in philosophy. I have been living right in the neighborhood, Kew Garden's Hills and Forest Hills, and have just graduated from Hofstra University,



earning a PhD in clinical and school psychology. Queens College was memorable for me because of the great education and remarkable classmates, but what I remember most fondly is my time volunteering as a research assistant in the Learning Lab run by Dr. Lanny Fields. This was my first exposure to science at work. The thoughtfulness and dedication demonstrated by Dr. Fields and his staff is something that drove me through my post-bachelor's career, which included graduate school, adjunct teaching in Touro College, and research fellowships. (Plus I worked for a legal consulting firm after college to save up, before starting Hofstra in 2003.) I hope to follow Dr. Fields' lead and continue researching and teaching, while I conduct psychotherapy. I thank QC for all that it gave me, preparing me for what I hope will be a successful career as a psychologist" . . . **2003: Robert Clovey** (MS) is president of the New York State Society of Certified Public Accountants. Robert, who worked for some time in accounting firms, has returned to academia to teach at York and Brooklyn Colleges. In 2008 he started an IRS-sponsored Volunteer Tax Income Assistance Program—first at York, now at Brooklyn, and in 2011 perhaps at Queens—where students offer free tax filings to underserved communities. Thus far, they have secured more than

\$5 million in tax refunds to low-income taxpayers . . . **Kerin E. Coughlin** (MA) is practicing commercial and antitrust litigation with Constantine Cannon LLP. She is also an adjunct professor of lawyering skills and legal writing at the Cardozo Law School of Yeshiva . . . **2008: Aaron Ellner** (MSEd '09) has started his own business as that rare and unusual person: the male Jewish matchmaker. Aaron's moniker, The Wingman, describes his role as he guides his clients through introductions and sticks with them through the dating process. "It's a great mitzvah to set people up," he says, and so far he seems to be having success at it. He is living in Woodmere, NY, where he also works as a substitute teacher in the public schools . . . **Denise Garvey** (MA) is director of the Jets Flight Crew Cheerleaders and is also in charge of a Junior Flight Crew Cheerleader Program for girls between 7 and 14. Before going to work for the Jets, Denise danced for the Dallas Cowgirls and the Knicks City Dancers, and entertained servicemen and women for USO tours overseas . . . **2010: Luis Perdomo** (MA) is touring with the Ravi Coltrane Quartet, led by the son of the late John and Alice Coltrane. Luis, who has three recordings of his own with a fourth scheduled for early 2011, studied with the late Sir Roland Hanna at QC and has appeared with many acclaimed jazz artists, including Ray Barretto and Alice Coltrane.

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Alumni Families

By Donna Shoemaker

A zig here, a zag there—the routes students take to and through college are anything but direct. Often applicants have had a chance to glimpse the journey through another person's eyes. Those applying to Queens College quite likely know someone else who has forged the way, which gives them a good idea of how the experience of earning a diploma at such a global campus opens other doors, not only in the city but internationally. Come along as we visit with three of the many families where a parent or sibling was the one who first came to study on campus. In these stories of the Landaus, the Adlers, and the Dobrins, you won't find any arm-twisting at college decision time.

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## Alumni Families THE LANDAUS

The mother retired from teaching English to immigrants and became a stand-up comedian.The doctor daughter specializes in reproductive genetics.The son is a scientist at a space agency.And the father did research in plasma physics and MRI imaging at various government, company,and university laboratories. Queens College has been the nucleus



The Landau family has been a familiar presence on campus, beginning with father Ronald (right), who taught physics and did research on plasma instabilities at QC in the 1970s. Since then (l-r) son Mayer, wife Linda, and daughter Jaclyn have all earned degrees at Queens.

of an expanding universe of education for this nuclear family of Landaus. The first three are QC graduates and the fourth is a former adjunct professor of physics at the college.

**MAYER LANDAU '87**, the son, found his niche at QC “hanging out in the mathematics lounge,” being tutored by faculty.“They were a great bunch, willing to spend a lot of time with undergraduates,” he notes. In Albuquerque, NM, the physicist explores optics and lasers at the Air Force Research Laboratory’s Space Vehicles Directorate.

As an 11th grader, Mayer took calculus at QC at night, then enrolled through early admission. He and four other math students, all of whom would earn doctorates, enlisted their professors to design 15 advanced classes just for them.As a senior, he studied math at the CUNY Graduate Center.“You felt you were at an elite school,” he recalls about his alma mater. His long educational trajectory has resulted in two master’s

degrees (physics and electrical engineering), a second undergraduate degree (engineering), and a PhD (optics).

He and his sister, **JACLYN L. ROBERTS, MD, '87**, could bicycle to campus in 10 minutes. Both had attended yeshivas, including in Israel, before the family moved to Queens. Like her brother, Jaclyn skipped her senior year to enroll (he’s a year older, but spent five years at QC).

And both embraced QC’s cultural diversity. “I just loved it,” she says.“It was like being reborn.” A chemistry-biology interdisciplinary major who received a Jonas E. Salk Award, she is grateful to pre-med advisor Dan Marien for coaching her. Working in the math lab and babysitting, Jaclyn earned money to go to SUNY Downstate College of Medicine. Now on staff at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, she aids women experiencing difficult pregnancies “who haven’t gotten the correct answers anywhere else.” Scaling back from her 90-hour-a-week ob/gyn schedule to a mere 40 gives her more time with her husband and four children, ages 5 to 17.

Those grandchildren, plus Mayer’s two, delight **LINDA LANDAU '89** (MA) and her husband, Ronald, who taught physics at QC in the late 1970s and early 1980s.When New York City slashed art teaching jobs during its fiscal crisis, Linda came to QC for her master’s in applied linguistics.“I did very, very well as the oldest student” in class, she notes, proud to hold her own in a family where Mayer and Jaclyn had been weaned on *Scientific American* and her husband had a PhD. While taking evening courses to prepare to teach English as a Second Language, she developed an unusual way of coaxing immigrants to learn:“I used joke-telling to internalize language structure,” she explains. She based her thesis on that approach. After retiring 13 years ago at age 59, she has been enjoying telling jokes on stage.

Mother, daughter, and granddaughter returned to QC last December to see *The Nutcracker*, notes the comedian, who takes culture and art seriously.“I have been blessed,” she says, “with my life, my family, my career.”

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Fu-Wei '89 & Hsiu-Chuan *Lu* Chen  
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Alumni Families  
THE ADLERS

When your dad has published 220 books that delight children world-wide in languages from Chinese to Braille, you might find a few details from your own childhood surfacing in print. So it is with labor law attorney **MICHAEL S.ADLER '99** and his father, the award-winning author **DAVID A.ADLER '68**. His fictional offspring include such spunky characters as Cam Jansen, Andy Russell, Jeffrey Bones, and Her-man “Houdini” Foster.

“He certainly has gotten ideas from me and my [two] younger brothers,” says Michael about his father. “A fanatical baseball fan” (like his dad), at age 8 he saw himself reflected in a draft of his dad’s book *Benny, Benny, Baseball Nut*.

As an infant, Michael played an unwitting part in launching his father’s career as a popular and prolific author. David took leave from teaching math in New York City schools to care for baby Michael while his wife, **RENÉE HAMADA-ADLER '70**, went back to work as a school psychologist. He had published several books, edited children’s books,

earned an MBA, and was working on a PhD in marketing. Being a stay-at-home-dad enabled him to concentrate on writing for children. In 1977 he wrote his first story about Cam (for camera) Jansen, a red-headed schoolgirl who applies her photographic memory to solving everyday mysteries. Thirty-one years later, the series has sold 25 million copies and been in print continuously. “I have the strongest connection to her,” comments her creator.

The author’s oeuvre leapfrogs across genres for children and young readers: fast-paced stories, mysteries, adventures, math puzzles, picture biographies, and historical fiction (his favorite). He’s usually working on several at once. For his children’s books on the Holocaust, he interviewed dozens of survivors. Almost half of his works are nonfiction—on

time zones, the laws of supply/demand, fractions, and other topics that have intrigued him.

Father and son have co-authored several of the picture biographies, including ones on Cesar Chavez, James Madison, and Sam Houston. That fits in well with Michael’s fascination with American history. “I don’t think I gave consideration to any other major,” he says. He studied in Israel as a freshman, and with AP credits graduated from QC in two-and-a-half years. As an attorney with Cohen, Weiss and Simon LLP in Manhattan, he focuses on employee benefits litigation. Both Adlers are committed to



The Adlers (back row l-r): Renée '70, Eddie, and Michael '99; (front row): David '68, Eitan, and Deborah.

basing their bios on authentic sources. David, while researching his Ben Franklin picture bio in QC’s Rosenthal Library, was impressed he could easily access volumes of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*.

Queens College, plus a love of children, are touchstones as well for his wife Renée and his brother, **JOSEPH ADLER '66**, who retired from teaching math in New York City schools and now is at a private school. Renée and David met two years after her graduation; they were married a year later. A psychology major at QC, she earned her PhD at Columbia University. QC was “really where I discovered what I wanted to do,” she observes. “It was a happy four years for me.” Retired from the city schools, she is a part-time therapist at the Peninsula Counseling Center in Valley Stream, NY, where she advocates for troubled youngsters and their parents.

David earned his BA at QC in economics and education, with certification in history and math. In his required English courses, the author says, “I learned a lot about writing clearly and precisely.” Growing up with five siblings, he was always reading and drawing, and since then has exhibited and published his illustrations. A nephew’s persistent questions inspired his first book, *A Little at a Time* (1976); it was recently reissued. “One night I went to bed reading poetry and just woke up writing,” he relates. “I don’t even remember it as a conscious effort. It flowed through me. I wrote with a rhythm that mimicked the poetry I had been reading.”

Last November, almost 300 grade-schoolers, plus elementary education students, came to hear the author speak on campus. “It was like a homecoming,” he recounts. “I felt young again. I started when I was 17; here I am, 17 again. I think the college is a wonderful resource for the whole community.”

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*Yacknin* Greenspan  
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'48  
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Hankin  
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'85  
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Robert & Catherine Hensel  
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Herman  
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Delgado '75  
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Hoffman '52  
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Eunice *French* Howes '50  
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*Zilvinskis* Hoyt  
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Edward Martin Huff '58  
Michelle A. Hyatt '09  
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Iacono  
Robert F. '61 & Paula  
Ingram  
Kenneth R. Irby '82  
Samuel & Denise  
*Rappaport* Isaacs '72  
Gerald I. & Carole *Schor*  
Isenberg '65  
Sidney & Shelley *Slavin*  
Itzkowitz '72/'74  
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Esta Jacobskind '00  
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Louis & Esther *Kaufman*  
Jacobson '44  
Stuart Leslie & Sandra  
*Morgenstern* Jacobson  
'76/'78  
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Herbert & Henny Jaffe  
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Seymour & Lore  
*Prausnitz* Jarmul '46  
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Jernow  
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'58  
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John & Teresa *Walsh*  
Karcich '74  
Lynn *Pulner* Karpen '70  
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S. Kart  
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Kaye  
Francis J. & Susan  
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Judith Keller '68  
Keogan  
David M. & Althea  
Davenport Kelley '82  
Michael E. Kelly '98

## Alumni Families THE DOBRINS

Queens College “was absolutely first-rate. I didn’t love high school but I got to love education while at Queens.And now to have major respon- sibilities in the place that gave me my opportunities is just spectacular.”

As those quotes attest, there’s nothing wishy-washy about what **ALLAN DOBRIN '77** thinks of his four-plus years studying at Queens College, and where that has led him. Dobrin serves as CUNY’s Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer (COO).The Queens native says he chose QC for two reasons: the “outstanding academic program” and the fact that his family “didn’t have a whole lot of money; my father died when I was very young.”

There is one thing he wishes had been different: Had he met his wife of more than 28 years, **LYNDA (KARKOSZA '79) DOBRIN**, earlier rather than later on, “I could have spent more time with her.”

After starting at Brooklyn College, Lynda transferred to QC, taking evening classes in psychol- ogy while working full-time. She has taught, been in school adminis- tration, and worked for an agency for children with disabilities.“I continued on because I liked QC so much,” Lynda recalls about earning her master’s in special education and her certificate in school administration at Queens College.At that latter point, she had just started a new job and

was pregnant with their younger son, Michael, now a junior at QC. Assistant principal of P.S. 009 (“The School with Heart”), Lynda works at its off-site location in Whitestone.The 80 youngsters there are “severely emotionally challenged” and have “failed in the regular classroom over and over,” she explains.“They are in need of a lot of discipline and love and caring,” which she thrives on providing. Though eligible to retire, she adds,“I just can’t imagine not doing what I’m doing.”

Before transferring to QC, son Michael studied at SUNY–Albany. At QC, “I’m a big fan of my business classes. It comes naturally to me,” the junior notes of his interest in business finance and his plans to



**Allan Dobrin '77, CUNY's Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer, out on the town with son,Alexander, wife Lynda '79, and son Michael, who is currently enrolled at QC.**

go into banking.“Outside of school, I’m mainly in the gym or playing basketball. On weekends, I’m a big city person, but what college kid doesn’t love the city?”

It’s a view both parents share.“There’s no place like New York City, and within that, there’s no place like Queens,” says Allan, who held high-level positions under three mayors. Before joining CUNY in 2001, for four years he was commissioner of NYC’s Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications, and the city’s Chief Information Officer. His distinguished public service also includes five years as a leader in the Board of Education’s Special Education Division

and two years as VP at Bel- levue Hospital. During the past decade, from his domain at CUNY—institutional business operations—have come major advances, such as CUNY’s productivity and sustainability initiatives, CUNYAlert (safety), and CUNYfirst (streamlined business procedures).

The Dobrins enjoy living in the borough known for its confluence of cultures. QC gives students a chance to “live in the global economy,” CUNY’s COO points out.“I make better decisions because of having had that opportu- nity to study in such a diverse atmosphere.” In Allan’s own student days, when he was, he

joshes, a “long-haired, long-bearded, radical-looking kid,” political sci- ence classes opened his eyes to other perspectives.Among the places he worked part-time during college was the city’s Off-Track Betting Corporation.Through being a Big Brother and running a drug therapy program, he learned a lot more about life in Queens and Brooklyn.

Allan’s high-level position at CUNY often brings him back to campus, and the political science department invites him annually to address students. One year, he gave them “generational absolution.”

He told them “If tomorrow George Bush instituted a draft, you’d be every bit as active [in protesting] as my generation was.”

Patricia Smith *Walker*  
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Emanuel & Lita  
Kelmenson '64  
Hannah Kenler  
Robert Kenler  
Robert J. Kennedy  
Allan '67 & Tikva Frymer  
Kensky  
William L. '70 & Victoria  
Keogan  
Robert Marc & Marcia  
*Davis* Kerchner '67

Tecla M. Kern '43  
Martin E. '76 & Shaynee  
J. Kessler  
Irving & Janet B. Kesten  
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'79/'80  
Rosalynd *Wolfson* Klipper  
'43  
Alicia Knight-DeBrady  
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Andrew M. & Tamara  
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Wolinski '55  
Darwin & Mary Womack  
Emma Wong '79  
Gary G. & Carol *Webster*  
Wootan '59/'60  
Winifred Wu  
Roger & Holly *Lachowitz*  
Wynner '77  
Barbara *Brizzi* Wynne '80  
Dean & Mary *Lee* Yee '88

Stephen K. '85 &  
Marianne Z. Yeh  
Elissa Yellin  
Shirley Young  
John & Elizabeth *Crystal*  
Yovino '61  
Mengyun Yu '08  
Lili Yuan '08  
Marvin E. & Barbara  
*Schweitzer* Yudell '63  
Veronica Maria Yurcik '76  
Beverly Zagofsky '74  
Margaret *Paparrillo* Zaller  
'48  
Paul S. & Brenda *Saxe*  
Zalon '59/'62  
Jerry & Mireille *Erdman*  
Zarin '57  
Jesse & Carrol Zazik  
Harold J. '95 & Shoshana  
Zazula  
Isabel E. Zeff '90  
Marshall M. Zeller  
Xiao-Ling Zhang '96  
George P. & Carol Ziegler  
Leonard B. & Eva  
Zimmerman  
Arnold '73 & Judy  
Zinman  
Joseph J. Zitolo '81  
Morton '45 & Miriam  
Zivan  
Dahlia *Farben/Sacks* Zohar  
'00  
Diane *Calo* Zolot '54  
Paul L. & Judith *Schwartz*  
Zorfass '63/'66  
Michael H. Zudiker '67  
Jeffrey & Sharon  
*Silverman* Zwerin '74  
Audrey *Cicak* Zwerle '53

Gifts-in-Kind

Martin Frommer  
Arnold A. & Ellen *Saul*  
Gruber '64  
Donald Rubin  
Amy Winter

Brunch/Lunch • Cocktails/Dinner • Prizes/Raffle

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2011

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## Playing to a Full House on Pennsylvania Avenue

QC Music Professor Antonio Hart (far left) had an instrumental role when Hu Jinto, president of the People's Republic of China, visited the White House in January for a "quintessentially American" evening hosted by President Barack Obama. The musical lineup included pianist Herbie Hancock (to the Commander-in-Chief's left), vocalist Dianne Reeves, and bassist James Genus. Inset: Complementing a meal of Maine lobster, rib-eye steak, and apple pie a la mode, Hancock, Hart, and Genus served up a few standards of their own.

