

ASU English Alumnus on Life and Legacies

He makes “a habit of enjoying life day to day.” Essayist, columnist, and cartoonist-extraordinaire, Jerry Dumas has cheered and enlightened readers for fifty years since graduating from Arizona State with a BA in English. To celebrate his fiftieth anniversary, Dumas gave the convocation address last May for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. English chair Neal Lester met him and became an instant admirer of the humorist’s charm and optimism, “It was not an ordinary graduation speech—he was able to relate to the students in a personal, generous way—contrasting student life at Arizona State College in 1955 and the scene at ASU today.”



Another English alumnus, former department chair Nick Salerno, was an undergraduate at Arizona State College when Jerry Dumas was the *State Press* cartoonist who poked fun at the football team and the Arizona Board of Regents. “I can picture him clearly in my mind!” said Salerno. “He was a very good student and a cut-up, and he was a hero to me because he was one of Miss Shilling’s favorite students.”

Dumas remembers Dorothy Shilling. “To me, she was a gentle, sweet woman who had complete control of her class. She wrote several letters to me after I graduated, and I still have them.” Dumas took every class he could from the best professors English had to offer. “I took Louis Taylor for creative writing, and every single class that Louis Myers taught. Dr. Myers and I often went to sit and have coffee at the Varsity Inn.”

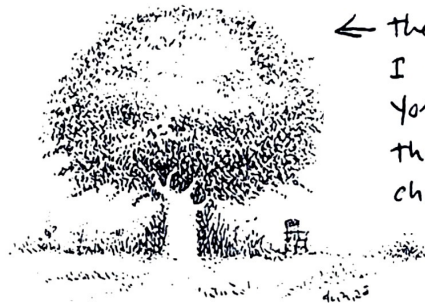
As a teenager, Dumas sold cartoons to *Teen Magazine* for \$2 each. His wit surely was honed in the pages of ASC’s *State Press*, but by the age of twenty-six, his art work had made it to *The New Yorker*, followed by *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Washington Post*, *Connoisseur*, *The New York Times*, and *Smithsonian*. Remember “Sam and Silo?”

His essays in *Smithsonian* are pure dessert, with delicious topics like nicknames, fame, Sibelius’ bed and wheelbarrow, and his wife Gail always-getting-the-last-word. Well, not always the last word. In an essay about his obsession with mail-order catalogs, Gail queries Jerry, “A camouflage outfit? You don’t hunt.” Dumas replies, “I’ve always wanted to be invisible.”

Once, Dumas sent some columns to his favorite writer, E.B. White and received this reply: “I enjoyed reading the pieces, particularly the one on Conestoga, which is done with much affection and good control. A first-rate piece of work.” This praise so encouraged the young writer that he began a memoir of his early life, *An Afternoon in Waterloo Park*. If you want to read a writer who can gather a phrase, try Jerry Dumas. “The house is filled with small last acts,” is a line from the memoir, a book populated by young friends, the “curious dignity” of aunts and uncles, his father, and by his mother’s death: “What a futile thing,/To try to make her live again.”

Dumas describes Henry David Thoreau as “Writing little bits, trying out the new terrain,” which also applies to the way Dumas takes delight and makes art out of the day-to-day as when he talks about Detroit in the 1940s: “And so I lived on this street,/In this house.” We are proud that Jerry Dumas advanced his study of art and writing—just a bit—in our English Department.

—Karla Elling



← the sort of “spot” drawings I once did for the *New Yorker*. They reprinted one of them 12 times. I got a check for \$15.00 each time.

sketch & note by Jerry Dumas,
from a letter to Neal Lester,
October 20, 2005

The Chair's Corner

The English department has had an incredibly busy year. Not only have we successfully navigated another Septennial Academic Programs Review of our graduate and undergraduate programs, but the review itself—at least from preliminary discussions with the site visitors from the Ohio State University, the University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana) and our own Maire Simington (PhD 2003) of Banner Health Systems—has already given us exciting new ways to think about the education we are creating for our students.



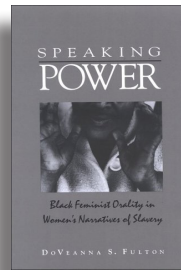
Twelve campus visits for faculty positions have kept us jumping. It is gratifying during these visits to witness the excitement that potential colleagues communicate about Arizona State University and about this department. It is equally satisfying to see that applications are coming in at record speed for two visiting faculty positions to help teach Medieval and Renaissance literature as the department accommodates various medical and research leaves and a retirement.

As the department continues to evolve under the new leadership model of the University, we are pleased to connect with our emeritus colleagues and with our alumni. Both the inaugural Alumni Lecture Series featuring Dan Shilling (PhD 1987), Babs Gordon (BA 1987; MA 1989), Nancy-Jo Merritt (BA 1964; MA 1974), and Nikki Buchanan (BA 1972; MA 1977) and the Emeritus Lecture series featuring Kathie Harris, Bert Bender, Thelma Richard and Barbara Levy remind us that we have many constituent groups interested in participating in conversations about the department's past, present, and future. This same investment in the department is underscored by Cindy Dyer's recent gift of the Eddie Dyer Memorial Undergraduate Writing Scholarship as well as in other conversations about endowments.

Yes, the English department is on the move, and I thank you all for joining me in this exciting ride.

—Neal A. Lester, Professor and Chair

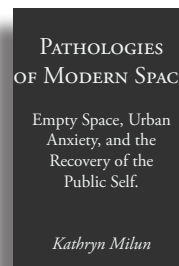
Faculty Publications



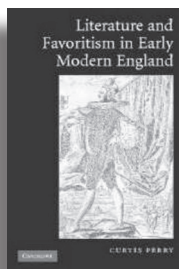
DoVeanna S. Fulton
Speaking Power: Black Feminist Orality In Women's Narratives Of Slavery. State University of New York Press, 2006.



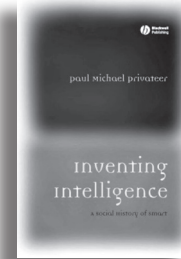
Cynthia Hogue
The Incognito Body: Poems. Red Hen Press, 2006.



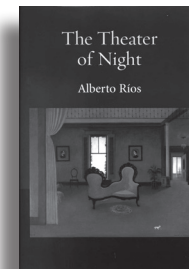
Kathryn Milun
Pathologies of Modern Space: Empty Space, Urban Anxiety, and the Recovery of the Public Self. Routledge, 2006.



Curtis Perry
Literature and Favoritism in Early Modern England. Cambridge University Press, 2006.



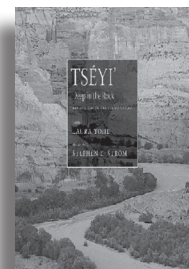
Paul Privateer
Inventing Intelligence: A Social History of Smart. Blackwell Publishing, 2006.



Alberto Rios
The Theater of Night. Copper Canyon Press, 2006.



Jeannine Savard
Snow Water Cove. Carnegie Mellon Classic Contemporary Series. (1st ed. U of Utah, 1988). Carnegie Mellon University Press, 2006.



Laura Tohe
Tseyi, Deep in the Rock. Poems and Prose. Photos by Stephen Strom. University of Arizona Press, 2005.

*"Goodbye . . . and Good Luck:"
ASU English Faculty & Staff Head for New Horizons*



From L to R: Dhira Mahoney, David Sudol and Roberta Binkley

As shown by three faculty members—Lecturer Roberta Binkley, Associate Professor Dhira Mahoney, and Senior Lecturer David Sudol—who are retiring this spring, ASU began cooperating with our neighbors to the south long before anyone thought of the new ASU/U of A downtown partnership. Dr. Binkley and Dr. Sudol both earned their PhDs from the U of A, while Dr. Mahoney and Dr. Sudol made their homes in Tucson and commuted to Tempe.

David Sudol says that the first thing he is *not* going to miss is driving 102.5 miles to work. When he first started teaching at ASU in 1996, he bought a new Saturn and he's crossing his fingers that it will hold up until May when it will have 212,000 miles on it. As to his future plans, he says he's going to clean out his garage, then empty his file cabinets, and then "following Candide's advice—tend my garden...After that, who knows?" We predict he will soon be back at his computer writing articles as well as the kinds of academic texts that he managed to produce while teaching over sixty writing classes and grading more papers than he can count. He co-chaired the Professional Development

Committee for Experienced Teaching Assistants and coordinated the teaching of the advanced writing classes, ENG 217 and 218, while also serving as an ASU Faculty Ambassador.

Since Dhira Mahoney commuted on a weekly instead of a daily basis, she only put 72,576 miles on the three cars that she has worn out over the last eighteen years. While her main teaching has been in Old English and in Medieval and Renaissance Studies, she has taught at every level, including a 105 First-Year Composition class where she had to explain her jokes. She has found herself teaching younger siblings of earlier students and in recent years even children of earlier students. Graduate student Amanda Owens, who has taken three classes from Dhira said that she "is probably the only person on the planet who can make translating *Beowulf* from the original Old English fun and humorous. . . . Beyond that, she is extremely intelligent and a wonderfully fascinating person to talk to—about her life or yours or any other subject." Dhira's goal after she makes that last commute from Tempe to Tucson is to finish her book about medieval prologues and epilogues, *Medieval Liminal Rhetoric: The Self-Authorizing Frame*. She will be working with pieces written between 1200 and 1500. She recently received a contract from Brepols, which has boosted her enthusiasm for completing the project.

Roberta Binkley joined ASU in 2001. Her research interests include the history of rhetoric and historiography, composition pedagogy and theory, and technical writing. Her recent book *Before and Beyond the Greeks*, which she wrote with Carol Lipson from Syracuse University, was published in 2004 by SUNY Press. Here at ASU, she chaired the Writing Program's Computer Mediated Instruction Committee and has received several grants to help teachers make good use of the equipment in computer-mediated classrooms.

Please join us in wishing them well at a reception on May 2, 2006, Language & Literature Building, #316 at 1:30 p.m.

—Alleen Nilsen

Main Office staffer Gina Twiligear has been so inspired by both students and faculty that she has decided to cut back on her work hours so that she can go to school full-time. She's taken a new job (53% time) across the street in the Foundation Building (newly renamed the ASU Fulton Center), so at least we will get to say "Hi!" when we see her rushing by for classes. On March 9, we held a farewell party for Gina. After six years of depending on her for help with whatever we needed from the main office, Department members are going to miss her very much. We wish her well!



English Department Faculty Contribute Globally

Thanks to Robert Bjork, Ron Carlson, Mark Lussier, Melissa Pritchard, Paul Privateer, and Rosalynn Voaden, what used to be said about the sun never setting on the far flung entities of the British Empire can now be said of ASU's English Department faculty—or at least of their scholarly contributions.

On December 2, Robert Bjork was notified by the National Endowment of the Humanities that he will receive a 2006-07 grant to complete his book project, *The Emergence of a Discipline: The Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxon Literary Studies*. The project covers nearly 300 books, articles, and translations in Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Finnish, and Scandinavian Neo-Latin. Bjork hopes his book

will provide “a history of a discipline,” and contribute to a “history of ideas and culture.” He first envisioned the project decades ago while translating and publishing more than a dozen Swedish novels, short stories, and poems. Also on December 2, Robert's wife Mary Bjork brought into the world the newest member of the family, Francesca Erica Bjork.



Robert Bjork



Lt. Col. Stacey Garmon (left) and Lt. Col. Glenn Botkin rehearse a scene from a story written by ASU professor Ron Carlson for a production in the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. (Photo by Major Scott Mackenzie)

In February, the first English language stage production in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein featured dramatizations of several short stories from Ron Carlson's 1987 *The News of the World*. Carlson borrowed the themes of such stories as “The Time I Died,” “I Found Hitler's Golf Clubs,” “Bigfoot Stole My Wife,” and “I am Bigfoot” from tabloid headlines. Several of the stories have been performed by various companies. Major Scott Mackenzie, an Infantry officer in the United States Army Reserve had seen a performance in Michigan and liked Carlson's humor. When he contacted him for permission, Major Mackenzie explained to

Carlson that in civilian life he is a “once and future assistant professor of theater” at Westminster College in Pennsylvania. Carlson was delighted to give his permission and even sent a new story, “What We Wanted to Do.” The production was sponsored by the U.S. military's Morale Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Center and was presented in the American Embassy in Baghdad, which is now located in one of Hussein's former presidential palaces. Carlson deadpanned that when his stories are produced, he tries to go to the opening performance, but this time he was happy to wait for Major Mackenzie's report of full houses with 70 to 80 people at each showing.

We will undoubtedly be hearing more about the International Conference on Romanticism, a major event which is being hosted by ASU November 9-12 in the fall of 2006. ASU English professor Mark Lussier is the Conference Director. Special sessions are being organized by ASU professors Dan Bivona, Julie Codell, Ted Solis, and Beth Tobin, with general assistance coming from Lecturer Cajsa Baldini, Department Computer Specialist Bruce Matsunaga, and Graduate Student Kimber Knutson. Other organizers include Jeffrey Cox from the University of Colorado, Julie Kipp from Hope College, Anne K. Mellor from UCLA, and Anne Williams from the University of Georgia. As Mark Lussier explains in the call for papers, “While Romanticism is generally discussed as a period of literature, it can equally be viewed as a mode and a practice as implied by the conference theme: “Engaged Romanticism: Romanticism as *Praxis*.” For more information please visit the conference website: www.asu.edu/english/engagedromanticism/



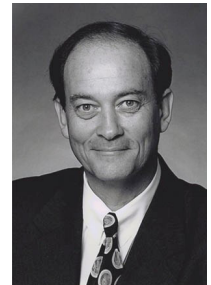


Melissa Pritchard poses with members of the Kalam Project in India.

Creative Writing Professor Melissa Pritchard, recently named Director of Creative Partnerships for the Daywalka Foundation, has a knack for seeing and seeking

possibilities. She has now found a way to link her two passions: writing and service. *Kalam* means “pen” in many of South Asia’s dialects and is the chosen name for the Daywalka Foundation’s project in India which involves volunteers teaching creative writing classes to children in red-light districts, urban railway stations, women’s shelters, and other high-crime, poverty-stricken areas. The Daywalka Foundation believes that creative writing “empowers stigmatized youth to ‘rewrite’ their identities.” In January, Pritchard traveled to Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) to observe the workings of the program, where she recognized the possibilities for collaboration between this grassroots project and the ASU Creative Writing Program. She hopes to create an outreach partnership between Daywalka and ASU. For more information about Daywalka and the Kalam Project, please visit Daywalka’s website: www.daywalka.org.

On February 8, Paul Privateer’s new book *Inventing Intelligence: A Social History of Smart* (Blackwell, 2006) was the subject of a BBC program. Professor Privateer was interviewed about the social and cultural fallout from the way that various theories related to human intelligence have been applied to people ranging from death row inmates and military recruits to immigrants, minorities, and modern corporate employees. Privateer’s claim is that the theories are used to reinforce existing class structures. At least for a while, the interview can be heard about five minutes into the broadcast at: www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/factual/thinkingallowed/thinkingallowed_20060208.shtml.



Paul Privateer



Corpus Christi College

Rosalynn Voaden’s fascination with a particularly old mystery recently led her to a semester-long quest in England. As a Visiting Fellow at Corpus Christi College in Cambridge, April through August, 2005, Voaden spent nearly every day in the library doing research on a Middle English manuscript. However, she wasn’t deciphering the text’s rhetoric or looking at linguistic features. Instead, she was hunting for evidence of someone called Marget Thorpe, whose name, in childish handwriting, is scrawled in the margin of *The Book of Gostlye Grace of Mechtild of Hackeborn*, a book of revelations which exists in only two Middle English manuscripts. Voaden’s obsession (as she refers to it) in figuring out who Marget

Thorpe was led her through medieval wills and court records from the time of Richard III, who had originally owned the manuscript. She believes that Marget was the niece of Sir John Constable, who was Knight of the Body to Richard. Voaden speculates that before his death at the Battle of Bosworth in 1483, Richard gave the book to Sir John, and that, during a visit to her uncle’s home, Marget practiced writing her name. Voaden’s findings have been published in an article entitled “Who was Margaret Thorpe? Reading Mechtild of Hackeborn in Fifteenth-Century England,” in the journal *Religion and Literature* (September 2005).

—Kristen LaRue, Alleen Nilsen, and Cornelia Wells

Martin Martos II: English Faculty Scholarship Recipient 2005-06

Martin Martos II, current recipient of the English Department Faculty Scholarship, has met perhaps the most daunting spiritual and intellectual challenge in academia today: making meaningful connections among an array of highly specialized domains of learning. Martos, currently in his fifth year at ASU, is positioned to graduate with honors in May, with a double major in English Literature and Religious Studies, as well as a double minor in Philosophy and Psychology through the Barrett Honors College.

The English Department Faculty Scholarship, initiated five years ago by an anonymous donor, awards \$500-1000 per year based on merit/need to an English or English Education major. Faculty generosity last year increased the amount to \$1800.

Martos also garnered a Sun Angel Foundation award to promote undergraduate research in the humanities. Martos' Sun Angel research investigates the femi-



nist biblical revision of the poet Alicia Ostriker, particularly her attempt to "create oral Torah through a hermeneutic of metaphor." Martos has been in touch with the poet and is endeavoring to arrange a visit for Ostriker to ASU. Martos' research project is being jointly directed by Professor Cynthia Hogue, poet and interim director of the Creative Writing program, and Associate Professor Joel D. Gereboff, Chair of Religious Studies specializing in Rabbinic Judaism, feminism, and ethics.

Martos' ethical impulses led him

to a 2005 summer internship in South Africa, working for U Managing Conflict (UMAC), an organization committed to child rights through institutional reorganization. Closer to ASU, Martos created in 2004 the Holocaust Education and Mentorship Program for Youth, pairing elementary students with college mentors to promote learning and creative expression beyond public school curricula. Martos' other undergraduate extracurricular roles have included Writing Tutor, Teaching Assistant, Peer Mentor for the Barrett Honors College, and Assistant Poetry Editor for *Hayden's Ferry Review*.

This fall Martos plans to pursue his interests in "literature, aesthetics, and philosophical ethics" via an interdisciplinary PhD in the highly ranked Ethics, Theology, and Culture program at the University of Virginia.

—Cornelia Wells

Word Lovers' Corner: 'Truthiness' and other New Words

Every year the linguists, scholars, and teachers who belong to the American Dialect Society vote on a "Word of the Year," interpreted in a broad sense to be a vocabulary item—not just words but phrases. The words "do not have to be brand new, but they have to be newly prominent or notable," similar to what *Time* magazine does with its "Person of the Year." The 2005 winner was *truthiness* as popularized by Stephen Colbert on Comedy Central. It is defined as "preferring concepts or facts one wishes to be true, rather than concepts or facts known to be true."

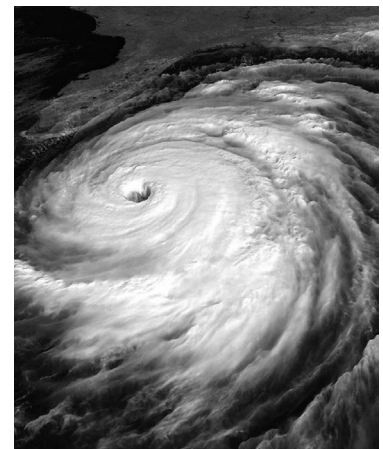
Other nominated terms included *whale tail* for the somewhat gender-specific appearance of thong underwear above the wearer's waist band and *muffin-top* to describe the bulge of flesh hanging over the top of low-rider jeans. The term that came in second was *Katrina* and such related words as *Katrina-gate* and *Brown-out* (an allusion to FEMA director Michael Brown), meaning the controversial handling of an emergency.

In early December, I interviewed seven ASU women named *Katrina*. One, who had never met another person with her name, laughed at the coincidence of going to her doctor a few days after the storm. Everyone in the waiting area was surprised and amused when the receptionist called "Katrina" and two women stood up. Another laughed about her former boyfriend having the same name as the last big hurricane:

Andrew. A third Katrina said she would have been disappointed if the storm had been "insignificant," but now she hates having her name tied to something so awful. Connotations changed

quickly. As the hurricane was gathering strength, one Katrina was starting a new job and her fellow workers greeted her by hanging a short-lived "Welcome Katrina" banner over her desk. The cheerful-looking message shocked people, who assumed the allusion was to the hurricane rather than to the new employee.

By December, a bank teller named Katrina said that customers had already begun to speak in the past tense saying such things as "I bet you heard a lot of comments." None will shy away from giving the name to their daughters. One said her parents named her after a prostitute on an old television soap opera, and if she could live that down, surely the next generation of Katrinas can live down being associated with a hurricane.



—Alleen Nilsen

'Voices of Valor' Premieres at Gammage on March 11

Thanks to ASU MFA graduate and Arizona playwright and journalist, James E. Garcia, approximately 2,000 viewers enjoyed the world premier of *Voices of Valor: WW II and the Latino Experience*, a play presented at Gammage Auditorium on March 11. The play grew out of a partnership between ASU and the University of Texas at Austin, where it is being presented on March 24 and 25. Garcia, who graduated in December of 2005, wrote the play as his thesis. It is based on interviews and photographs gathered by Maggie



Rivas-Rodriguez as part of the Texas university's "U. S. Latinos and Latinas World War II Oral History Project." The play recalls in vivid detail how the experiences of some 500,000 Hispanics who participated in war efforts served as a catalyst for Hispanics' struggle for civil rights and social recognition in the United States. In a memorable line, one of the six fictional, composite characters says after his first day at boot

camp, "I'd been called a lot of things in my life, a wetback, a spic . . . but that was the first time in my life I'd ever been called an American."

A day-long celebration preceded the showing of the play. Participants in a symposium discussing its themes included Maggie Rivas, the original collector of the oral histories, along with Phoenix College history professor Pete Dimas, ASU Chicana/o studies professor Edward Escobar, University of Houston history professor Benjamin Olguin, ASU Library archivist Christine Marin, and ASU history professor Arturo Rosales. The panel was moderated by Professor Carlos Vélez-Ibañez from ASU's Chicana/o Studies and Anthropology units. Garcia is currently a Lecturer at ASU, teaching journalism, screenwriting and ethnic studies.



—Bonnie Rigmaiden

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Accents on English
 is published by the
 ASU Department of English

Coordinated by: Faye Verska
 Executive Editor: Alleen Nilsen
 Design Editors: Cajsja Baldini, Kristen LaRue, Faye Verska
 Artwork: Karla Elling, Cajsja Baldini
 Photography: Bruce Matsunaga

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NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AT ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Coming Events . . .

Department Colloquium Mark James, Assistant Professor LL316, 3:30 p.m.	April 10, 2006
Glendon & Kathryn Swarthout Awards in Writing Lee K. Abbott, Fiction Writer MU Turquoise Rm 208F, 7:30 p.m.	April 18, 2006
Visiting Writer Susana Chávez-Silverman, Bilingual Memoirist LL316, 3:30 p.m.	April 24, 2006
Graduation Reception & Awards Ceremony Ron Carlson, Regents' Professor MU Turquoise Rm 208F, 3:00 p.m.	May 10, 2006



From Sam and Silo by Jerry Dumas. See page 1 for story.