

Dore Ways

A forum for exchanging ideas

From the Editor

The world in our backyard

I MET CARLTON WILKINSON ON A WET NOVEMBER MORNING THAT WAS surprisingly cold for Nashville. As he opened the door to his small gallery and studio on Jefferson Street, I discovered a gallery packed with paintings by contemporary African-American artists as well as traditional carvings and weavings from countries across Africa. I was there to select a single photograph for *Vanderbilt Magazine*, and what could have been a 20-minute visit stretched to two hours that day and a half-day the next week.

We talked as we flipped through images. We talked about the aesthetic that guides his photography. We talked about influences and about where he sees his work in the context of contemporary photography and African-American history. And as we talked, I began to think about the importance and appropriateness of a Vanderbilt faculty member's investing his artistic talent and energy into creating a deeper understanding of Southern people. Vanderbilt is a research university—international in scope and influence—yet shaped in subtle ways by the culture and values of the South, of Middle Tennessee. Our faculty conduct research and scholarship in areas ranging from the biological sciences and humanities to engineering and business, and the influence of their work is felt world-wide. Wilkinson's work takes place in our backyard, but like the best of Vanderbilt scholarship and research, it has global resonance.

After my first visit with Wilkinson, I expanded my thinking about what we might do with his photography. You'll find a very small sampling of Wilkinson's photographs in the photo essay "Images of Man," which begins on page 44 of this issue. But Carlton Wilkinson is one of many Vanderbilt faculty members whose creative endeavors have contributed to the American culture. Writer Paul Kingsbury's story takes a look at the Fugitive Poets and Agrarian Writers and offers a sense of the controversy surrounding their literary legacy. "Southern Journal" features "The Book of Ed," the second of four short stories by fiction writer and professor Tony Earley. You'll also find, on page 52, a short mystery written for *Vanderbilt Magazine* by English professor Cecelia Tichi, who in addition to producing scholarship on American literature and culture, is the author of three mystery novels set in Nashville.

I want to thank you for the feedback we received on the fall issue of *Vanderbilt Magazine*. More than 150 readers sent cards, letters or e-mails that voiced opinions on how we are doing as a magazine and how well we are addressing the concerns and interests of the Vanderbilt community. We're continuing to refine the newly redesigned magazine and continue to welcome your feedback.

KEN SCHEXNAYDER

From the Reader

American Terrorism

MY EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS AND I WERE fortunate to have Sam McSeveney's piece from the spring issue ["A Historian's Reflections on American Terrorism and Terrorism in America," p. 30] as we concluded the 2001–2002 school year and our survey of U.S. history. So much material about the "meaning" of Sept. 11 has been pushed on secondary-level teachers. It was refreshing and, I think, more to the point to simply put it into historical perspective. Nationally, we do seem to lack an awareness of the history of domestic and international terrorism within the United States.

My students responded with great interest to Professor McSeveney's article. It broadens our perspective to consider that much of the public violence in our history has been, in fact, terrorism; and that since the 1970s overseas, and since 1993 here at home, international terrorism had been moving slowly but surely toward the tragedy of Sept. 11.

Thank you for this insightful piece that I was able to use in my classroom.

SHERYL SPRADLING SUMME, MA'83
Birmingham, Ala.

The Lawson Affair

YOUR ARTICLE IN THE FALL 2002 ISSUE OF *Vanderbilt Magazine* ["Days of Thunder: The Lawson Affair," p. 34] brought back a flood of memories from that period. It's evident how well you researched the Lawson controversy from the point of view of the Divinity School and the politically correct spin required today. I am giving you the benefit of the doubt and saying here that I believe you are quite sincere in your belief.

It occurs to me that indeed Lawson's entry into the Divinity School did mark a turning point in Civil Rights activity. Chancellor Branscomb shared the goal of integration of Vanderbilt and was at work achieving it in a gradual and peaceful way. Joseph Johnson was a Tennessean who cared about the purpose of integration but was not willing to make his entry as a student into a national incident.

The Lawson affair made a national hero out of James Lawson and brought the national media to Nashville to sneer at Southern tradition and laugh at these backward, racist hicks. The other element in the equation was the matter of Christian witness. James Lawson was not only a hero,



but a suffering saint!

I am sure [Professor of History, Emeritus] Dr. Paul Conkin probably remembers, as I do, the dishonesty and hypocrisy so characteristic of that period. A decision was made that, although the sit-ins were supposed to be peaceful, national opinion via the TV news was strongly in favor of the demonstrators. Therefore, if things disintegrated into vandalism, the explanation could be that the suffering had gone on long enough and these “Christian witnesses” were forced to act. The Lawson affair was an event that began a long string of them. It is now so “proper” to sneer at the South when some of the traditions deserved to be kept—such as the gentlemanly politeness with which Chancellor Branscomb conducted himself.

I remember how Branscomb was vilified and wrongly portrayed as weak and lacking in the backbone to do the right thing. I also remember how hard it was for good Nashville people to see themselves shown as racist hicks day after day. Unfortunately, Jim Pilkinton had not yet begun his Vanderbilt News Archive, or we would have a visual record of the period. It is hard to really sympathize with Lawson because, in the decision to outlaw what was called gradualism, there was an element of self-righteousness that said: “We must punish these sinners.”

That unspoken judgment set the tone for the years following, in which vindictiveness was a key element. We saw an era in which almost any act was condoned on the basis of “Christian witness.” I remember the Detroit riots of 1965 during which burning and looting accompanied the demonstrations. A Methodist minister’s wife in Chicago said to me while devoutly looking up to heaven, “I believe Jesus would have been among those rioters.”

We are still in an era in which the end justifies the means. During the ’60s and ’70s, students from colleges all over the North flocked to the South to march and demonstrate. Their professors (who usually stayed in the background) had inspired them with the idea that this kind of thing was “right,” and the unspoken idea was that these people are so bad they deserve to be punished. Colleges all over the country were subjected to civil rights incidents. The civil rights demonstrations blended into the Vietnam War movement.

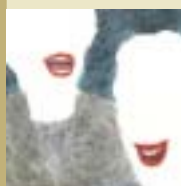
At the time I wondered, and still do, where God was in all this sanctimoniousness. Presumably, it is God who judges, and weren’t we taught that he loves everybody?

Before the *Vanderbilt Magazine* came, I watched another James on TV’s “Book Notes” discuss his book. He is James Meredith, who was the first black man to enroll at the University of Mississippi. He was from Mississippi and honestly cared about the local people (which Lawson did not) while asserting his rights as a citizen. There was none of the self-righteousness in his attitude, which characterizes the politically correct attitudes today. James Lawson has prospered in his life, and I guess

{ Featured Letter }

Liar, Liar

WHO IS THE LIAR AT *Vanderbilt Magazine*? In describing the Fall 2002 issue’s contents, someone under your supervision wrote, “Given



10 minutes, Americans are likely to tell a lie.” The article [“A Nation of Liars,” p. 28] to which the quote refers states, on page 32, that a psychologist “has found that in 20 percent of the interactions that last more than 10 minutes, Americans are likely to utter a fib.” Something that happens no more than 20 percent of the time is not “likely.”

Perhaps you should devote more time to content than to form. In connection with your request for feedback, please be advised that I find lying both “bad” and “ugly.”

DAVID. G. GRIMES JR., JD’67
Washington, D.C.

he is happy with the way he helped turn the Civil Rights Movement.

It’s like discussions of whether the Civil War could have been averted. We’ll never know whether or not Branscomb’s way might have achieved the same purpose in the same length of time without the lingering bitterness.

I was born in Nashville and was a third-generation Vanderbilt graduate. Since I have lived in the North for 40 years, I can say that I see how pleasant race relations are in the South—not that I don’t recognize improvement can still occur.

EMMALINE RUST HENRY, BA’42
Greencastle, Ind.

Hustler Chronicles

I FIND IT SUSPICIOUS THAT GAYNELLE DOLL chose Terry Eastland as representative of the *Vanderbilt Hustler* during the late 1960s and early ’70s—the most turbulent period of student activism in 20th-century America [“The *Hustler* Chronicles,” p. 50]. In fact, Terry Eastland’s conservative politics were peripheral to the tenor of the times and the polar opposite of the newspaper’s editorial voice.

That voice was the creation of Chuck Offenburger, editor during that period. Chuck (who actually won the Grantland Rice scholarship) was responsible for making the *Hustler* an advocate against the war in Vietnam, a champion of social justice, an unrivaled stimulus for campus debate, and, most entertainingly, a David-like gadfly of James Stahlman and his *Nashville Banner*. Chuck’s next-day coverage of the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.—filed from Memphis only a

few hours after the fatal shots were fired—won the *Hustler* national recognition and placed it far ahead of any other college newspaper for important reporting. Chuck went on to become one of the most popular and widely read columnists for a large daily newspaper and continues today as a teacher and writer of great vigor. (See www.chuckoffenburger.com for current Offenburgerana.)

Are politics to blame for Ms. Doll’s switcheroo? Or should we credit Terry Eastland with merely having a better flack?

MARK MCCRACKIN, BA’71
White River Junction, Vt.

Better Content

I HAVE ASKED YOUR OFFICE NOW ON SEVERAL occasions to cease wasting paper by delivering the Vanderbilt alumni magazine to my home. So once again: Please remove me from your mailing list.

Why? Oh, I scarcely have the time or energy to explain this again, but here it is in a nutshell:

Al Gore and his family are fellow alumni with multiple and distinguished connections to Vanderbilt.

Gore—you must have realized at some point—was the vice president of the U.S. and more recently the presidential nominee of one of the two major political parties. (Do you remember now? It was all over the news.)

“Wow!” I thought. “Has our school ever had an alumnus who had risen to a place of such prominence in national politics?” (C’mon, you can agree with me here; the answer is, “Gee, never!”). But amazingly, in all his years as V.P., your magazine rarely made mention of him and, even more surprisingly, during the year 2000, you barely even acknowledged that he was a contender for “leader of the free world” status. Seems like it could have been a big scoop for you.

Listen, we all know neither your editorial staff nor the vast majority of Vandy grads would ever vote for Gore. And that’s fine: A trip to the voting booth is the ultimate example of the free, unencumbered expression of one’s personal beliefs (... well, unless you live in Florida). However, I strongly suspect that had George W. been a Vandy alumnus, you guys would have put him on the front cover for six issues running! I just as strongly suspect that you minimized the Gore family’s connection to Vandy because you feared that the additional publicity might have the effect of winning him votes. *Not your job!*

Because the members of your editorial board clearly failed to put their personal political viewpoints aside and exercise journalistic integrity, I once again respectfully request that you immediately refrain from sending to me what I can now only conclude is another right-wing rag. In the future, if I want to read that point of view, I’ll subscribe to the Rush Limbaugh newsletter!

CHRISTOPHER TALBERT, BS’84
Long Island City, N.Y.

New Magazine

IT IS WITH GRATITUDE—AND NO SMALL MEASURE of surprise, I must confess—that I am writing in praise of the transformation of *Vanderbilt Magazine*. On at least a half-dozen occasions I have moved to throw it out (as I have discarded this magazine for years without a second thought) but have failed each time, finding something thought provoking and relevant that begs to be read.

And, heaven forbid, I’m looking forward to the next issue.

Instead of a publication with the clear primary intent of ingratiating itself with me as an alum, this new magazine presents opinions and ideas in relevant, readable ways. It speaks with a voice that does not insult my intelligence, but assumes that—as a Vanderbilt graduate—I just might enjoy a little brain food. Thanks.

And just to show that I’ll put my money where my mouth is: Thanks to this magazine, I’ll be renewing my Alumni Association membership this year—the first time in a while.

In particular, thanks for the thoughtful profile of a few *Hustler* editors [“The *Hustler* Chronicles,” p. 50]. I’d be writing this note even if that piece had not been there, but as the *Hustler* editor for the 1988 centennial year, just following Bridget Kelley, it was a delight to read about so many people I worked alongside for so many hours. With the recent controversy over the “de-naming” of Confederate Hall, I’ve been thinking about my own editorial in 1988 calling for the hall to be renamed. That piece actually led to my being named “Scalawag of the Month” by a Southern history/heritage magazine—an “honor” that still makes me smile. I’m glad to see Vanderbilt is finally doing the right thing.

Thanks for making *Vanderbilt Magazine* relevant and real. Keep up the great work.

J. WILLIAM AARON, BA’89, MBA’98
Nashville, Tenn.

I’LL KEEP THIS BRIEF AND SUCCINCT. THE latest *Vanderbilt Magazine* is some of the best reading I’ve enjoyed in a while. The upgrades are very visible and outrageously appreciated. Vanderbilt should settle for nothing less, and I wish to personally thank you for [the magazine’s] depth, range and sheer polish.

CHRISTOPHER BOND, BA’98
Birmingham, Ala.

I JUST READ THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE “NEW” *Vanderbilt Magazine*. Wow! This is an awesome magazine with real depth and interesting stories. Congratulations to you all on a first-class magazine! Based upon what you have presented in this fresh approach, you have recognized that alumni in the new millennium are different critters than we were back 30 or 40 years ago. Mere sentimentality for having spent some time on a campus can-

not be the only hook for folks to stay connected to a university. What you have shown is that there are real Vanderbilt people making a significant impact upon the society in many, many ways. Bravo!

DON GNECCO, EDD’83
Kennebunk, Maine

YOU ASKED FOR COMMENTS ON THE NEW MAGAZINE: The overall content seems quite good to me, and the Lawson story [“Days of Thunder: The Lawson Affair,” p. 34] particularly interesting. When I was a student (1947–51, in the first freshman class welcomed by Harvie Branscomb), there were always students “of color” scattered around the campus. They were enrolled in Scarritt College for Christian Workers (if I have the name right), and usually wore some kind of “native dress.” It seemed that people of color were quite welcome as long as they were foreign, few in number, usually older and mostly taking graduate classes. It was only a short step from there to the admission of selected black students to the School of Religion. Alas, the fact that some of these lucky folks might actually assert themselves in some way seems to have come as a shock to Branscomb and his board.

As to the format of the magazine: The full-page pictures are excellent, but I think the miscellany pages are a little cluttered—jerky and hard to read. Best of luck with it.

LEE E. PRESTON, BA’51
Professor emeritus, University of Maryland
College Park, Md.

YOU ASKED FOR INFO ON THE NEW FORMAT, so I’ll give you some. It’s great! Lots of content and perspective, plus genuine entertainment as well. Articles I particularly liked include “The Lawson Affair” (I was there at the time, but the turmoil wasn’t apparent to the average student), “Singing in the Saddle” [p. 44], and “The Mystery of the Reed” [p. 58]. My only worry is that you won’t be able to maintain this standard in future issues. Then again, maybe you will. Thanks for a fine job.

FRANK MORRIS, BE’61
Cincinnati, Oh.

I HAVE JUST FINISHED WADING THROUGH YOUR latest magazine from Vanderbilt, and find it not only very poorly written, but incomplete in the article about oboe reeds. I am a 1950 graduate of George Peabody College for Teachers with a B.S. in instrumental music education. Having sat in on the construction of oboe reeds by our professor of woodwinds, Dr. Don Cassell, I was disappointed in the incompleteness of that report. Also, I do not consider myself an alumnus of Vanderbilt. I have always been upset and angry that Vanderbilt abolished Peabody’s music department, firing all the beloved faculty I had enjoyed.

Please cancel my subscription, if that is what it is, of the *Vanderbilt Magazine*. I usually throw it away without reading it, but I saw the cover story

about “The Lawson Affair” and tried to read through that poorly written piece. I made it. As a Presbyterian minister, who was involved in the movement for justice in the desegregation of the South, serving in Alabama at the time, I was interested in this story.

So please take my name from your list of alumni. I never wanted to receive information about Vanderbilt in the mail, and it will save you the postage.

JAMES S.R. TIPPINS, BS’50
Efland, N.C.

KUDOS ON THE NEW *Vanderbilt Magazine*, and thanks for including some of the “ugly”—the “Lawson Affair” article was especially well done and candid, I thought. It has become especially important in recent months to look at our past societal failures so we can learn from them.

MARY CONTI SWIONTONIOWSKI, MD’81
Oak Park, Ill.

YOU PICKED A FINE STORY WITH WHICH TO launch the new *Vanderbilt Magazine*. “The Lawson Affair” was a soul-searching tale of self-examination—an example of why it is so important that universities never stop asking what they are and whom they represent. Publishing it demonstrates that Vanderbilt is willing to look to even its darker moments in the hopes that we can learn from them. It’s refreshing to read an alumni magazine that has the courage and confidence to share more than just happy news, but to ask serious questions about where our university has been, and where it is headed.

For those of us off in the hinterlands, *Vanderbilt Magazine* is one of the only means available to stay connected to our school. I’m grateful to receive a magazine that looks great, reads well, informs and entertains—but, most important, reminds me of what I cherished most about studying at Vanderbilt. For me, it was a place that nurtured free thinking and critical debate. I’m pleased to see those same qualities are beginning to be reflected in the pages of the magazine.

MICHAEL PENN, BA’91
Madison, Wis.

THE *Vanderbilt Magazine* HAS ALWAYS BEEN “a good read,” with subtlety, balance and frequently inspiration.

However, the writers did not live the historical times that are featured in the pages of this magazine. For instance, *The Hustler* campus newspaper was financially supported by ads, newsstand copies and subscriptions in 1960–61. There was no university subsidy. The profits at the end of the year were distributed among the editorial staff. As features editor for that year, some time after graduation a rather magnificent check for \$67 arrived in my mailbox. If you factor in that inflation has increased prices by a factor of 10, it would be like receiving a check for \$670 today. Lamar Alexander

received a cut of the profits for the editorial staff in 1960–61, as did we all. Was this policy changed in 1961–62 so that only he and the business editor received profits that working year? That doesn't seem reasonable, for Lamar was so (excuse me for being politically incorrect) fine and useful a young man, I have been casting votes for him these last 42 years by pencil, lever or punch-module voting machine. (Tennis elbow, anyone?)

Douglas B. Green's article, "Singing in the Saddle," resonates with my generation. However, it surprises me that Tex Ritter did not receive mention. As an East Texas farm boy in law school, Tex heard the old cowboy songs, knew that he could master both cinema and singing, and took his talents to Hollywood. In the 1950s, his television program was as popular as the Country Music Network is now. Perhaps my bias swings in his direction since he was my cousin, though I was always explaining away his singing habits to my classmates at Julia Green Elementary with "he sings really neat stuff, too, like 'Blood on the Saddle.'"

In response to William B. Hunter ["From the Reader," p. 7], perhaps the "cannibalistic practices" invoked in the Eucharist may be explained by their symbolic nature and the forgiveness embodied in them. For the actual body of Christ to be present, it would have to be freeze-dried for 20 centuries.

Samar Ali's breathless idealism shows that the essential Vanderbilt student has not changed. Donald Davidson, a fugitive and Vanderbilt professor of staggering excellence, could not have produced a better writer than Vanderbilt teachers have inspired Samar Ali to be.

Finally, the new *Vanderbilt Magazine* is as good a read as the old one, but it takes much longer to absorb and digest its eclectic content.

DANIELL CHADWICK BEASLEY, BA'61
Crossville, Tenn.

And The Cards Say ...

[EDITOR'S NOTE: We received more than 150 reply cards from readers expressing their views on the new Vanderbilt Magazine. Below we've printed a representative sampling. You'll find the complete collection on the Vanderbilt Magazine Web site: www.vanderbilt.edu/alumni/publications/index.html.]

OK, HERE IS ONE MAN'S OPINION!

My overall evaluation: very strong positive. I enjoyed learning from "PSCI 287" [p. 9]; was inspired by the "Word of God" windows; impressed by Vandy's luring of imaging scientists from Yale; fascinated by the photo of the Retina Nebula; unimpressed by "Sports in the Trenches" [p. 16]; not interested in the "food" article ["Food for Thought," p. 20]; fascinated by "Bright Ideas"; will give the article by Michael Sims ["Standing at the Intersection," p. 26] to my high-school senior grandson as he considers universities and career choices; was disappointed (again) at realizing how far short we fall from being civilized human beings

["A Nation of Liars," p. 28]; looked in the back door and under the carpet and heard from the fly on the wall regarding some Vandy history from Ray Waddle ["Days of Thunder: The Lawson Affair," p. 34]; skipped the cowboy article ["Singing in the Saddle," p. 44] and what appeared to be a "puff" piece for the *Vanderbilt Hustler* ["The *Hustler* Chronicles," p. 50]; intrigued by the oboe reed piece ["Mystery of the Reed," p. 58]; yearned to be at Vandy to participate in Arts & Culture activities; looked for familiar names in "The Classes" (found none); and, finally, lacking experience or other interest in golf, skipped "The Regulars." I moved to the "ho-hum" sophomoric piece by senior Samar Ali and read only two pages of self-aggrandizing Sergeant's "Coming of Age" [p. 68].

MORTIMER BROWN, PHD'61
Lutz, Fla.

THE NEW MAGAZINE IS BEAUTIFUL! IT WAS SO inviting that I read it immediately. The James Lawson story was superb. I was finishing graduate school at that time and really had forgotten the whole episode. Praise the Lord the chancellor and J. Lawson had some time together before C. Branscomb died. It was an important ending.

The layout is very colorful. What a beautiful picture at the end of Old Central. It is very fitting for us old timers. You need to be congratulated on a job well done!

P.G. WISEMAN, BA'59, MS'60
Isle of Palms, S.C.

WHAT A DELICIOUS SOUTHERN BREEZE FOR us "damn Yankees" who had the good sense to earn at least one degree in the comforting climes of Nashville!

You have produced a superb publication. "The Lawson Affair" should be required reading in every recent history.

LEO J. NEIFER, PHD'71
Hosmer, S.D.

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE GRADUATION (1984), I found an issue of the *Vanderbilt Magazine* serious, stimulating, illuminating and even provocative. I also receive alumni magazines from Berkeley and Stanford, but the fall issue of [*Vanderbilt Magazine*] is the only alumni publication I've ever passed around to friends and family. Cover to cover, that was a fine piece of journalism and a *gigantic* step beyond the usual fluff and propaganda of alumni publications. The new design is equally superb. The bad news: It now takes much

longer than the walk from the mailbox to the front door to get through an issue.

KEVIN D. SMITH, BA'84
Burlingame, Calif.

THANK YOU FOR PUTTING THE NAME ON THE magazine so that I wouldn't think it was *People* magazine or the *Smithsonian*. Very attractive but awfully slick. Are you planning to sell it on the newsstands? All you lack is advertising.

JAMES MONTGOMERY, MAL'63
Austin, Texas

HANDSOME, REVEALING AND STIMULATING. I could be reading an academic *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *The New Republic*, etc., all geared to Vanderbilt. Most impressive. Thank you.

LYNNE REUBUSH CARTER, BA'42
Charlottesville, Va.

VANDERBILT'S "DIVERSITY" HAS TURNED SOUR. The Confederate Hall [was] built as a memorial to the memory of Confederate soldiers [and] paid [for] by the Daughters of Confederacy. Now there are blacks living in the hall. I understand that the blacks and Muslims insist on ripping out the marker at considerable cost. Next will be Al-Qaida.

Are there no students or faculty to raise a voice?

EDWARD L. TARPLEY M.D., M'42
Nashville, Tenn.

[THE NEW MAGAZINE IS] EMBUED WITH POLITICAL and social dogma that is not reflective of people's values outside of [the] immediate university community. Well-written articles, but I'm so tired of having the race card crammed down my throat—write about something else for a change. I am no longer proud of *anything* VU does since you have declared my ancestors unworthy of being remembered. *Deo Vindice*.

MICHAEL R. BRADLEY, MA'69, PHD'71
Tulahoma, Tenn.

I READ THE CLASS NOTES THOROUGHLY. THE rest of the magazine only took me 10 minutes to skim. Just more political correctness.

I used to save an issue until the next one arrived. Often it was prominently displayed. The latest issues have wound up in the trash the same day they arrived.

What terrible covers!

MARY DAVIS, BA'50
Columbus, Ga.

Letters are always welcome in response to contents of the magazine. We reserve the right to edit for length, style and clarity. Send signed letters to the Editor, VANDERBILT MAGAZINE, VU Station B 357703, 2301 Vanderbilt Place, Nashville, TN 37235-7703, or via e-mail to ken.schexnayder@vanderbilt.edu.