Nominate a YOW

Yalies of the Week

Every Friday, the Yale Alumni Magazine chooses a newsworthy Yale alum as its latest YOW. Scroll down to check them out.

October 16, 2009

She started composing when she was nine years old. Now, at 31, Angel Lam ’10ARTA is traveling the Silk Road. An artist diploma candidate at the Yale School of Music -- where she's working with Martin Bresnick and Aaron Jay Kernis -- Lam wrote a piece on the new album by the Silk Road Ensemble, the worldwide musicians’ collective founded by Yo-Yo Ma. Lam's composition, “Empty Mountain, Spirit Rain,” was inspired by childhood memories of her grandmother’s death. Raised in Hong Kong and California, Lam says her music expresses “East Asian femininity. There are very few East Asian female composers writing feminine music. I go to school at Yale right now and a lot of my colleagues, mostly male, don't write music like this.” Even for such an accomplished artist, this is a big week. Off the Map, the Silk Road ensemble’s first album without Ma, was digitally released October 13. On October 15, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra premiered another Lam composition, Awakening from a Disappearing Garden -- a cello concerto commissioned by Carnegie Hall and showcasing none other than Ma himself.

October 9, 2009

Last time we wrote about Neal Katyal ’95JD, he had just bested the federal government in a U.S. Supreme Court case. Now Katyal is the federal government -- a deputy solicitor general, to be exact -- and this week, he appeared before the high court in what the New York Times calls “the most important free speech case this term.” In United States v. Stevens, a Virginia man is challenging a federal law that outlaws the sale of dogfight videos and other “depictions of animal cruelty.” Katyal, defending the
law in the face of the justices' questions about foie gras and an imaginary Human Sacrifice Channel, urged the court to avoid an "endless stream of fanciful hypotheticals." But when Justice Sonia Sotomayor '79JD compared the banned videos to a documentary about pit bulls, Katyal had to concede, "The line will sometimes be difficult to draw."

October 2, 2009

Health policy guru Jacob Hacker '00PhD has been dubbed the "father of the public option." But it's been an awfully tough labor, and he's still waiting for that baby to be born. Hacker, the Stanley B. Resor Professor of Political Science at Yale, has been all over the news media in recent months, pushing his idea -- adopted by President Barack Obama in January -- to offer government-run health insurance that would compete with private plans. (You could tell he had really made the big time when, like Obama, he got called a liar on the subject.) The House of Hacker suffered a defeat -- make that two defeats -- this week, when the Senate Finance Committee rejected two public-option amendments to committee chairman Max Baucus's reform bill. Yet Hacker remains unwavering, telling the Boston Globe that for any proposal (like Baucus's) that requires individuals to buy health coverage, "the public plan is the linchpin" to making it "both politically and morally acceptable."

September 25, 2009

As a New York journalist, Steve Bodow '89 (arguably) had to work for a living. Then he landed a job writing for the Daily Show, where, he noted, "I'm paid to sit around in an office with a bunch of other entertaining nerds and make fun of the news." Since 2006, Bodow has been the Daily Show's head writer -- and since Sunday night, he's worn the Emmy Awards crown for "Outstanding Writing for a Variety, Music or Comedy Series." Bodow shares that honor with Jon Stewart and the rest of the Daily Show's writing team; they wrested the award, which they had won from 2003 through 2007, back from the Colbert Report, which snatched it last year. When Bodow isn't getting paid to sit around in an office making fun of the news, he co-directs Elevator Repair Service, an experimental New York theater company whose plays include one about an office worker reading the novel
The Great Gatsby out loud -- for six and a half hours. And, presumably, getting paid to do it.

September 18, 2009

Back in January, Colorado governor Bill Ritter appointed Michael Bennet ’93JD to fill a U.S. Senate seat vacated by Cabinet nominee Ken Salazar. Next year, Bennet will face a Democratic primary challenge from another Yale: Andrew Romanoff ’89, a former state House speaker who is portraying Bennet as too centrist, too unaccountable, and too dependent on out-of-state donors, announced his candidacy on September 16. "This contest ought to be decided not by a tap on the shoulder but by actual voters -- especially voters who live in Colorado," Romanoff declared. One Denver columnist, however, derided Romanoff and Bennet as the "identical cousins" of the *Patty Duke Show*:

"They're both center-left, white Yalies with law degrees. . . . They're both non-native species to Colorado, and their roots here, however shallow, are only in Denver. Neither would look terribly comfortable in a bolo tie."

September 11, 2009

He was hired to promote green jobs, but Van Jones ’93JD turned out to have too many red flags for the White House. The environmental activist and author of *The Green-Collar Economy* -- named an Obama administration special adviser for green jobs, enterprise, and innovation in March -- came under fire in recent weeks from Fox News's Glenn Beck. Beck raised alarms over Jones's call to "change the whole system" in America, including overconsumption of energy and mistreatment of Native Americans. (Beck didn't mention that Jones gave the keynote speech at the Yale Law School's annual Rebellious Lawyering Conference -- a gathering of left-leaning legal activists -- in February.) But the piece of Jones's past that drove him from office was his signature on a 9/11 "Truther" Petition in 2004 -- especially the petition's claim that "people within the current administration may indeed have deliberately allowed 9/11 to happen." While the political right celebrated Jones's resignation, many on the left painted him as a victim. But not blogger Arianna Huffington, who rejoiced that Jones is "no longer tied to his desk with a sock in his mouth." Instapundit's Glenn Reynolds '85JD had a different take: "Unlike me," he wrote, "Van Jones has never been Yale Of The Week. Hence, he's oppressed and miserable."

September 4, 2009
In nearly 35 years as Manhattan District Attorney, Robert Morgenthau '48LLB has drawn hundreds of headlines, prosecuted everyone from Bernie Goetz to Boy George to the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, and served as inspiration for Law & Order’s Adam Schiff. Now he has an award named after him. New York’s District Attorneys Association celebrated its 100th anniversary by creating an award in Morgenthau’s honor, which will be given every year to four assistant DAs around the state. The association’s president pointed out that Morgenthau has served “for more than one third of our existence,” while “The Boss” himself joked that he “was just getting ready for kindergarten” when the group formed. The 90-year-old DA is retiring at the end of this year.

August 28, 2009

Nearly eight months after Barack Obama nominated her to head the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel, Indiana University law professor Dawn Johnsen ’83, ’86JD, has gone back to her day job -- sort of. The Senate Judiciary Committee approved Johnsen’s appointment in March. But Democratic leaders, apparently fearing a Republican filibuster, have yet to schedule a vote in the full Senate. So Johnsen -- who reportedly moved her family to D.C. over the summer -- will commute back to Indiana to teach a weekly seminar on “Sexuality, Reproduction and the Law.” That’s a hot topic: conservative objections to Johnsen (whom one critic called “aggressively radical”) have focused largely on her pro-choice views and former job as legal director of the abortion-rights group NARAL. The Office of Legal Counsel, you may remember, was the source of that John Yoo ’92JD torture memo -- which Johnsen called “shockingly flawed” and demanding of “outrage.” Just in case the Senate gets around to voting, Johnsen has structured the seminar so that classes end before fall break, with students working on research papers for the rest of the term.

August 21, 2009

A Yale degree in Russian studies -- earned while the Cold War still raged -- plus a master’s from Harvard would seem like good
preparation for the CIA. But Joseph Finder ’80 tried that and decided that writing spy novels was more fun than the real thing. The best-selling author of Paranoia and Killer Instinct has just come out with his latest, Vanished, about Nick Heller, a shadowy corporate fixer (i.e., private spy) in search of his estranged brother, who has lived up to the title. Naturally, Nick makes “shocking discoveries about his brother’s life” and finds himself up against “a powerful and deadly conspiracy that will stop at nothing to protect its secrets” -- so we won’t give them away either. Dubbed an auteur of “Dilbert noir,” Finder nonetheless breaks out of his business-thriller niche on occasion -- writing, for example, an intriguing though anonymously sourced nonfiction piece on recent CIA travails, and appearing on TV to opine about swine flu. There’s no evidence, however, that this former Whiffenpoof has been called upon to sing. Would that make him a stool pigeon?

August 14, 2009

If the 1970s were the golden age of quirky television detectives (remember Baretta and his cockatoo?), the past seven years have seen a twitchy revival in Monk. But now Tony Shalhoub ’80MFA, who won three Emmys for his portrayal of obsessive-compulsive San Francisco gumshoe Adrian Monk, is hanging up his handcuffs. The USA Network show has begun its final season -- one in which, it is promised, Monk will solve the mystery of his wife’s murder. Playing a character with OCD (no, that’s not the Oldest College Daily) brings out the obsessive fans, Shalhoub told reporters: “They know way too many details about this character, things that I have frankly long forgotten.” For those who can’t get enough, try this trivia quiz about Monk and “a Mensa society’s worth of dysfunctional TV geniuses.”

August 7, 2009

It took 20 hours, one dinner with the head of state, and one crucial apology to win the reversal of a 12-year sentence for two American journalists in North Korea. That, and the prestige of an ex-U.S. president who just happens to be married to the secretary of state. Laura Ling and Euna Lee returned to Los Angeles in the company of Bill Clinton ’73JD on Wednesday, more than four months after they were arrested and imprisoned in North Korea while researching human trafficking near the Chinese border. North Korea’s reclusive leader, Kim Jong-II, invited Clinton to dinner and pardoned the two women after Clinton apologized for their actions. According to the New York Times, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton ’73JD considered asking other dignitaries to undertake the mission -- including Al Gore, Bill Clinton’s vice president and founder of the journalists’ employer, Current TV -- but settled on her husband
when North Korea sent word that it preferred his presence. Once a rock star . . .


July 31, 2009

Julia Usher ’84 put her Yale engineering degree to good use. Honest, she did. Also her Stanford MBA: she worked on nuclear reactors and in management consulting. But the education that’s leaving the sweetest taste in Usher’s mouth these days is her stint at the Cambridge School of Culinary Arts, where she was valedictorian and winner of the the M. F. K. Fisher Prize for outstanding scholarship in 1996. That training launched Usher’s career as a professional baker and food writer. She ran a boutique bakery, designed wedding cakes, and wrote for publications such as Bon Appetit and Better Homes and Gardens. Now comes Usher’s first book, Cookie Swap: Creative Treats to Share Throughout the Year. Due for release on August 1, it contains recipes and ideas for themed parties, with the aim of turning cookie swaps from a Christmas-only event to a year-round tradition inspired by potluck meals. And for those of us who didn’t know there was such a profession as dessert styling -- well, we’ve got a lot to learn. Maybe the chapter titled "Cookies Cum Laude" will help.


July 24, 2009

Henry Louis "Skip" Gates Jr. ’73 has written for the New Yorker, made PBS documentaries, won a MacArthur “genius grant,” and been named one of Time magazine’s “25 Most Influential Americans.” But last week outside his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, he was another black man in handcuffs. Gates, professor of African American studies at Harvard, returned to his Harvard Square home at midday on July 16, after a trip to China, and found the front door jammed. With the help of his driver, he shouldered it open and went inside. Then arrived a Cambridge police officer, investigating a passerby’s complaint of a possible break-in. While the police report and Gates’s account differ on some details, both note that Gates eventually showed the officer ID, proving that he lived in the house. Both accounts have Gates angrily repeating something along the lines of: “Is this how you treat a black man in America?” As Gates followed the officer onto the porch, police cuffed the 58-year-old scholar in front of a crowd of onlookers. Charged with disorderly conduct, he spent several hours in jail before being released. When news of the arrest broke early this week, Cambridge dropped the charges. But that did little to quiet the outcry about police treatment of African Americans. “Here we are in the age of Obama, and some things haven’t changed,” Yale Law School Professor Stephen Carter told Inside Higher Ed. “Blackness is associated in the public mind with wrongdoing.” As for the aforementioned President Barack Obama, he opined that the police “acted stupidity.” Gates says his next documentary will focus on the criminal justice system.
July 17, 2009

Before picking up his Yale law degree this spring, Bryan Townsend '09JD studied economics, philosophy, and disabilities law in China, England, and his native Delaware. What better way, then, to bring together his interests and experiences than ... swimming the English Channel? There is a connection, actually, aside from a passion for distance swimming that dates to Townsend's high school days: he is undertaking the 15-hour Channel crossing as a fund-raiser for Special Olympics Delaware and the Haidian Peizhi Special School in Beijing. Townsend headed to England this week to prepare for the swim, the date of which will depend on the weather and currents. After his one-man assault of the coast of Normandy, the bar exam -- which most of his fellow law graduates are taking this month -- may seem like a kiddie pool.

July 10, 2009

Francis Collins '74PhD came to Yale to study chemistry, drawn to the mathematical precision of molecular interactions. But at Yale he took a biochemistry course that sparked a new appreciation for the sprawling messiness of life, sending Collins in a different direction. He headed to medical school and later became one of the world's leading geneticists, discovering the genes that cause cystic fibrosis and Huntington's disease, among other devastating illnesses. As director of the National Human Genome Research Institute from 1993 to 2008, Collins also established a reputation as a strong administrator, completing the sequencing of the human genome ahead of schedule and under budget. Collins's track record made him a front-runner to had the National Institutes of Health -- a position cemented on July 8, when President Barack Obama announced his intention to nominate the geneticist as director of the $30 billion research agency. While the announcement drew applause from many scientists, some have questioned the cost-effectiveness of the Humane Genome Project as a national priority. Other critics question the ability of Collins, who is an evangelical (though not fundamentalist) Christian, to reconcile science with his religious faith. Collins himself has undertaken this task in his bestselling book, The Language of God, and in frequent interviews and lectures -- like this one at Yale last October.

July 3, 2009
Geoffrey Black '72MAR has been elected leader of the United Church of Christ -- but don't call him Your Holiness. "The phrase 'servant leadership' encapsulates his understanding and practice," one UCC honcho says of the church's new president and general minister. "He does not believe that leadership is the exclusive purview of a single person, but the shared responsibility of the many." That sounds like an excellent trait in the highly decentralized UCC, described by one commenter on the Beliefnet blog as "this crazy wagon of a denomination with hundred[s] of horses pulling it." The UCC was formed in 1957 from many Protestant denominations, including the Congregationalist tradition, begun by the New England Puritans. It now has 5,320 churches with more than 1.1 million members.

Black, who in his nomination speech called the struggle for justice and peace "part of our identity," is the first African American elected to lead his denomination, which is more than 90 percent white. (The only previous black president completed the term of a general minister who died in office.) Black succeeds another Yalie, John Thomas '75MDiv.

June 26, 2009

Since his days at the Yale Daily News, Dan Froomkin '85 has never been one to duck an argument. He started plenty in the past five years in "White House Watch," his column for washingtonpost.com. Now Froomkin will have to find a new jousting ground: the Post has axed "White House Watch." (Click here to read the June 26 column, his last.) The daily feature, originally called "White House Briefing," was renamed in 2005 amid grumbling by Post political reporters that readers would confuse Froomkin's "highly opinionated and liberal" work with their own "objective" writing. Froomkin, in turn, criticized the cozy relationship between Post staffers -- especially Bob Woodward '65 -- and the Bush White House. By the time of his firing last week, a Post spokeswoman dismissed "White House Watch" as "the blog that Dan Froomkin freelanced for washingtonpost.com." The decision, a Post editor said, stemmed not from Froomkin's politics but from "viewership data, budget constraints and judgments about how well the column was or was not adapting to a new era." The firing of "the WaPo's best blogger* inflamed liberal and not-so-liberal commentators, with Salon lamenting the loss of "one of the rarest commodities in the establishment media," a "long-time Bush critic and Obamawatchdog (i.e., a real journalist)." Perhaps prophetically, Froomkin (who has occasionally written for the Yale Alumni Magazine) declared a month ago on a separate blog that journalists should "be brave enough to call things as we see them... Raising it safe," he argued, "is often transparently bogus -- and boring, to boot."
June 19, 2009

How often except in daydreams does someone get to make a statement like "I am happy the pope has entrusted to me an area that he considers so important?" That’s what theologian Augustine Di Noia '80PhD told the Catholic News Service when he was appointed on June 16 to head the Vatican office concerned with liturgy. Di Noia, who got his doctorate in religious studies at Yale, is a Dominican priest who has worked since 2002 at the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. There he served under then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger before Ratzinger became Pope Benedict XVI. As secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Di Noia will address issues relating to liturgical practices, including a new English translation of the mass. The job comes with a promotion: Di Noia will be ordained as an archbishop in a ceremony in Washington, DC, on July 11. The New York City native has been named archbishop of Oregon City, Oregon, but he won’t have to make the commute from Rome. Oregon City is a former archdiocese that is no longer active: it's maintained as one of the church’s "titular sees" for bishops based in the Vatican.

June 12, 2009

Running for an unprecedented ninth term, New Haven mayor John DeStefano has for months been promising radical improvements in the city’s troubled school system. Now the Board of Education has hired a man to put some flesh on the mayor’s skeletal reform plans: Garth Harries ’95, who for six years oversaw the founding of new schools and the closing of failing ones in New York City. He’ll start next month in New Haven in the newly created position of "assistant superintendent for portfolio and performance management." New Haven’s 20,000-student school system struggles with the gamut of achievement, management, and behavior problems that typically afflict urban districts. But Harries, a former McKinsey consultant, told the Board of Ed that he looks forward to "a great foundation" and "a leadership that’s setting ambitious goals." And, he said, he intends to stay in New Haven and "live a career here."

June 5, 2009

Many people wish for fame. For Brian Deese’s turn in the
spotlight, maybe not so much. Deese, a once-and-perhaps-future Yale law student, is the 31-year-old steering the Obama administration through General Motors’ bankruptcy. After his position earned him a profile in the New York Times, his age and lack of business or economics background -- and, just possibly, his political affiliation -- earned scorn from the likes of a Wall Street Journal editorialist and Fox News’ Glenn Beck. “There was a time between Nov. 4 and mid-February when I was the only full-time member of the auto task force,” Deese told the Times. “It was a little scary.” Quipped Beck: “More than a little scary for GM, much less the American people.” Scary or not, presumably Deese would like to see the job market for this particular skill set -- dismantling failed American companies -- dry up soon.

May 29, 2009

For Sonia Sotomayor ’79JD, it was a Memorial Day to remember. That’s the night when, after weeks of speculation, President Barack Obama called to let the federal appellate judge know she is his choice to replace retiring Supreme Court justice David Souter. Sotomayor’s by-now-famous biography -- raised in a Bronx housing project by a single mom after her father died, graduating from Princeton and Yale Law -- and her legal chops were enough to win Senate confirmation twice before: when George H. W. Bush ’48 named her to the U.S. District Court bench in 1991, and again when Bill Clinton ’73JD elevated her to the Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. If confirmed again, Sotomayor will become the first Latina to sit on the nation’s highest court. She’s described as a centrist, which will set her apart from the other two Yalies on the court, Samuel Alito ’75JD and Clarence Thomas ’74JD.

May 22, 2009

Like a lot of former Clinton administration appointees, Neal Wolin ’83, ’88JD, has found his way back to Washington under President Barack Obama -- with some baggage. A Treasury Department lawyer in the 1990s, Wolin made a Bush-era detour into the insurance business. On May 19, the Senate unanimously confirmed his new appointment as deputy Treasury secretary under Tim Geithner. The move “isn’t exactly confidence-inspiring,” one blogger noted, since Wolin oversaw Treasury’s drafting of the 1999 law that repealed the Depression-era firewall between commercial banks and riskier investment banking. Many commentators blame the repeal for some of the reckless lending that fueled the current economic meltdown. Geithner, however, says he’s “thrilled” to have Wolin on his team “at this critical moment in our nation’s history.”
Playwright Tony Kushner previews it as the American arts community’s “best news . . . since the birth of Walt Whitman.” Other colleagues rave about the “vibrant personality” who is “fabledly impatient.” Broadway impresario (he’s president of Jujamcyn Theaters); former racehorse owner and investment manager; producer of The Producers and Angels in America; the man behind the $480 Broadway ticket: ladies and gentlemen, we bring you Rocco Landesman ’76DFA, President Barack Obama’s nominee to head the National Endowment for the Arts. Landesman’s Yale ties run deeper than his degree; he has taught at the School of Drama and championed the works of playwright August Wilson, many of which premiered at the Yale Rep. Those who know him expect this bold commercial talent to shake up the staid nonprofit world of the NEA: “Rocco is bored,” Yale Rep founding director Robert Brustein ’51DRA told the New York Times, “if things just go routinely.”

Not all is misery on the right these days. Just ask the co-founders of the Federalist Society: they and their organization of conservative law students, profs, and legal practitioners just landed the 2009 Bradley Prize from the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation. (The prize is awarded for contributions to the fulfillment of the Bradley Foundation’s conservative mission.) Three of the founders -- law professor Steven Calabresi ’80, ’83JD (left), ex-congressman David McIntosh ’80 (middle), and Federalist Society VP Lee Liberman Otis ’79 (right) -- met as Yale undergrads. In 1982, after scattering to the four corners -- OK, to law school at Yale and the University of Chicago -- they celebrated the Reagan era by launching the society, with the help of Spencer Abraham at Harvard Law. By 2000, the Washington Monthly had dubbed the Federalists “The Conservative Cabal That’s Transforming American Law.” And by 2007, the society reported annual income of $7,826,281. The Bradley Prize is worth a comparatively measly $250,000 -- but with conservatives out of power, every quarter-million helps.
When Arlen Specter ’56LLB jumped parties this week, after 43 years in the GOP and 29 in the U.S. Senate, he set off a flurry of counting: that makes 57 Senate Democrats, plus one more if Al Franken is seated, plus two independents who caucus with the Dems, for a potential 60-vote, filibuster-proof majority. President Barack Obama pledged to support Specter for re-election, fueling speculation about whether the White House could now count on his vote on the budget or the controversial nomination of fellow Yale Law School grad Dawn Johnsen to head the Office of Legal Counsel. (Answer: no.) U.S. News & World Report delved into the demographics, noting that the Philadelphian’s switch “deprives Republicans of their sole Jewish senator.” Amid all the number-crunching, it might be worth tabulating one more consequence of the newly blue Old Blue: of eight Yale alumni in the Senate, Republicans now account for exactly zero.

April 25, 2009

She pulled down a MacArthur “genius” prize two years ago, so perhaps it was just a matter of time until playwright Lynn Nottage ’89MFA scored a Pulitzer Prize. That time came this week, when Nottage’s Ruined scooped up the Pulitzer for drama. For her latest work, Nottage traveled to Africa, interviewing Congolese women who had been raped and brutalized by their country’s civil war. Though Ruined is based on Bertolt Brecht’s World War II classic Mother Courage and Her Children, Nottage -- a playwriting lecturer at the School of Drama -- rejected Brecht’s trademark technique of distancing audience from characters. “I believe in engaging people emotionally,” she told the New York Times.

April 17, 2009

Whatever else there is to say about Jay Blount ’05 -- he’s a consultant with the firm of Casey Quirk, he was a founding member of Yale’s chapter of Sigma Phi Epsilon, he was one of Rumpus’ 50 Most Beautiful People at Yale for 2002 -- the reason you might have read about him on Gawker or People.com this week is because of a rumor that he is engaged to marry Barbara Bush ’04, the daughter of former president George W. Bush ’68. The talk began with an item on the blog StyleList on April 14. Before the day was over, someone described as a “Bush family source” had told People that it wasn’t true. The two frequently
April 10, 2009

It doesn’t quite match up to the G-20’s promised $1.1 trillion in global stimulus spending. But Yale is quite happy with a $50 million gift from John W. Jackson ’67 and his wife, Susan, for a new international institute. Retired CEO of pharmaceutical maker Celgene Corp., Jackson majored in political science, served in the Marines in Vietnam, earned his MBA in France, and worked overseas for Merck & Co. He hopes the Jackson Institute for Global Affairs will “inspire students to pursue careers in diplomacy and public service and to become globally engaged leaders in all walks of life.” The institute, scheduled to open in the fall of 2010, will expand enrollment in and financial aid for the undergraduate international relations major. In addition, it will offer courses and career placement for all of Yale’s schools. Says Yale president Richard Levin: “I expect that the Jackson Institute will become the most visible of the many thriving activities of the MacMillan Center” for International and Area Studies.

April 3, 2009

He’s got 14 years on the federal bench in Indiana, a top American Bar Association rating, and the support of home-state senators from both parties — not to mention a Yale law degree. So you might expect David Hamilton ’83JD to breeze through confirmation for a seat on the U.S. Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. But President Barack Obama’s first judicial nominee ran into some flak at his April 1 hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee. Led by ranking Republican Arlen Specter ’56LLB, some GOP senators boycotted the hearing, complaining that it came too soon after Hamilton’s March 19 nomination. Hoosier senator Richard Lugar, a Republican, stuck by his man, calling Hamilton “superbly qualified.”

March 27, 2009

Even before the NCAA men’s hockey tournament started, University of Vermont coach Kevin Sneddon paid homage to his first-round opponent. Yale’s Keith Allain ’80 “has my vote for
coach of the year," Sneddon told College Hockey News -- an opinion shared by CHN itself. Allain, who played goalie and served as assistant coach under Yale's revered Tim Taylor, ran up the Bulldogs' winningest season ever, 24-7-2, capturing the ECAC championship and the conference's Tim Taylor Award as ECAC Hockey Coach of the Year. Yale, ranked fifth in national polls, and Vermont face off Friday at Harbor Yard in Bridgeport.

March 20, 2009

Mom's a successful arts administrator. Dad teaches at the Yale School of Management and co-founded a profitable beverage company. But Rachel Kauder Nalebuff '13 has found her own route to fame: My Little Red Book, an anthology of first-person accounts of first periods. While the subject is "bound to provoke snickers," the New York Times Book Review noted this week, "there's much that is distinctive" about the book. Nalebuff -- who is taking a gap year before starting Yale College in the fall -- brings a fresh and youthful editor's perspective. But she gathers stories from women and girls covering a wide range of ages, countries, and socioeconomic circumstances. (One contributor is Nalebuff's younger sister Zoe, who announced the news to a friend by texting a red dot, with the message: "Only 40 more years.") And with 92 authors crammed into just 225 pages, My Little Red Book is, like the best of periods, mercifully short.

March 13, 2009

Medical resident Matt McCarthy '03 made quite a splash last month with his book Odd Man Out, a tell-all account of his year as a minor-league pitcher with the Provo Angels: an excerpt in Sports Illustrated, an interview in USA Today, and sightings on the New York Times Best Seller List (#21 as of March 8).

But when the New York Times published an article on March 3 pointing out that "many portions of the book are incorrect, embellished, or impossible," McCarthy suddenly found his name in print alongside faux memoirists James Frey and Herman Rosenblat. McCarthy's errors -- many of them pointed out by McCarthy's former manager and teammates, who were not happy with the way they were portrayed -- do not seem to have sunk the book, though; publisher HarperCollins is standing behind the book, and it was still the third-best-selling baseball book on Amazon as of March 12.

"I trusted my notes and my memory on some smaller details, and there were obviously a few instances in which I didn't have things quite right. That's my fault, and I'll take the blame," McCarthy told USA Today on March 9. "But if people are waiting for me to break down and confess that I made everything up, it's not going to happen."

March 6, 2009
Since critical opinions have ranged from "a world-class masterpiece" to "bloatedly inept," you may have to read the new doorstop of a novel by Jonathan Littell '89 for yourself. Just be prepared for the incest and genocide. The Kindly Ones, Littell's fictional memoir of a Nazi SS officer, was released in English on March 3 to great fanfare after collecting a slew of prizes and selling 700,000 copies in the original French. HarperCollins reportedly spent $1 million to acquire the American rights, and the company has launched a major promotional campaign in hope of replicating the book's European triumph. But even if The Kindly Ones doesn't succeed here, Littell will always have Paris: although he is an American by birth and lives in Barcelona, he was awarded French citizenship after the book's publication under a law that makes citizenship available to those whose "meritorious actions contribute to the glory of France."

February 27, 2009

"On test scores alone, I probably would not have been admitted to Yale," Gary Locke '72 told a roomful of undergrads in a 2001 Chubb Fellowship Lecture. "Yale took a hard look at me and gave me a chance." He was talking then about affirmative action. But the lesson about long-shot candidates and unexpected opportunities applied equally this week, when Locke became President Barack Obama's third choice as Secretary of Commerce. (The first, New Mexico governor Bill Richardson, withdrew as an investigation into his business dealings heated up; the second, New Hampshire senator Judd Gregg, decided his conservative Republicanism wasn't such a good fit with the Obama administration after all.) A son of immigrants, Locke didn't learn English until he started school, but he also knows what it's like to lead the pack: he served as the nation's first Chinese-American governor, of Washington State, from 1997 to 2005.

February 20, 2009

First there was the French Fry Mobile, driving around the U.S. on used fast-food grease to demonstrate that biodiesel works. Now comes the India Climate Solutions Road Tour, conceived by...
Alexis Ringwald '05, '06MEM and Caroline Howe '07. The two took part in a mostly Indian-led "Climate Caravan," touring the subcontinent in an Indian-made electric car, retrofitted with a longer-lasting battery and a solar roof that boosted its range to 100 miles per charge. The goal, Howe blogged, was "a wake up call to consumers and policy makers across the world to drive change by reinventing the global auto industry." If that seems too modest, the sponsoring organization, the India Climate Youth Network, also used the road tour to train and inspire other young environmental activists.

February 13, 2009

He dropped out of law school to do standup comedy, but Demetri Martin '95 has not neglected his education. The mop-topped jokester taught himself to sew his own costumes; to play guitar, piano, and harmonica; and even to draw (well, sort of) on an easel pad to enhance his "sketch comedy." This week, Martin learned what it's like to headline his own show: Important Things With Demetri Martin made its debut Wednesday night on Comedy Central. Already known to Comedy Central viewers as Jon Stewart's "youth correspondent," Martin also stars in the upcoming Ang Lee film Taking Woodstock, based on the memoir of concert promoter and gay-rights activist Elliot Tiber. Important Things punchlines revolve around naked women, self-castration jokes, and supertitles reading "ASSH**E" -- not exactly egghead humor. But in a Yale Alumni Magazine interview last year, Martin proved that he has not lost his intellectual edge: Getting laughs, he said, is "probabilistic . . . like quantum physics. In a sense."

February 13, 2009

Ten years ago, surgeon Francisco Cigarroa '79 -- embroiled in what he called a "healthy debate" with administrators at the University of Texas Health Sciences Center -- got a letter from the UT System. He thought he was fired, he recently told the San Antonio Express-News. Instead, it was an invitation to apply for the health sciences center's presidency -- a move that put Cigarroa on track to become the nation's first Latino head of a major university system. On February 2, he took office as chancellor of the UT System, presiding over 15 campuses with more than 194,000 students. One of ten children raised in Laredo by a cardiologist father and a mother who, he says, believed firmly in discipline, Cigarroa made his reputation as a pediatric transplant surgeon (acquiring the nickname manos do oro, or "golden hands") before moving into administration. As head of the health sciences center, he proved himself a talented fund-raiser -- more important now than ever in the current economy, unless Cigarroa wants to wield his scalpel on the UT system's $11.5 billion budget.
January 30, 2009

After a stint as Bulldogs quarterback, Nick Sanchez '95 shifted his competitive focus to the courtroom. Now the California litigator is headed back for the huddle, where he'll be calling plays of a different kind -- as sports agent for his kid brother Mark. The younger Sanchez, starting QB for the University of Southern California, recently announced that he'll forgo his final year of college eligibility and enter the NFL draft in April. He has reportedly tapped Nick to represent him. The choice drew some Monday morning quarterbacking in the blogosphere, on the theory that it's rarely a good idea to do business with a family member, especially one whose experience is in business litigation rather than representing pro athletes. Then again, Nick Sanchez is no benchwarmer: SuperLawyers magazine ranked him as a Southern California Rising Star in 2008.

January 23, 2009

The inaugural prayers offered by Rick Warren, Joseph Lowery, and Gene Robinson each kicked up their own mini-controversies. But the Reverend Dr. Sharon E. Watkins '84MDiv flew under the radar in her sermon at the National Prayer Service held on January 21 at Washington's National Cathedral. Watkins, the first woman to preach the sermon at an inaugural prayer service, is president of the Disciples of Christ, a 700,000-member mainline Protestant denomination. In front of the Obamas, much of official Washington, and an interfaith Who's Who of religious leaders, Watkins implored the president to respond to hard times with "generous hospitality" both at home and abroad. She also ad libbed a pastoral critique of his schedule the day before: "Dancing till dawn? What were you thinking?"

January 16, 2009

Next week, the curtain comes down on the second Bush administration, and with it 20 years of Eli hegemony in the White House. We've collected here some thoughts on president George W. Bush '68 from Yale pundits, his classmates, and other alumni -- much of it from our own pages over the last eight years. But don't just read it -- add to the archive by sending your own opinions to yalealumnimag@yale.edu.

January 9, 2009
Just as one Yale Law School graduate (Hillary Clinton ’73JD) leaves the Senate, another is arriving: On January 3, Michael Bennet ’93JD was appointed by Colorado governor Bill Ritter to fill the Senate vacancy to be created when Senator Ken Salazar becomes Barack Obama’s secretary of the interior. Bennet, a Democrat, has been Denver’s superintendent of schools for three and a half years; before that, he had stints in Denver city government, the Clinton justice department, and corporate law.

Bennet is not the only Eli in his family: he is married to Susan Daggett ’91JD, an environmental lawyer, and his brother, James Bennet ’88, is the editor of the Atlantic. As for the Senate, he’ll be one of eight members of the Bulldog caucus.

January 2, 2009

Liev Schreiber ’92MFA is perhaps not yet a household name, but he’s one of those actors you’re bound to have seen in something by now. The drama school alum has appeared in such diverse fare as the slasher film Scream, the indie favorite Big Night, and the 2000 film of Hamlet. His latest film, Defiance, opened on December 31; in it, Schreiber plays one of the Bielski brothers who led a rebellion against the Nazis in the forests of Belarus. But if that’s not your cup of tea, just wait a while: his turn as the villain in the comic-book adaptation Wolverine premieres on May 1.

December 26, 2008

When it came time for President George W. Bush ’68 to join 41 other presidents in the National Portrait Gallery, he says he needed “a good and forgiving friend” to paint his portrait. His choice was Robert Anderson ’68, a painter from Darien, Connecticut, who took a Spanish class with the president at Yale.
The portrait, along with another artist's likeness of Laura Bush, was unveiled in Washington on December 19.

Anderson had done a formal portrait of Bush for the Yale Club of New York City in 2003, but this time, the two settled on a casual, seated pose. "This is more conversational and intimate," Anderson told the Stamford Advocate, "the way you would experience the president if you were just sitting down and talking with him."

Anderson, a combat veteran in Vietnam, took painting classes at Yale, but majored in American studies. After his Navy service, he studied at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. He makes his living at privately commissioned portraits, including a few up the road at his alma mater: he has painted former chaplain William Sloane Coffin, and a portrait of president Richard Levin is in the works.

December 19, 2008

Ever since Robert Frost read "The Gift Outright" at John F. Kennedy's swearing-in, Democrats have had a thing for inaugural bards. James Dickey turned up for Jimmy Carter, and Maya Angelou and Miller Williams for Bill Clinton. Barack Obama's choice? Elizabeth Alexander '84. It was announced on December 17 that Alexander, author of four books of poetry, will read one of her works at Obama's inauguration on January 20. Alexander's most recent volume, American Sublime, was one of three finalists for a Pulitzer Prize in 2005, and she won the Jackson Poetry Prize last year. For her day job, Alexander is a professor and chair of African American studies at Yale.

As poets go, she's also well connected. Her father, Clifford Alexander, was secretary of the army in the Carter administration, and her brother Mark Alexander '86, '92JD, was an adviser to the Obama campaign and is working on the transition team.

December 12, 2008

In a week dominated by the spectacular charges against Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich, it takes a lot to get noticed. But Marc Dreier '72, sole owner of the 250-person New York law firm that bears his name, got his share of attention when he was arrested on federal fraud charges on December 7. Federal prosecutors allege that Dreier forged promissory notes and other documents to steal $380 million from hedge funds and other investors -- $100 million from two hedge funds in one instance alone. That's on top of the odd incident last week in which he was arrested for impersonating another lawyer at a meeting with a pension group in Toronto. At Dreier's bail hearing on December 11, Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan Streeter called him "the Houdini of impersonation and false documents." But then, Yalies love to excel in their fields.
December 5, 2008

Sure, Hillary Clinton ‘73JD is the Eli who made the biggest splash in the news this week. But she got her turn as Yaleie of the Week months ago. Instead, we bring you Dave Arnold ’93, a culinary mad scientist just named by Esquire as one of its “Best and Brightest of 2008.” Known for his manic energy (New York chef Wylie Dufresne, a friend, suggested to Time that “he’s probably a little ADD”), Arnold is a tireless experimenter who has been known to use rotary evaporators, an immersion blender of his own design, and a 1950s centrifuge in his quest for epicurean innovation. As director of culinary technology at the French Culinary Institute, he’s leading a revolution in cooking science. “There’s no reason you can’t mess with anything and everything,” he told Esquire.

November 28, 2008

Robert Rubin ‘64LLB may have to turn to the sports page this week to find an article that doesn’t mention his name. The former treasury secretary under fellow Yale Law grad Bill Clinton ‘73JD, Rubin is in the news as an adviser to President-elect Obama and as a mentor to the top members of Obama’s incoming economic team -- including treasury secretary Timothy Geithner, senior White House economics adviser Lawrence Summers, and budget director Peter Orszag.

But Rubin is also taking hits because of his role as a director of Citigroup, where he and CEO Charles Prince were reported to have “played pivotal roles in the bank’s current woes, by drafting and blessing a strategy that involved taking greater trading risks to expand its business and reap higher profits.” What’s more, some are pointing fingers at Rubin for his support of deregulation during his term as treasury secretary. No word yet on a possible Rubin connection to the California wildfires.

November 21, 2008

If Peter Matthiessen ’50 needs a set of bookends, he’s in luck: he now has a second National Book Award to go with the one he won in 1979. On November 19, Matthiessen won the prize for fiction for Shadow Country, a reworking of three of his previous...
historical novels centered around a 19th-century sugar cane farmer in Florida. His previous award was for the nonfiction book *The Snow Leopard*, a classic of nature writing that chronicled a trip to the Himalayas.

Matthiessen has said that he got into nonfiction writing nearly 50 years ago for "crassly commercial" reasons: he wasn’t making enough money writing fiction. "I’ve had a hard time over the years persuading people that fiction was my natural thing," Matthiessen said on accepting his award. It seems as though he's making progress.

November 14, 2008

He was dean of a law school at 36, provost at Penn at 46. And in March, the 49-year-old Ronald J. Daniels '88LLM will become president of Johns Hopkins University. The appointment of Daniels, who was a professor and dean at the University of Toronto Law School, has led some arts and sciences people at Hopkins to hope that their day has come at an institution that is heavily weighted toward medicine. Daniels took his undergraduate and law degrees from Toronto; his Yale degree is a one-year Master of Laws for lawyers who want to pursue teaching. Like most university presidents, Daniels will have a faculty appointment at Hopkins. But for the first time in his career, he'll be on the political science faculty: Hopkins doesn't have a law school.

November 7, 2008

Come January, Tom Perriello '96, '01JD may be the new kid among 19 Yale alumni in the 111th U.S. Congress. Or maybe not. As of the afternoon of November 6, the Virginia State Board of Elections showed Perriello ahead of Virgil Goode, the Republican incumbent in the state's fifth congressional district, by 631 votes. But the numbers have been rather fluid, and even after provisional ballots are counted, there will still be a recount given the closeness of the race. The congressional race is Perriello's first foray into electoral politics: he's best known for helping to prosecute war crimes in Africa and for starting nonprofit groups focusing on international affairs and religion in politics.

October 31, 2008
When Anne Wojcicki ’96 and her husband, Google cofounder Sergey Brin, have their first child in November, they’ll have more than a family tree to put in the baby book. The tot will have access to a wealth of information based on DNA samples supplied by Brin and Wojcicki and analyzed by 23andMe, a company founded by Wojcicki and Linda Avey. (Google put up $3.9 million of the company’s estimated $10 million in capital.) 23andMe (named for the number of chromosome pairs humans carry) offers a $399 saliva test that can tell you about your ancestry and about your predisposition to some 90 inheritable conditions ranging from psoriasis to schizophrenia. Time magazine calls the company’s retail test the Invention of the Year for 2008, and the company has been collecting the saliva of the rich and famous at “spit parties,” at the World Economic Forum in Davos and more recently in New York.

October 24, 2008

Oliver Stone ’68 left Yale after his freshman year, but his time on campus no doubt came in handy when he was creating scenes from George W. Bush’s Yale years in W., a film biography of the president that opened on October 17. Although Stone is known for an over-the-top style and leftish political leanings, he has been credited by some surprised critics with an “evenhanded” and even “sympathetic” portrayal of Bush in the film.

October 17, 2008

Princeton economist and New York Times op-ed columnist Paul Krugman ’74 is also a prolific blogger. But for most of Monday, October 13, the only item on his blog read simply “A funny thing happened to me this morning.” It linked to the Nobel Prize website, which announced that he had been awarded the Nobel Prize for economics.

For many of the fans (and foes) of Krugman’s liberal political views, the prize was an introduction to his more scholarly side. Krugman won his Nobel for research he did beginning in the late 1970s that explained international trade patterns and how industries end up being concentrated in specific countries. Krugman will have his hands full in the coming months explaining the economic crisis, but he’ll have a little cushion as far as his own finances are concerned: the Nobel comes with $1.4 million.
The reaction of most left-leaning critics and commentators to the choice of Sarah Palin as John McCain's running mate has been uniform and predictable. Perhaps just as predictably, Camille Paglia '74PhD begs to differ. Paglia, best known for her 1990 book *Sexual Personae*, is a confirmed Obama supporter, but her recent columns about Palin in the online magazine *Salon* have been the talk of the blogosphere. In her October 8 column, she praised Palin as an "Amazon warrior" and said she admires her "competitive spirit and her exuberant vitality, which borders on the supernormal."

Paglia also predicted that "even if she disappears from the scene forever after a McCain defeat, Palin will still have made an enormous and lasting contribution to feminism. As I said in my last column, Palin has made the biggest step forward in reshaping the persona of female authority since Madonna danced her dominatrix way through the shattered puritan barricades of the feminist establishment."

Paglia forgot to mention that the record label founded by Madonna in 1992 was called Maverick Records. Coincidence?

Being an expert on presidential debates is occasional work at best -- better than census taker but not as frequent as America's Cup commentator. But Aaron Zelinsky '06, '10JD, has carved a nice niche for himself with the *Presidential Debate Blog*, which offers news and commentary about this year's presidential and vice presidential debates. A Yale law student who spent four years on the Yale debate team as an undergrad, Zelinsky has, according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "watched every debate of the 2007-2008 primary season and read or watched every past presidential debate." So you don't have to.

Quote-hungry reporters have started turning to Zelinsky for his thoughts. On the eve of the Biden-Palin vice presidential debate, he predicted that Palin "will bring the kitchen sink -- a lot of very well-rehearsed zingers that she has to make sound like they're not," and advised Biden to "act himself and focus the firepower on McCain." And before the first presidential debate, his advice to the electorate was candid, although not in the best interest of the punditocracy: "After the debate is over, turn off your television and make up your own decision," he said in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "Don't wait to be spun by the post-debate commentary. I hope to put guys like me out of business."
As the object of daydreams, the $500,000 MacArthur Fellowships are even better than the lottery in that you don't have to buy a ticket -- the call from the MacArthur Foundation comes completely out of the blue. For Chimamanda Adichie '08MA, a Nigerian novelist who got her master's in African studies at Yale, the call came on her birthday, while she was in the bathtub at her home in Lagos. "I was thrilled and grateful," she e-mailed the New York Times. "I like to say that America is like my distant uncle who doesn't remember my name but occasionally gives me pocket money. That phone call filled me with an enormous affection for my uncle!"

Born to an academic family in Nigeria, Adichie is best known for her second book, Half of a Yellow Sun, a story centered on the late-1960s war between Nigeria and the secessionist state of Biafra. The MacArthur Foundation said that the book "has enriched conversation about the war within Nigeria while also offering insight into the circumstances that lead to ethnic conflict."

Adichie was one of three Yale-connected people among this year's 25 MacArthur winners, which were announced on September 23; the other two were Stephen Houston '87PhD, an anthropologist at Brown who studies the Mayan civilization, and Jennifer Tipton, a professor of lighting design at the School of Drama. The MacArthur Fellowships, known in the media as "genius grants," offer $500,000 -- with no strings attached -- to "extraordinarily creative individuals who inspire new heights in human achievement," according to foundation president Jonathan Fanton '65, '78PhD.

With huge financial institutions falling like dominoes this week, the presidential campaign may finally be turning away from issues like lipstick on domesticated animals and toward a discussion of the economy. Which means we will be likely hearing more from Austan Goolsbee '91, '91MA, the 39-year-old economics professor at the University of Chicago who is Barack Obama's senior economic adviser. Goolsbee, a skilled debater and member of Skull and Bones at Yale, turned up in the media this week talking about the need for government regulation of markets. "The core issue is pretty easy to understand," he told The Politico. "We've just spent the last eight years operating on the premise that the government shouldn't be in the business of setting the rules of the road."

Goolsbee attracted some unwanted attention to the campaign during the primaries, when it was reported that he had assured Canadian officials that his candidate's talk about revisiting NAFTA was merely political posturing. He has also heard praise from unlikely quarters: "He seems to be the sort of person -- amiable, empirical, and reasonable -- you would want at the elbow of a
Democratic president,” wrote columnist George Will last year, “if such there must be.”

September 12, 2008

As the new chief executive of the troubled Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae), Herbert M. Allison Jr. ’65 may have to make some unpopular decisions. But that might not be a problem for the man who in 2003, as CEO of TIAA-CREF, eliminated 500 jobs. (Employees called the layoffs “Herbicidess.”) Allison also ordered layoffs at Merrill Lynch during his two years as president of the brokerage in the late 1990s.

Allison was named to head Fannie Mae on September 7, when the federal government announced it would take over the lender and its cousin Freddie Mac, both of which were at risk of failure from the mortgage crisis. One thing’s for sure: Allison’s not just in it for the money. James Lockhart ’68 (a previous Yale of the Week), the Bush administration official responsible for oversight of the companies, has already said the new CEOs’ pay will be “significantly lower” than the much-criticized packages of their predecessors.

September 5, 2008

These are tough times for those Blue boosters who like to bask in the reflected glory of Yale’s dominance in presidential politics. This summer, for the first time since 1968, neither party nominated a Yale graduate for president or vice president, and Eli watchers are left to grasp at whatever alumni stories they can -- in this case the odd spectacle of a former Democratic candidate for vice president addressing the Republican Convention.

In his speech on September 2, Connecticut senator Joe Lieberman ’64, ’67LLB, praised Republican nominees John McCain and Sarah Palin and dismissed Barack Obama as someone who “has not reached across party lines to accomplish anything significant.” But he did have a good word for his old friend Bill Clinton ’73JD, whom he said “got some important things done like welfare reform, free trade agreements, and a balanced budget.”

August 29, 2008

Barack Obama says he’s here to “tell the corporate lobbyists that their days of setting the agenda in Washington are over.” That
can't be good news for Hunter Biden '96JD. Ever since his father, Senator Joe Biden, was named Obama's running mate on August 23, the younger Biden’s work as a lobbyist and Washington insider has been under the media microscope.

From 2001 to 2005, for example, while Senator Biden was working to pass a bill making it harder for consumers to declare bankruptcy, Hunter Biden was a consultant for MBNA, a credit-card company that stood to benefit from the bill. Obama aides told the New York Times that Hunter Biden had not done lobbying work for MBNA, but the Times also said the campaign acknowledged that his connection to the firm was “one of the most sensitive issues they examined” while vetting Senator Biden.

August 22, 2008

What is the R-word? No, not “recession.” Tim Shriver '81, son of long-ago vice presidential candidate Sargent Shriver '38, '41LLB and Special Olympics founder Eunice Kennedy, has been chair of the Special Olympics for 11 years. He's been making the media rounds recently in the campaign for a boycott of the movie Tropic Thunder. “The degrading use of the word ‘retard’ together with the broader humiliation of people with intellectual disabilities in the film goes way too far,” he wrote in a CNN.com commentary.

Shriver and the Special Olympics have been trying to get the word “retard” off the playground and out of kids' (and adults’) vocabularies for a few years now, but Tropic Thunder has brought the issue into the spotlight. The boycott campaign has drawn decidedly mixed reactions. One blogger who had worked with disabled children wrote, "Oh my, how much I would love to see an end to the use of the "R" word forever from any kind of discourse." On the other hand, a commenter on an LA Times blog called Shriver a “Commie Pinko Rat” and told him to “go back to Russia.” Uh-huh. That'll show him.

August 15, 2008

Sada Jacobson '06 had one more thing to do before starting law school at the University of Michigan this fall: compete in the Olympic Games in Beijing. Jacobson, a fencer who was a two-time NCAA champion in women's saber while at Yale, won a bronze medal in the Athens games in 2004. (We profiled her in the magazine that summer.)

This time, Jacobson won the silver medal in the individual saber event, going down in the finals to her U.S. teammate Mariel Zagunis. A third member of the U.S. team, Becca Ward, won the bronze for a U.S. sweep. The trio was favored to win the team saber event on August 21, but they had to settled for bronze after being defeated by Ukraine.

Jacobson found herself in tears ("sobbing hysterically," as she put it) after the individual meet and before she joined her teammates for the medal ceremony. But a fellow Yale was on hand to proffer a handkerchief: former president George H. W. Bush '48, who
had been on hand for the final bout. "It was a very kind gesture," Jacobson told the Hartford Courant. "I probably should have kept the handkerchief, now that I think about it."

August 8, 2008

Is it hard for you to imagine a presidential election without a sixty-something Skull and Bones member on the ticket? Take heart: FedEx founder and CEO Fred Smith '66, a Bones classmate of John Kerry, is being talked about as a potential running mate for John McCain. New York Times columnist William Kristol mentioned Smith as a possibility in his column on August 4, and the Democratic website The Next Cheney now includes Smith as one of seven possible McCain choices.

FedEx put out a statement on August 4 saying that "Mr. Smith has no interest in pursuing political office under any circumstance." But Smith seemed open to the possibility of some kind of government service in May, when he told PBS's Charlie Rose that "if the president of the United States asks you to do something, you have to pay attention to it. But . . . I certainly would hope Senator McCain would have better judgment than to hire me."

August 1, 2008

Since 2006, James B. Lockhart III '68 has been director of the little-known Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight, charged with regulating Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and the Federal Home Loan Banks. Also since 2006, he has been arguing for more oversight power. Now that the housing debacle has almost brought Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac down, Congress has swung into action.

Legislation signed by President Bush on July 30 creates the Federal Housing Finance Agency, which will be empowered to regulate the mortgage companies' capital requirements and executive pay. (They are already forbidden to buy subprime loans, a regulation that saved them from a much worse disaster than what they face now.) Lockhart, who will be the new agency's director, was present at the small Oval Office gathering at which Bush signed the bill. But it was hardly his first meeting with the president: the two attended Andover, Yale, and Harvard Business School together.

July 25, 2008
Last year, **Jesse Washington ’92** took a bold stand. As entertainment editor for the Associated Press, he decreed that, as an experiment, there would be no coverage of Paris Hilton for an entire week. (The AP had been averaging about two stories a week about the celebrity heiress.)

Washington, a former managing editor of *Vibe* and founding editor of the hiphop magazine *Blaze*, will presumably have less need to worry about Ms. Hilton in his new job. On July 18, the AP announced that Washington will be its new national race and ethnicity writer. In the AP memo announcing his appointment, Washington describes himself as "a kid from the projects who went to Yale and married a doctor. I'm a person who fits in everywhere and nowhere." And, like the man whose candidacy for president has put race at center stage this year, Washington is the son of an interracial marriage.

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**July 18, 2008**

**Meryl Streep ’75MFA** didn’t get 14 Oscar nominations for just doing the same-old same-old. This weekend, she turns up singing and dancing in, of all things, a movie musical based on the songs of the 1970s pop group ABBA. Streep has sung before, in films ranging from *Postcards From the Edge* to *A Prairie Home Companion* (and in an unforgettable performance on *Philadelphia Chickens*, an album of songs by Sandra Boynton ’74, ’79Dra), but her performance in *Mamma Mia!* is by all accounts a tour de force—though critics disagree about just what kind.

*USA Today* said the movie is "worth the ticket price just to see her belt it out, jump up and down on a bed, dance in platform shoes and slide down a banister . . . Streep and the rest of the cast appear to be having the time of their lives." *New York Times* critic A. O. Scott, on the other hand, says, "It is safe to say that Streep gives the worst performance of her career—safe to say because it is so clearly what she intends, and she is not an actress capable of failure. There is a degree of fascination in watching an Oscar-winning Yale School of Drama graduate mug and squirm, shimmy and shriek and generally fill every moment with antic, purposeless energy, as if she were hogging the spotlight in an eighth-grade musical."

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**July 11, 2008**
Michael E. O'Neill '90JD is only our 24th Yale of the Week, but he's the second one who became newsworthy through plagiarism. (Make of that what you will.) O'Neill, whom President Bush nominated in June to be a federal district judge, has acknowledged using passages from other people’s writings in his articles for legal journals. But unlike English professor Kevin Kopelson ’79, O'Neill told the New York Times [registration required] that his borrowing was inadvertent, the result of a "poor work method."

O'Neill, 46, is a law professor at George Mason University. He voluntarily surrendered his tenure after the plagiarism was disclosed, but he continues to teach there and may reapply for tenure. A former clerk to Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas ’74JD, he served more recently as a counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee, where he helped shepherd the confirmations of Supreme Court justices John Roberts and Samuel Alito ’75JD. "I think on the merits, Michael O'Neill ought to be confirmed," his former boss, Senator Arlen Specter ’56LLB, told the Washington Post. "You have a mistake which ought not negate an extraordinary record of public service."

July 4, 2008

When Dr. Benjamin Carson '73 was an inner-city grade-schooler, his nickname was "Dummy." On June 19, Carson, a neurosurgeon, philanthropist, author, and motivational speaker, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He credits his mother, Sonya, with turning his life around. When he was in fifth grade, she "put us on this reading program," Carson recalled in a 2002 interview, "and said we had to read two books apiece from the Detroit Public Library and submit to her written book reports, which she couldn't read, but we didn't know that."

Carson went on to Yale, to medical school at the University of Michigan, and to a career in pediatric neurosurgery. He has developed therapies for controlling brain seizures and pioneered surgical methods to separate conjoined twins. His foundation has awarded millions of dollars in scholarships to students from fourth grade on, and he has spoken to countless children and adults about his experiences. And lest you think he doesn't have a sense of humor, he made his film acting debut in a cameo for the 2003 Farrelly Brothers comedy Stuck on You: he was the surgeon who parted conjoined twins Matt Damon and Greg Kinnear.

June 27, 2008

Colin Sheehan '97 knows the Yale golf course pretty well -- he's even played it at night, as he reported in Yankee magazine in a paean to the course's famed ninth hole: "Once, in my undergraduate days, I tackled this hole at night. I sneaked onto the course, headed up to the tee with Day-Glo balls, then launched drive after drive over the pond. I'd follow their arcs like tracer rockets, then close my eyes, hoping to hear, after what seemed like an eternity, a thud (as they hit the green) rather than a splash."
A former Yale golfer who spent last year as an assistant coach, Sheehan was named head coach of the men's team on June 26, succeeding veteran coach Dave Peterson. Sheehan is as much a wordsmith as a golfer: he was an editor of The Golfer magazine and wrote a history of the U.S. Amateur championship.

June 20, 2008

Vanessa Selbst ’05 has always been a competitor. She played tennis and hockey at MIT, then rugby after transferring to Yale. These days, her playing field is the card table: since 2006, she has won $681,115 playing poker. On June 12, she won her first World Series of Poker event, taking home a gold bracelet and $227,965. One poker website said her final table was "as rowdy as any poker duel in recent memory." (Click here for a live blog account of the event, but only if you have a clue what a "check preflop" is.) Selbst will be even more dangerous in another three years: she's bringing her winnings back to New Haven in the fall and starting law school.

June 13, 2008

The Supreme Court’s June 12 decision in the case of Boumediene v. Bush was a victory for foreign detainees being held at Guantanamo Bay and a setback for the Bush administration and Congress. It was also a professional triumph for Seth Waxman ’77JD, the lawyer who argued the detainees’ case before the court. Waxman argued that his clients, six natives of Algeria arrested in Bosnia in 2001 over an alleged terror plot, were not enemy combatants and should have access to U.S. civilian courts.

"These men have been held, taken by the United States, thousands of miles away in the case of my six individuals, plucked from their homes, from their wives and children in Sarajevo," Waxman said in his December 6 appearance before the court.

Waxman, a partner in the Washington, DC, firm Wilmer Hale, was U.S. Solicitor General in the Clinton administration.

June 6, 2008
Relief pitcher Craig Breslow ’02 is tenacious. In his first stint in the big leagues, in 2005 with the San Diego Padres, he pitched two scoreless innings. But instead of embarking on a dream career, he got sent right back down to the minors. Ever since then, Breslow has been in and out of the majors—Boston and Cleveland, as well as San Diego—pitching 40 innings in 37 games for four teams. This week he made his debut with yet another major-league team, the Minnesota Twins. He struck out three Yankee batters in one and two-thirds innings of work on May 31. “I hope Craig has finally found a home,” says his former Yale coach, John Stuper.

Wherever Breslow has played ball, his Yale molecular biophysics and biochemistry degree has been a topic of conversation. “I can’t even pronounce that degree,” Twins pitching coach Rick Anderson told the St. Paul Pioneer Press. “I just hope I don’t have to get into any real deep conversations with him because I think he’ll be a little over my head.”

May 30, 2008

It’s one thing to get caught plagiarizing. It’s another to shout about your own plagiarism from the rooftops—or at least in the London Review of Books, as Kevin Kopelson ’79 did recently. In a 4,400-word essay (which we assume he wrote himself), Kopelson, a literary critic and English professor at the University of Iowa, tells of three instances in which he plagiarized academic papers. In fourth grade, he copied an encyclopedia entry on Hernando Cortez; in a music class at Yale, he handed in a paper his brother had written at Harvard; and in graduate school at Brown, he lifted a published paper by gender theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick ’75PhD.

Weirdly, when Kopelson later met Sedgwick and she offered to read his work, he sent her the paper he stole from her. Kopelson writes: “As far as I know, Eve’s never read the thing. (But what if she has?) Never seen my name above her work. Never noticed the plagiarism. Well, she will now.”

May 23, 2008

Expect a record turnout at the tenth reunion of the Class of 2001. Budding film producer Cash Warren ’01 became the envy of millions of men on Monday when he married Jessica Alba, the 27-year-old actress who got her start on the TV series Dark Angel. The couple are expecting a daughter this summer. Warren met Alba when he worked as a director’s assistant on her 2005 film The Fantastic Four. Although he majored in political science at Yale (where he was tapped for the secret society Wolf’s Head), show business is the family business for Warren: his father is actor Michael Warren, who played Officer Bobby Hill on the 1980s series Hill Street Blues.

May 16, 2008
He rode bulls for the rodeo team in college. He's worked off and on as a ranch hand in his home state of Nebraska. And he logged 65,000 miles in a pickup truck researching his PhD dissertation on western ranches in the 19th century. So despite his Yale doctorate and his job teaching history at Hastings College, Scott Kleeb '06PhD comes by those Marlboro-man photos on his campaign website naturally.

On Tuesday, Kleeb, who is 32, won the Democratic nomination for an open U.S. Senate seat from Nebraska, winning 69 percent of the vote against businessman Tony Raimondo. In November, he'll face Republican former Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns. In this heavily Republican state, Johanns is the current favorite. But Kleeb (pronounced "klebb"), who ran unsuccessfully for the House in 2006, is heeding the advice of his Yale adviser, history professor John Lewis Gaddis, who told Kleeb in 2004 that Democrats had to become more competitive in red states in order to win national elections. "I had no idea he'd take me seriously," Gaddis told the Kearney Hub.

May 9, 2008

It's hard to find a woman higher on the ladder of success than Yale trustee Indra Nooyi '80MPPM, chair and CEO of PepsiCo since 2006. Fortune magazine calls her the most powerful woman in business. Last year, Forbes ranked her as the fifth most powerful woman in the world.

OK, OK, we're impressed. But we bet this is the one she's really been waiting for: Nooyi was recently selected as one of the inaugural inductees to the Chief Mommy Officer Hall of Fame. As the mother of two daughters (24 and 15), she is one of ten women being recognized because they have "achieved greatness in their respective careers while simultaneously maintaining their roles as exemplary mothers." We should add that the hall of fame is pretty much a publicity gimmick for a company that sells "chief mommy officer" and "chief daddy officer" T-shirts online. But, as millions of mothers have been known to say at this time of year, it's the thought that counts.

May 2, 2008

W. Bing Gordon '72 is a 58-year-old executive who sees an empty nest on his horizon and, as he told the San Jose Mercury News, wants to "go do something new and cool." Fair enough. But what if your job for the last 26 years has been to create, market, and play video games? What's cooler than the apex of
To Gordon, it's . . . venture capital. He was one of the founders of Electronic Arts, the video-game behemoth responsible for The Sims, Medal of Honor, Madden NFL, and lots of other successful games. He shepherded those games to market as the company's chief creative officer otherwise known as the "resident genius." Now he's leaving to become a partner at Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, the Silicon Valley venture capital firm. "I'd like to take the thinking behind video game design and help a new generation of entrepreneurs make cool new stuff," Gordon told the Los Angeles Times.

April 25, 2008

The Yale Alumni Magazine is emphatically not in the business of endorsing presidential candidates, but for newsworthiness this week, it's hard to top the victory of Senator Hillary Clinton '73JD in the Pennsylvania primary. If we were the alumni magazine of about 50 years ago, we'd have to declare that Clinton had "shown the grit and tenacity of the bulldog" in her against-the-odds quest. But this is 2008, so we'll just note that she's trying to become the nation's first female president, and its fourth consecutive Eli president.

April 18, 2008

We don't know who gave the Library of Congress the authority to decide who is and who isn't a "living legend," but David McCullough '55 was one of seven people to be honored with that distinction at an event at the library on April 12. True, he has a lot to recommend him. With two Pulitzer Prizes (for his presidential biographies Truman and John Adams), a Presidential Medal of Freedom, and 40 honorary degrees (including one from Yale), he hasn't got a lot of accolades left to aspire to. The "living legend" award event, by the way, took place during the run of the critically acclaimed HBO mini-series adaptation of John Adams (starring Paul Giamatti '89, '94MFA).

April 11, 2008

Never thought Hans Christian Andersen's "Little Match Girl" and Bach's St. Matthew Passion were a natural combination? That's why you didn't win the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for music, as David Lang '83MAM did on Monday for The Little Match Girl Passion.
Lang, who studied composition at the School of Music under Martin Bresnick, has made noise in the contemporary-music world for two decades as one of the founders and directors of the collective known as Bang on a Can. His winning work, scored for four voices and percussion instruments (played by the singers), explores the Christian aspects of Andersen's bleak story of a street urchin's death by telling it in a structure lifted from Bach's treatment of the death of Christ.

Listen for yourself: Carnegie Hall, which commissioned the piece, has a recording of it available online.

April 4, 2008

Almost unnoticed in the scandal surrounding Shin Jeong-ah—the South Korean art history professor who falsely claimed to have a Yale PhD (see our story here)—is the fact that her alleged lover and accomplice really does have a Yale degree. Byeon Yang-kyoon '87MA, who was until recently a top aide to Korean president Roh Moo-hyun, received his master's as a student in Yale's International and Development Economics program. On March 31, a South Korean court sentenced Shin to 18 months in jail for faking credentials and embezzling funds. Byeon, 59, who was convicted of improperly using his influence to help Shin gain favor with Dongguk University, was given a one-year suspended sentence and ordered to perform community service. He has resigned his government post.

So watch out, Scooter Libby '72 and Bill Clinton '73JD. You've got competition. As Yale becomes more international in its outlook, even our roster of scandal-ridden alumni is going global.

March 28, 2008

No one's going to walk all over Angela Bassett '80, '83MFA, the Academy Award-nominated actress best known for portraying Tina Turner in the film What's Love Got to Do With It. But her name is another matter: Bassett is now officially part of Tinseltown's terra firma, having been honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on March 20. Bassett's is the 2,358th star on the storied walk, and by our count the 13th claimed by a Yale alum. (For a list of all 13, click here.)

March 21, 2008

At 37, the Rev. Otis Moss III '95MDiv is a rising star: a minister with a degree from Yale Divinity, a noted youth pastor named one of "God's foot soldiers" by Newsweek, and one of
Beliefnet’s "most influential black spiritual leaders." So after two years as associate pastor at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Moss was ready to step into the shoes of the church’s pastor, the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright, on March 9.

But thanks to an unusually prominent parishionerone Barack Obama and the controversy over Wright’s statements from the pulpit, Moss’s first weeks as pastor have been "a baptism by fire," as he told All Things Considered on March 19. He feels, Moss said quite cheerfully, like "Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego thrown into the fiery furnace."

March 14, 2008

Seth Hawkins ’93 did not actually have to leap tall buildings or jump off cliffs in order to be officially declared a hero. But he does help oversee the EMS team whose territory includes the “deepest gorge east of the Rockies.” He also founded the Appalachian Center for Wilderness Medicine. Hawkins, who practices in Morganton, North Carolinain the foothills of the Smokieswas honored this week as a Hero of Emergency Medicine by the American College of Emergency Physicians. The college called him a "true pioneer" of the medical specialty of caring for the sick and injured in places no ambulance can reach. Hawkins says it was Yale’s Freshman Outdoor Orientation Trips (FOOT) that helped set him on his career trail.

March 7, 2008

When Richard Lalli ’80MM, ’86DMA, received the 2007 Yale College prize for Teaching Excellence in the Humanities, eight of his students came onstage to sing one minute’s worth of Handel’s Messiahfrom the "Alleluja" chorus, naturally. Lalli, an adjunct School of Music professor for two decades, has won raves from undergraduates for his course in vocal performance and his leadership of the college Opera Theatre and Baroque Opera Project. On March 5, Lalli became master-elect of Jonathan Edwards College. (His term will begin next January.) His partner, Michael Rigsby ’88MD, medical director of University Health Services, will be associate master.

February 29, 2008

It’s not easy being the arbiter of sports in a league that’s still
hanging on to the idea of the “scholar-athlete.” But as executive director of the Council of Ivy Group Presidents, Jeff Orleans ’67, ’71JD, has managed to maintain high standards for more than 23 years. Orleans, a former civil rights lawyer known for his trademark bow tie, just announced that he will retire in June 2009. Penn president Amy Gutmann, chair of the presidents’ group, called him “an exceptional leader of an exceptional athletic conference.” Our only complaint is that he seems never to have abused his position in order to help out the Bulldogs.

February 22, 2008

He’s smart, he’s an Emmy-winning reporter, and he’s a co-anchor on Good Morning America. But the reason Chris Cuomo ’92 is Yale of the Week is that, on February 19, he jumped off the Taj Mahal. OK, it was the Taj Mahal Casino and Resort in Atlantic City, NJ, and he had been trained by a stuntwoman and was harnessed to a cable. Once safely down, Cuomo, who is afraid of heights, knelt and kissed the pavement.

February 15, 2008

For designing the first computerized switching system for telephone calls, Bell Labs researcher Erna Schneider Hoover ’52PhD was awarded one of the first patents ever issued for computer software. On Thursday, it was announced that her achievement had earned her a spot in the National Inventors Hall of Fame. Like most women who combine career and family, Hoover knows how to juggle. She first sketched out the system while she was in the hospital recovering from the birth of one of her three daughters.

February 8, 2008

In Congress, she’s the Doyenne of DC and the Voice without a Vote. For 17 years, Georgetown U. law prof Eleanor Holmes Norton ’63MA, ’64LLB, has served as DC delegate to the House. She can’t vote because the District, as she tells everyone, has taxation but no representation. But trust us: she can hold her own. Even on The Colbert Report, where she once asked the host, “Why would you think that I find you attractive at all?”

February 1, 2008
Yalies? Liberal? So they say. But consider Glenn Reynolds '85JD, whose blog Instapundit is one of the most influential on the Web. (It's also one of the oldest -- Wired called him The Blogfather.) He's living proof that some Blues bleed red.