**WINNERS!**
Lions Roar to a Title | 2

**HONOR ROLL**
Degrees and Awards | 45

**TALENT SHOW**
MFA Grads Display Works | 3

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**GRADUATION 2008!**

**Recipe for a successful university commencement**

38,000 folding chairs
8 sets of bleachers
12,000 feet of cable
553 signs
4 10-foot-by-14-foot video walls
9 professional video cameras
40,000 programs
150 volunteers, 150 staff
60,000 bottles of water

Directions: Add graduates, families and stir.

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**POSTCARDS FROM THE CITY’S EDGE**

By Candace Taylor

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**Climate Experts See a Risk to Farm Regions**

By Karen Droubek

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**The Record**

**VOL. 33, NO. 12**

NEWS AND IDEAS FOR THE COLUMBIA COMMUNITY

MAY 19, 2008

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**Columbia** climate scientists, citing their findings from a study of the Dust Bowl that devastated the Great Plains in the 1930s, are raising concerns that current pressures on farm land could lead to similar extreme events in other vulnerable regions of the world.

In their study, the researchers at Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory and NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, both part of Columbia University's Earth Institute, found that dust caused by farming activities in the 1930s probably amplified a natural drop in rainfall, turning a normal drying cycle into a widespread agricultural collapse.

Recent studies indicate that periodic droughts in the Western United States are controlled by naturally occurring periods of cool sea-surface water temperatures over the eastern tropical Pacific—so-called La Niña phases. The La Niña of the 1930s was extreme because it was coupled with the arrival of farmers into the Great Plains, where they replaced drought-resistant wild prairie grasses with fragile wheat, neglected to plant cover crops in unused fields, and allowed livestock to overgraze pastures, leading to increased levels of dust.

According to the new Columbia study, the dust caused by these unsustainable farming activities fed the disaster, doubling the drop in rainfall, and moving the drought itself northward into major farming regions. When the 1932-1939 drought struck, plants shriveled and more bare soil was exposed. The land was quickly eroded by gigantic dust storms, leading to widespread collapse of the region's agricultural system.

The researchers used a computer model to simulate a 1930s drought driven only by La Niña. Then the modelers added in the effects of dust, using data from the 30s, and allowing the computer to create dust storms. This yielded a simulated event much like the Dust Bowl of the 30s, with a full 10 percent drop in rain.

Lead author Benjamin Cook, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) postdoctoral researcher affiliated with both Lamont-Doherty and the Goddard Institute, says the study, "is an example of how dust can help transform a natural drop in rainfall into a widespread agricultural collapse.

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**The south facade of Hamilton is viewed here from West 114th Street around 1908, prior to the expansion of the athletic field in front of Low Library.**

By John H. Tucker

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www.columbia.edu/news
The House Speaker

Dear Hound,

Columbia has dozens of guest speakers at the various school graduations, but none at Commencement except for the University president. Why is that?

—Autograph Hound

Dear Hound,

The tradition of having only Columbia’s president speak at Commencement appears to date from 1890, according to University archives. Joseph Wick, who looked through old programs and Commencement scrapbooks. In the years before that, Columbia had been metamorphosing from a college for young New York men to a collection of professional schools that—oh yes—also had an undergraduate college.

Columbia President Eisgruber at the 194th Commencement in 1948

By 1889, the College had been joined by the Law School, the School of Mines and the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Columbia College’s enrollment represented less than 20% of the total for all the schools, according to Stand, Columbia. Robert A. McCaughey’s history of the University’s first 250 years.

So the following year, when Seth Low became Columbia’s president, the University took center stage at Commencement for the first time, with only its president as the speaker. According to a newspaper account at the time: “The occasion was of especial interest, because for the first time in the history of the college, have all the departments containing men to be graduated united in one common commencement—a great step toward the completion of the university idea at Columbia.” That Commencement was held on June 11, 1890, at the Metropolitan Opera House on Broadway between 39th and 40th streets. Today’s location for Commencement, Low Plaza, didn’t exist at the time, as Columbia didn’t move to Morningside Heights until 1897.

The various schools, however, held their own Class Days, and each of Columbia’s 15 professional schools, three undergraduate colleges and two affiliated schools continued to have their own speakers at those ceremonies, with the speakers more in keeping with the specific interests of the school’s graduates. This year, for example, radio host Terry Gross will speak at the Journalism School’s Class Day, while dancer and choreographer Bill T. Jones is the School of the Arts’ speaker. Mayor Michael Bloomberg is the speaker at Barnard College’s graduation.

Columbia President Eisgruber at the 194th Commencement in 1948

Three professors have been elected members of the prestigious National Academy of Sciences for their excellence in original scientific research. They are: GARY STRUHL, a professor of genetics and development at the College of Physicians and Surgeons at left, CAROL PRIVES, who is the DaCosta Professor of Biology as well as an American Cancer Society Research Professor, and PAUL E. OLSEN, the Storke Memorial Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. Membership in the academy is one of the highest honors given to a scientist or engineer in the United States. The three will be inducted into the academy in April 2009 during its 146th annual meeting in Washington, D.C.

JOSEPH SLAUGHTER, professor of English and comparative literature, is the recipient of the Rene Wellek Prize for his 2007 book, Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form and International Law (Fordham University Press). The award, given by the American Comparative Literature Association, is the most prestigious in comparative literature.

CORRECTIONS

A gift of $1.5 million from the Mendelson family will support an endowment for the directorship of the American Studies program, currently held by Andrew Delbanco. In the April 26 issue of The Record, the donor was inaccurately identified.
MAY 19, 2008

Subway Riders Are Invited to Take A More Elevated Line of Thought

By LaVenia LaVelle

One of the first Train of Thought excerpts from the book Here Is New York. Whitman's 1898 love letter to the city, on the special character of New York City and its people. White, the former New Yorker essayist, is best known as the author of Charlotte's Web. The other selection is from 18th-century Italian astronomer and scientist Galileo on the centrality of mathematics to science. The ads will be illustrated with original images from Columbia's Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

"The project is consonant with Columbia's tradition of engaging directly with the primary texts marking great intellectual achievements," Pinkham says.

MFA GRADS’ TALENTS ON DISPLAY

By Donna Cornachio

For the 26 MFA students enrolled in Columbia's School of the Arts visual arts division, the culmination of their two-year program is the MFA Thesis Exhibition, in which they select their best and most representative works to go in a group show.

"I love deadlines," said Irene Harman, a few weeks before the show was set to open. An MFA student whose final project is an installation incorporating film, "I especially love not knowing how it's all going to come together," he added.

Gregory Amenoff, chair of the visual arts division, felt the pressure, too, but from a different perspective: "To house the exhibition, the challenge has always been to find a show that can accommodate several thousand square feet of exhibition space," said Amenoff.

This year that challenge has been met by a first-time partnership between the School of the Arts and the Fisher Landau Center for Art in Long Island City.

Opened in 1991, the center is a 25,000-square-foot exhibition and study facility with a 1,200-work collection spanning key works by artists from 1960 to the present.

ON EXHIBIT: BITES OF THE BIG APPLE

There are eight million stories in New York City, and this is one chance to get a piece of the drama.

"Bites of the Big Apple," an exhibit running May 12-25 at Columbia University, offers a taste of the secrets, history and pulse of the city that never sleeps.

Designed and curated by Columbia University graduate students, who each selected His or her own "bite" of the city, the exhibit invites residents and visitors to sample the sounds, stories and structures of the past and present that make this city so unique—unfrom the towering skyscrapers to the underground subway tunnels, from the thriving neighborhoods to the art created on the street or the stage. The exhibit also features an original New York City-inspired sound score.

"Bites of the Big Apple" is on display in the main rotunda of Low Library. The show is running in conjunction with Columbia's Theoretical Archaeology Group (TAG) conference. For more information about TAG, please visit: www.columbia.edu/ca/ archeology/conference/tag/.

—By Record Staff

ON EXHIBIT:

The book of nature is written in the language of mathematics. Its symbols are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures, without which it is impossible to understand a single word; without which there is only a vain wandering through a dark labyrinth.

The exhibit also features an original New York City-inspired sound score.

Pinkham says.

SubTalk

The Train of Thought ad featuring Galileo, now showing in a subway car near you.

And that's exactly what a university should do for people.

One of the first Train of Thought excerpts from the book Here Is New York. Whitman's 1898 love letter to the city, on the special character of New York City and its people. White, the former New Yorker essayist, is best known as the author of Charlotte's Web. The other selection is from 18th-century Italian astronomer and scientist Galileo on the centrality of mathematics to science. The ads will be illustrated with original images from Columbia's Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

"The project is consonant with Columbia's tradition of engaging directly with the primary texts marking great intellectual achievements," Pinkham says.

To help choose what should be used in the series, Pinkham set up a committee of faculty members and administrators to propose selections, which then go to the MTA for approval. Selections for the next year have already been chosen—just don't ask Pinkham what they are. "I do not want to divulge them," he says.

The next two ads arrive July 1 and will feature quotations from the fields of philosophy and literature. Funding for production of the program is provided by Barnes & Noble. Of course, with two new quotations from different disciplines to be posted every three months, the Train of Thought ads won't be quite as ubiquitous as those for Dr. Z, the Manhattan dermatologist Jonathan Zizmor, whose subway ads seem to be everywhere.

"I'm really excited—I've made all new work for this show," said MFA student and photographer Diane Wahl, whose work includes incorporating photography into fake album covers that she calls "Sounds Like Wahl." "If I was getting married, this show would still be even bigger!"

The thesis exhibition takes up about 8,000 square feet of space and includes multimedia installations, video, sculpture, painting, photography and printmaking.

"The trick is to present a selection of work which makes for an interesting and cohesive show, and avoids the feeling of booths at an art fair presenting each person's work as a mini solo show," said Arden Austin, another MFA student. "I think we have a very balanced and close-knit group of people in our class who are more interested in fostering the communities which make long-term survival in the art world possible than in making a big splash at their thesis show!"

Emily Fisher Landau, the philanthropist and art patron who founded the Fisher Landau Center for Art, has a reputation for discovering artists before they're famous, a talent that is not lost on Amenoff. "What a perfect fit for our young artists just coming out of graduate school and just starting their artistic careers to be showing in her museum," he said.

The exhibition will be on view until May 25 at the Fisher Landau Center for Art, 58-27 30th St., Long Island City. Gallery hours are Thursday through Monday, 12-5 p.m. For more information, and a list of the artists, visit www.flcart.org/exhibit.htm.
FAZLE HASAN ABED  
Doctor of Laws

Fazle Abed is the founder and chairperson of BRAC (formerly the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee), one of the largest non-government anti-poverty organizations in the world. Abed formed BRAC in his native Bangladesh shortly after the 1971 Liberation War to provide assistance to millions of refugees returning to the newly independent country. Abed’s organization then took on the challenging mission of alleviating poverty and empowering the poor. Today it supports 34,000 schools and is helping to improve the lives of 100 million Bangladeshis. Abed is a recipient of the first Clinton Global Citizen Awards, the Ramon Magsaysay Award and the Unicef Maurice Pate Award.

ALICIA JANELLE GRAF  
Medal of Excellence (awarded to an outstanding graduate under the age of 45)

Alicia Graf is a modern dancer with the Akin Akley American Dance Theater. She earned high praise as a teenage ballerina and at age 17 joined the Dance Theatre of Harlem. When injuries and subsequent surgeries forced her off stage, Graf became the associate artistic director of A Time to Dance, overseeing a collegiate dance-ministry team that performed in local churches and other spiritual spaces. During that time, she enrolled in Columbia, where she eventually graduated magna cum laude. Now fully recovered from her injuries, Graf has returned to dancing and recently was named by Smithsonian magazine one of 37 young American innovators of the arts and sciences.

ERIC S. LANDER  
Doctor of Science

Eric Lander is the founding director of the Broad Institute, a collaborative disease-prevention research organization associated with MIT and Harvard. It is credited with making progress toward identifying the molecular taxonomy of cancer. A principal leader of the Human Genome Project—a 13-year program that identified and assessed the functions of more than 20,000 genes in human DNA—Lander helped develop the precepts of human and mammalian genomics, pioneering new ways of understanding cancer. Lander is a professor of biology at MIT, professor of systems biology at Harvard Medical School and member of the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research. In 2004, he was named one of the world’s most influential people by TIME magazine.

GERTRUDE F. NEUMARK  
Doctor of Science

Gertrude Neumark is a pioneering engineer and one of the world’s foremost experts on blue and ultraviolet light-emitting diodes (LEDs) and lasers. The Howe Professor Emerita of Materials Science and Engineering and Professor Emerita of Applied Physics and Mathematics, she is the first woman to be given a chair at the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science. Neumark has amassed several patents, and her research has led to improved consumer products, including sharper laser printers, increased DVD storage capacity, and advanced traffic lights, mobile-phone screens and flat-screen TVs. Neumark served as a fellow of the American Physical Society, a panelist for the National Research Council, and a top researcher for Sylvania Research Laboratories and Philips Laboratories. She received her Ph.D. from Columbia.

JUDITH SHAPIRO  
Doctor of Laws

Judith Shapiro, a cultural anthropologist, became president of Barnard College in 1994. A pioneering researcher and prominent voice on women’s education, she was the first woman appointed to the University of Chicago’s Department of Anthropology, in 1970. Shapiro’s expertise is gender differentiation and social theory based on her field research in South America. During her tenure, Barnard became the most sought-after private liberal arts college for women, and its endowment doubled. Shapiro was president of the American Ethnological Society, president of the American Historical Association, a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences and a fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies. In 2002, she received the National Institute of Social Services Gold Medal. Shapiro, who will step down as Barnard president this summer, received her Ph.D. from Columbia.

EMANUEL AX  
Doctor of Music

Emanuel Ax is an award-winning pianist who performs regularly with several orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony, London Philharmonic and the Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin. He holds the Avery Fisher Prize, the Michaels Award of Young Concert Artists, and in 1974 he was the first winner of the Arthur Rubenstein International Piano Competition. Recipient of several Grammy Awards, Ax has been an exclusive Sony Classical recording artist since 1987. He has performed with Yo-Yo Ma, Sir Simon Rattle and Myung-Whun Chung, Sir Simon Rattle and Yo-Yo Ma. Ax attended Columbia College.

DAWN GREENE  
Doctor of Laws

Dawn Greene is president and CEO of the Jerome L. Greene Foundation, a philanthropic organization founded by her late husband, a graduate of Columbia College and Columbia Law School and a major donor to the university. Through the foundation, Jerome and Dawn Greene made notable contributions to the health-care field, with gifts in support of the Jerome L. and Dawn Greene Medical Arts Pavilion and Children’s Hospital at Montefiore Medical Center. Dawn Greene’s interest in social health issues stems from her degrees in sociology, social work and clinical counseling. She has served on the boards of Inwood House and Planned Parenthood of New York City.

WILLIAM F. LEUCHTENBURG  
Doctor of Letters

William Leuchtenburg, one of the nation’s top experts on the presidency, is the William Rand Kenan Jr. Professor of History Emeritus at the University of North Carolina and a former professor at Columbia, where he held the DeWitt Clinton chair. Leuchtenburg served as president of the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians and the Society of American Historians. He has lectured in the U.S. Capitol, the U.S. Supreme Court and the French Senate. During the 1977 Silver Jubilee in London he delivered the inaugural lecture to Queen Elizabeth II. Leuchtenburg has also served as presidential election analyst for NBC and has covered inaugurations for CBS, C-Span and PBS. He received his Ph.D. from Columbia.

JUDITH SHAPIRO  
Doctor of Laws

Judith Shapiro, a cultural anthropologist, became president of Barnard College in 1994. A pioneering researcher and prominent voice on women’s education, she was the first woman appointed to the University of Chicago’s Department of Anthropology, in 1970. Shapiro’s expertise is gender differentiation and social theory based on her field research in South America. During her tenure, Barnard became the most sought-after private liberal arts college for women, and its endowment doubled. Shapiro was president of the American Ethnological Society, a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences and a fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies. In 2002, she received the National Institute of Social Services Gold Medal. Shapiro, who will step down as Barnard president this summer, received her Ph.D. from Columbia.
PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON 1981

Matthew (CC’10) majors in American Studies. Mark Amsterdam’s father, February with a concentration in African American Studies; his son

ENGINEERING AND APPLIED SCIENCE 1970, BUSINESS 1974

Lee was a founding member of the Asian Columbia Graduates. Lee became director of the Social Enterprise program. At the University level, Waite continues
to provide counsel to the Board of Trustees. In 2008 he endowed a professorship in Social Enterprise at the Business School, where he has been a member of the Board of Overseers since 1992.

CHESTER LEE

Columbia College 1995

EVELYN LANGLIEB GREER

Barnard 1970, Law 1973

Anglilie Greer, a Miami lawyer, is vice chair of the Law School Board of Visitors, where she focuses on increasing public interest in scholarships and internships. She was a Barnard College trustee for many years. She was elected in 2004 to the Miami-Dade County Public School Board, was elected mayor of the village of Pinecrest, and was a founder of Our Kids Inc., a Florida foster-care privatization effort, among other activities. Greer was awarded the Lawrence A. Wien Prize for Social Responsibility by the Law School in 2005. She is married to Bruce Greer (LAW’73), and mother of Matthew (CC’09); Josh (CC’10); Toby and Larry.

ANDREA BUBULA

Lecturer in the Discipline of International and Public Affairs, School of International and Public Affairs. Bubula, who earned his Ph.D. in economics from the University in 2004, teaches the core course Economic Analysis for International Affairs. His expertise is in applied open-economy macroeconomics and finance. His research focuses on the choice of the exchange-rate regime and nominal anchor across countries and over time. He has also examined the determinants of interest-rate differentials in developing countries.

LEWIS COLE

Professor of Professional Practice in Film, School of the Arts. Cole received his BA from Columbia in 1968 and served as the chair of the film division from 1995-2000. He is the author of 13 screenplays and four published books. Cole was television critic of The Nation from 1992 to 1994, and won a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship for Fiction in the 1980s.

CARL L. HART

Associate Professor of Psychology (in Psychiatry), Departments of Psychology and Psychiatry. Hart’s research strives to understand complex interactions between drugs of abuse and the neurobiology and environmental factors that mediate human behavior and physiology. This research uses an interdisciplinary approach that draws broadly on both psychology and neuropharmacology to study responses to psychoactive drugs in humans, and to assess the efficacy of potential drug-abuse treatment strategies for substance-dependence individuals.

LETTY MOSS-SAULENTIN

Dr. Edan S. Rubenstein Professor of Destiny (in Anatomy and Cell Biology), College of Dental Medicine. Since joining the faculty in 1968, Moss-Saulentin has received a number of teaching awards, and has pioneered several teaching innovations, including the conversion of the traditional microsurgery laboratory into an interactive virtual exercise, lecture podcasting, and live video recording of lectures.

GERARD F.R. PARKIN

Professor of Chemistry, Department of Chemistry. Parkin has made insightful and creative contributions to areas as diverse as bioinorganic and organometallic chemistry. For example, Parkin has developed models for the active sites of zinc

FACULTY

ANDREW BUBULA

Therapies for spinal-cord injury, multiple sclerosis, and other neurologic disorders of the central nervous system. Dr. Cohen received his BA with honors in psychology from Princeton University and completed his residency in internal medicine at the University of Virginia Medical Center. Dr. Cohen has been co-chair of the Physicians and Surgeons Class of ’81 since graduating, and serves as a member of the Columbia-Presbyterian Health Sciences Advisory Council. He is a recipient of the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award for the New York metropolitan region.

RICHARD COLE

Physicians and Surgeons 1981

Cohen is president, CEO, and founder of Acorda Therapeutics, Inc., a public biotech company developing therapies for spinal-cord injury, multiple sclerosis, and other neurologic disorders of the central nervous system. Dr. Cohen received his BA with honors in psychology from Princeton University and completed his residency in internal medicine at the University of Virginia Medical Center. Dr. Cohen has been co-chair of the Physicians and Surgeons Class of ’81 since graduating, and serves as a member of the Columbia-Presbyterian Health Sciences Advisory Council. He is a recipient of the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award for the New York metropolitan region.

CHERYL GLICKER MILSTEIN

Barnard 1982

Vicer Milstein, a Barnard College trustee since 1999, is a founding member of the Asian Columbia Graduates. Lee was a founding member of the Asian Columbia Alumni Association in 1995, and received the 2004 Alumni Mentor of the Year Award from the Columbia College Alumni of Color Outreach Program (ACOP). He also served on the university-wide steering committee that formulated the first constitution of the Columbia Alumni Association. His son, Douglas Lee (’16), has followed in his footsteps to the School of Engineering and Applied Science, majoring in industrial engineering and operations research.

DONALD C. WAITE III

Business 1966

WAITE, a Harriman Scholar, joined the international management-consulting firm McKinsey & Co. upon graduating. When he retired 36 years later he was one of three senior partners responsible for management of the firm. Upon retirement, Waite became director of Columbia’s Executive-in-Residence Program, through which senior executives from a range of industries donate their time to teach, guest lecture and counsel students. He is also an adjunct professor, and in 2007 was recognized as one of two outstanding professors in the Social Enterprise program. At the University level, Waite continues to serve as president and chief executive officer of the organization during half of his time as president.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

IVY CHEN

Department of Biostatistics

ANNE FALK

Department of Germanic Languages

ABIGAIL ANNE SCHOLER

Department of Psychology

MARK AMSTERDAM

Columbia College 1966, Law 1969

Amsterdam, a senior partner at a New York City law firm, is the current president of the Columbia Alumni Association of New York and chair of the Columbia College Fund. He has previously served both the College and Law School as a director of the alumni associations and a reunion co-chair. His daughter Lauren (CC’08) graduated in February with a concentration in African American Studies; his son Matthew (CC’10) majors in African American Studies.
Climate Study

continued from page 1

effect occurred because dust particles suspended in air reflect solar radiation. Studies by other researchers show that this causes a drop in temperatures at or near the soil surface, lessening evaporation of moisture into the air, and thus decreasing precipitation even further. Dust on the Great Plains, therefore, helped draw the drought northward like a siphon, says Cook. "This is what made the Dust Bowl the Dust Bowl," he says. "It was a process that fed on itself."

Cook points out that many scientists believe hard-pressed farmers and herders in places like China and Africa's Sahel region may be repeating the history of the U.S., ruining marginal lands in order to have food in the short term.

"This highlights the fact that humans can alter natural events and make them worse," says co-author Richard Seager, a climate modeller at Lamont-Doherty. Seager says scientists studying global climate change predict many subtropical regions will dry in coming years. "That, in combination with the pressure from rising population and demand for food, could lead to a similar cycle of drought, dust storms and more drought," he warns. "The lesson of the Dust Bowl is there to be learned."
TEODOLINDA BAROLINI

POSITION: Da Ponte Professor of Italian
Acting chair, Italian Department
Director of Graduate Studies

JOINED FACULTY: 1992

HISTORY:
University of California at Berkeley, 1978-1983
New York University, 1983-1992
Former president, Dante Society of America, 1997-2003

Interviewed by Adrienne Blount

T exodolinda Barolini was a ninth grader in Rome when she first came across the works of Dante Alighieri. She didn’t know they were from the Inferno—that she actually was reading T.S. Eliot’s The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, which begins with six unidentified lines in Italian. “Those verses were mysterious to me, quite haunting,” says Barolini, who asked her father, an Italian poet, what they were. “I cannot report that I immediately went to read the Inferno,” says Barolini, but Dante’s masterpiece—the Divine Comedy, or Commedia, which contains the Inferno as well as Purgatorio and Paradiso—proved difficult to ignore.

“I came to Columbia to graduate school, intending to use my Greek and Latin to work with Paul Oskar Kristeller on Paradiso,” Barolini says. She has written three books on dante-esque subjects and edited three others. And so began Barolini’s lifelong love affair with Dante’s work. As chair of the University’s Italian department, she is one of the foremost experts on the subject and a former president of the Dante Society of America (which was founded by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1881 to further the study of Dante). “I hope I showed in the University Lecture that Dante was absolutely a connoisseur of desire, of a human longing in all its dimensions, and of the ways by which longing impels us to act, rightly and wrongly. He was obsessed with justice and with figuring out how to achieve a just society—on Earth, not in Heaven.”

Q. Seven centuries separate Dante’s world from ours, but do you see connections between Dante’s 14th-century vision and what it means today?

A. It seems more relevant now than when I started out. When I began my career, I assumed that everyone would see the Commedia as a text, an artifact, as I did. I remember my surprise when a student at NYU, where I taught next, argued with the fictitious tortures of Hell from the perspective of Hell’s reality and Dante’s inaccurate rendering of that reality. In a world where belief turns out to be at all passe, Dante’s struggle with his belief is remarkably relevant. He was not passive; he voiced his doubts and concerns right up to the threshold of the beatific vision. He placed virtuous pagans as a noble castle in a green meadow, and most of all as figures as a noble castle in a green meadow, and most of all as light—the only light in Hell. He was tormented by the injustice of damning a virtuous person who was excluded through no fault of his own from the knowledge of God—the “man born on the banks of the Indus” of Paradiso 19.

Q. Would Dante like to add new circles of Hell representing today’s evils?

A. Certainly rogue traders, predatory lenders, unethical business people, and lying/biased politicians all exist in Dante’s time! Only the modalities have changed: the ways we trade, lend, conduct business and politics, but the behaviors certainly all existed.

Q. How is his work relevant to the 21st century?

A. It’s very relevant, as you can see in the beams of light that are shining through today’s evils. When I began my career, I assumed that everyone would see the Commedia as a text, an artifact, as I did. I remember my surprise when a student at NYU, where I taught next, argued with the fictitious tortures of Hell from the perspective of Hell’s reality and Dante’s inaccurate rendering of that reality. In a world where belief turns out to be at all passe, Dante’s struggle with his belief is remarkably relevant. He was not passive; he voiced his doubts and concerns right up to the threshold of the beatific vision. He placed virtuous pagans as a noble castle in a green meadow, and most of all as figures as a noble castle in a green meadow, and most of all as light—the only light in Hell. He was tormented by the injustice of damning a virtuous person who was excluded through no fault of his own from the knowledge of God—the “man born on the banks of the Indus” of Paradiso 19.

Q. How do you hope readers take away from reading Dante’s work?

A. There are many kinds of readers, and even in my classroom there are many different constituencies, from the future professor and professional readers to the amateurs of various stripes and levels of attainment. Over the years, I have been struck by how many write me that Dante has informed their lives and remained in their minds as a kind of touchstone—the former MA student whose subsequent law-school applications contain references to the Divine Comedy, the practicing psychologist who wants to use Dante to write about Freud and psychotherapy, the undergraduate who went on to work in the mayor’s office and keeps a copy of the Commedia handy, and the poet in the MFA program who says that reading Dante helps with her poetry. It pleases me to see the text live on in so many people’s lives.

Juan “John” Arevalo

WHO HE IS: Head Mechanic, Carpentry Shop/Campus Operations
YEARS AT COLUMBIA: 33

WHAT HE DOES: Arevalo is responsible for scheduling staffing and providing leadership and direction for the entire carpentry crew.

THE ROAD TO COLUMBIA: The beginning of his career at Columbia marked the continuation of a tradition for Arevalo, whose father and brothers also worked at the University. Then 21 years old, the Bronx native served as a temporary laborer until a series of assignments caused former Head Carpenter Bob Henney to recognize his burgeoning talents. “He saw something in me I didn’t know I had,” says Arevalo, who began his apprenticeship under Henney shortly thereafter.

A GOOD DAY ON THE JOB: Every opportunity to share the benefits of his experience with his crew is valuable to Arevalo, a mindset rarely encountered on the job during his formative years in carpentry. “Back then, people were afraid to teach what they knew only to have their jobs taken from them. [Henney’s] attitude was ‘If I teach you what I know, you’ll be able to help me.’”

MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE: Among the many University projects he’s enjoyed over the years, Arevalo particularly remembers a community outreach initiative that invited local tradesmen to showcase their talents, make professional contacts and explore future career opportunities. Arevalo credits such projects with the development of an increasingly diverse working environment at Columbia.

BEST PART OF THE JOB: “The people you get to meet.” Especially rewarding to Arevalo is the opportunity to connect with University students, faculty and staff members—the added personal touch that he finds a refreshing change from simply “seeing the job on paper.”

IN HIS SPARE TIME: Arevalo enjoys spending time with his daughter and participating in physical activities such as scuba diving, an interest he acquired through a course offered at Columbia.

—Michelle A. Failing
A YEAR OF BIG NAMES ON CAMPUS

1. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger speaks to the Journalism School's National Affairs Reporting Class.
2. Sandra Day O'Connor, the retired Supreme Court justice, lectures at the Law School on "Balancing Security, Democracy and Civil Rights in an Age of Terrorism."
3. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts presides at the moot court competition at Columbia Law School.
4. German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder spoke at Columbia last fall about European energy security and Russia.
5. Iranian President Mohammad Khatami spoke at last fall's World Leaders Forum.
7. Michelle Bachelet, president of Chile.
8. The leader of the interior government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Fakhruddin Ahmed, also spoke at the World Leaders Forum.
9. Oscar-winning actress and author Julie Andrews read from her children's book at the Great Hall, held on Columbia's campus last fall.
10. Steve Kroft (J'75) of CBS's 60 Minutes, was the host of the Journalism School's annual alumni dinner in April.
11. New York City Police Commissioner Ray Kelly reads to children at the Great Hall.
12. Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, president of Turkmenistan.
13. Today show anchor Bryant Gumbel spoke at the Journalism School about covering Darfur.
14. Cardinal John P. O'Brien (J'58), who accompanied Pope Benedict XVI on his trip to the United States in April, speaks at the Journalism School.
15. Erica Jong (BC'63, GSAS'65), author, poet and novelist, spoke in November at a Friends of the Asian Columbia Alumni Association (ACAA) event. She recently donated many of her papers to Columbia University's Rare Book & Manuscript Collection.
16. Author Philip Roth thanks the audience who attended a symposium on his work (and wished him a happy 75th birthday) at Miller Theatre in April.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

HINT: Yes, of course it’s a clock. But where is it? Look up in the right place, and “it shall not be moved.”

Winner: Maxine Paul, student at Columbia College.