Got the Summertime Blues? Join us for...

Something **Old**...
For the last 60 years, the President's Alumni Picnic has afforded old friends an opportunity to gather together and share great memories. From its beginnings at Peony Park, the picnic has continually evolved.

Something **New**...
Again this year, we are planning some exciting changes — starting with a **new date**. The event will move from June to Saturday, July 29. (More details will be forthcoming.)

Something **Borrowed**...
As we wed the old with the new, we will borrow heavily upon Creighton’s family atmosphere and warm hospitality. Remember, you’re always welcome here.

Something **Blue**...
So join us this summer. And don’t forget to **wear** your **blue**!

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It seems as if humans have always been fascinated by butterflies. From Lakota Indians to ancient Greeks, cultures and religions through the ages have attached mythical qualities to these beautiful, fluttering creatures. Creighton biologist Ted Burk, D.Phil., examines some of these legends.

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With the lazy, hazy days of summer nearly upon us, we polled Creighton faculty and staff to get their recommendations for summertime reading.

Creating Connections

Earlier this month, Creighton University celebrated its 115th spring commencement.

While we are proud of our graduates and their accomplishments, these ceremonies truly mark a new beginning. We ask our graduates to be leaders and agents of change in a complex world.

Much of this column focuses on our undergraduate students, but the same efforts are expended on our graduate and professional students, as well.

In all cases, we have a responsibility to educate our students to be comfortable in the world beyond the University. It’s been noted that effective leaders must be able to make connections between academic learning, professional practice and important public questions. A Creighton education, then, provides the knowledge and ethical compass by which our graduates can pose their own meaningful questions and seek sustainable, appropriate solutions.

While we remain committed to our core principles, we know that higher education is changing dramatically. We must be open to that change.

As I noted in my annual address to the University community in February, the future of academe is being shaped by several national trends. These include cuts in federal funding, modest endowment returns and increasing health care costs. We also face the prospect of fewer students from our traditional feeder states — Nebraska and Iowa.

To chart our future, we must continue to facilitate meaningful connections for our students.

According to the latest research, students today thirst for an education that integrates traditional pedagogy with an examination of moral and ethical values, spirituality, social responsibility, self-awareness and faith.

In the book Putting Students First: How Colleges Develop Students Purposefully, which prominently features Creighton, the authors argue that “an effective and ideal undergraduate college education is one that centers on holistic student development, including the search for meaning and purpose in life.”

At Creighton, we have an obligation to maintain an atmosphere and culture that fosters this connection — a place “where the Gospel is in dialogue with culture” and “where faith meets reason.” In an age of increasing secularization, Creighton must not be afraid to hold in tension the best of what a university is and the best of what Jesus and Catholic bring to the academy.

While today’s “millennium” students are technologically savvy and idealistic, they also come to America’s campuses with great vulnerability bred from our increasingly fast-paced, stressful world.

With this backdrop, the task of mentoring and guiding our students, especially in light of the declining demographics in Nebraska and Iowa, is in dialogue with culture and “where faith meets reason.” In an age of increasing secularization, Creighton must not be afraid to hold in tension the best of what a university is and the best of what Jesus and Catholic bring to the academy.

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To ensure Creighton’s future viability, the University also must connect with a wider, more diverse population of prospective students, especially in light of the declining demographics in Nebraska and Iowa. Creating a diverse human community of students, faculty and staff is one of our institutional priorities. In our global society, connecting with and understanding cultures different from our own is critical to our students’ success.

To promote and facilitate that effort, we held our first University-wide Diversity Forum in March. You can read my address from the forum online at: http://creighton.edu/abbottpresident/pres/ diversityforum2006/.

Creating these connections is a vital part of a Creighton education, for it is in these connections that we grow more fully, seek truth and justice more passionately, know God more intimately and live more completely.

Enjoy your summer, and may God bless and keep you and your family.

John P. Schlegel, S.J.
Recognizing African American Glaucoma Experts


Nipper Appointed to Federal Drug Testing Board

Henry Nipper, Ph.D., director of clinical chemistry and toxicology in Creighton’s Department of Pathology, has been appointed to the Drug Testing Advisory Board for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The board makes recommendations to the agency regarding the direction, scope, balance and emphasis of federal drug testing activities and the federal drug testing laboratory certification program. These recommendations are generally followed by state agencies and the private sector for non-federally regulated drug testing.

Nipper was appointed to serve a four-year term on the board, comprised of individuals who are recognized as experts in analytical forensic toxicology, specimen collection procedures or interpretation of drug testing results. Nipper also serves Creighton as associate professor of pathology and assistant dean for admissions in the School of Medicine.

New Book Offers Tips for Alzheimer’s Caregivers


Callone serves as vice president for Institutional Relations at Creighton and is a past president of the Alzheimer’s Association Midlands-Chapter. Brumback is chair of the Department of Pathology and a professor of psychiatry and psychology. He is a noted expert on Alzheimer’s and has educated groups across the country about the disease.

McGovern Kicks Off Horning Lecture

At Creighton on April 11 to inaugurate the first annual Ross Horning Lecture was fellow South Dakota native, Democrat and former Senator George McGovern, longtime friend of the late Creighton president. Horning, beloved professor of history at Creighton for 41 years, died last April following a brief illness.

McGovern, 83, spoke on the theme “America: The Road Ahead” to a near-capacity audience at Creighton’s Lied Education Center for the Arts. Long known for his stance against the Vietnam War, McGovern also gave listeners a glimpse into the history of America at war.

“America is not a blind acceptance of official policy, but a love of one’s country deep enough to call her to a higher standard.”

— George McGovern

Five times elected to political office, McGovern flew a total of 32 combat missions as a B-24 bomber pilot in World War II. But he said that the courage it took to fly those missions “was nothing compared to the courage it took for me to stand up in the Senate and to tell my president (fellow Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson) that the Vietnam War was wrong.”

“I was led up to the ears with old men dreaming up wars for young men to die in.”

Still calling World War II “the last war I believed in,” McGovern drew comparisons between the American involvement in Vietnam and our involvement in Iraq today. “Like Vietnam, Iraq was no threat to us,” McGovern said. “But we went into Iraq without the United Nations, without the European Union, without the Arab League.”

Because we did so, we are virtually standing alone, he said. “I think the time has come for us to bring our people home.”

McGovern then went on to outline his vision for America’s future, which he says must include an end both to unilateral interventions and “going after whoever disagrees with us.” Taking the work of the United Nations more seriously, comprehensive health care for every American, a new take on the GI Bill that would open up college to all Americans who can benefit from higher education, an energy policy not written by oil company executives; an efficient railway system, and election funding taken out of private hands and put into the hands of the taxpayers round out McGovern’s list for his country’s future.

The lecture series in McGovern’s honor is made possible by donations to Creighton’s WELCOMING OF LEAD CHARITIES. For more information on the Ross Horning Lecture Series, contact the Office of Development, (402) 280-2740.
It is the epicenter of political life in the United States. Where else would you want to be? Where else can you just casually stroll about the centers of power?

— Brian Travis

Circo Receives Leaders for Life Award

Olivia (Morena) Circo, Ph.D ’81, a Creighton’s first female cheerleader, was honored with the University’s first Leaders for Life Award at the Leaders for Life Luncheon for women’s athletics on May 5. The luncheon was a fundraiser for Circo’s women’s athletic programs. Headlining the event was Circo, the University’s first female cheerleader. Circo is the University’s first female cheerleader and has been inspiring the women’s athletic programs for the past 15 years. The program is designed to recognize and honor women who have made significant contributions to the University.

Haddad Works on Pandemic Planning

Amy Haddad, Ph.D., director of Creighton’s Center for Health Policy and Ethics, has been invited by the World Health Organization to participate in one of five working groups discussing influenza pandemic planning worldwide. Her group will focus on ethical issues associated with the roles and responsibilities of health care workers in dealing with a pandemic. Participants meet this month in Geneva, Switzerland, and plan to offer recommendations in June.

Creighton Professors Win Award for Teaching Excellence

Geoff Bakewell, Ph.D., the Michael W. Barry Professor and associate professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Eastern Studies, recently received the Award for Excellence in College Teaching from the Classical Association of the Middle West and South. Bakewell has been with the University for 12 years and directs the Horizons Program in the College of Arts and Sciences. He has written extensively on ancient Greek history and literature.

The Classical Association of the Middle West and South is an organization of university, college, secondary and elementary teachers of Latin, Greek and all other studies that focus on the world of classical antiquity.

Program Gives Students Capitol Hill Experience

By Eugene Curlin

About 1,200 miles from the serenity of Creighton University’s campus lies the bustling maze of Capitol Hill. There, in the nation’s capital, where lobbyists maneuver for advantage, politicians write and rewrite laws, and justices rule the great issues of the day, four Creighton students have themselves stepped into the fray.

Rachel Kruat, Matthew Manning, Brian Oszakiewski and Brian Travis are among the small army of college students who annually flock to Washington, D.C., to take unpaid jobs serving members of Congress, justices and presidents. It’s an opportunity to be at the center of national and global affairs and an introduction to the wheeling and dealing of the real world.

Oszakiewski works in the office of Rep. Dan Lipinski, a first-term Democrat from Illinois. He has found that his time on Capitol Hill is far from token.

“Where else would you want to be? Where else can you just casually stroll about the centers of power?”

His work at the Democratic National Committee has brought Travis into fairly frequent contact with Democratic Party Chairman Howard Dean, a former governor of Vermont. “I have met Dean about seven or eight times,” Travis said. “He’s very laid back.” Travis helped research issues in preparation for the 2004 presidential campaign and has interviewed Dean about issues in a Virginia race during a breakfast with Dean and Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill. Travis said his involvement in the program has been rewarding.

“I saw the advertisement for this program on the bulletin boards (at Creighton) and thought how awesome it would be,” he said. “But I was sure in the back of my mind that it would never happen.” That it did has much to do with Graham Ramsden, Ph.D., associate professor of political science at Creighton.

Ramsden is currently the president of the Ichthys, seven-state consortium that matches about 19 students per semester with Washington internships. He said the program was founded in 2000 by professor Robert Manser at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln, Neb.

Ramsden said consortium students live in a three-story townhome in Washington, with the bottom floor used for classrooms, the third floor housing the male students and the second floor housing the female students. The internships last one semester and are funded by the students themselves who apply funds they would have spent on housing at Creighton to their Washington expenses.

Ramsden said the Ichthys program was the result of a conversation in 2000 between Graham Ramsden and the program’s founder, professor Robert Manser at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln, Neb. The program was founded in 2000 and has been running ever since. The program has matched about 19 students per semester with Washington internships.

Ramsden said the program is funded by the students themselves, who apply funds they would have spent on housing at Creighton to their Washington expenses.

“Where else would you want to be? Where else can you just casually stroll about the centers of power?”

— Brian Travis

About the author: Curtin is a freelance writer in Omaha.
Student Organizes NAACP Chapter at Creighton

Creighton junior Kirsten Treadwell has taken to heart the NAACP slogan “Don’t talk about it, be about it.”

The political science major has started the first NAACP college chapter in the state of Nebraska at Creighton.

“I feel it’s important because of the historical and current success of the national chapter in equal rights for the poor and oppressed from all races,” Treadwell said.

“At Creighton, we will be advocates for all students, as well as the community,” she continued. “We would like to show people that there are still inequalities among all classes, races, and gender, and that we, as students, can do something about it.”

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, organized in 1909, is the nation’s oldest and largest civil rights organization, with a half-million adult and youth members throughout the United States and the world.

Treadwell was active in the NAACP youth division as a student at Omaha Northwest High School. In addition to serving as chapter president at Creighton, Treadwell also performs with the University’s African American Student Association choir and works as a tutor coordinator with Classic Upward Bound, which helps high school students from low-income families prepare for college.

Creighton Text Messages Admitted Students

Creighton was featured on CNN Headline News and in newspapers across the country for its newest admissions strategy — text messaging admitted students.

An informal poll by the Omaha World-Herald found no other colleges or universities in Iowa or Nebraska doing anything similar.

Since Creighton added the option on application forms last fall, about 44 percent of admitted students have been notified through personal messages flashing on their cell-phone screens: “Barb, congratulations. You’ve been admitted to Creighton University. Your file number is 12345678. Thank you.”

Project Welcome has raised more than $70,000 to help Sudanese immigrants repatriate the cost of their airline to the United States. In addition, the program has helped families find affordable housing and assisted with job searches, transportation and emergency assistance.

Mueller coordinates a network of hundreds of volunteers to fund and staff the program that operates on donations and small grants. Project Welcome’s aim is to help Sudanese refugees and their families, the program now funds a full-time social service director, a summer school, summer math, vocabulary and prep camps, and at-school tutoring. A recent independent report found that “Project Welcome’s educational programs are effective and could be used as a model for other at-risk child schools.”

Medical Center Names CEO

Linda Ollis was named chief executive officer of Creighton University Medical Center in March. She succeeds Phil Castiglia, who stepped down in September to take a job in Arizona. Ollis had been serving as the hospital’s chief operating officer. Ollis, a 25-year veteran of the health care field, is the first woman to hold the CEO post at Creighton.

Morse First Holder of McGrath North Chair

Creighton University law professor Edward Morse was installed as the first holder of the McGrath North Mullin & Kratz Endowed Chair in Business Law.

“The creation of this chair is testament to the tremendous relationship between the law school and the Creighton law firm,” said Patrick Boorhser, J.D., dean of the Creighton University School of Law.

“As a University, Creighton must constantly renew itself so that we can prepare students to better serve the fluctuating needs of society. One way we are able to fulfill this mission is through endowed chairs,” said Creighton President the Rev. John F. Schlegel, S.J., after being installed as the first holder of the McGrath North Mullin & Kratz Endowed Chair in Business Law.

Creighton law professor Edward Morse, left, receives congratulations from Creighton President the Rev. John F. Schlegel, S.J., after being installed as the first holder of the McGrath North Mullin & Kratz Endowed Chair in Business Law.
Grant Funds Study of Antipsychotic Medication

Creighton professor Daniel Wilson, M.D., Ph.D., has been awarded a $1.1 million, five-year grant from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) to study medication for the treatment of psychosis. Researchers will evaluate the direct clinical and economic impact of the first available long-acting, injectable medication for the treatment of psychosis. Despite advances in treatment of psychoses such as schizophrenia, patients still experience relapse and incomplete recovery and significant side effects. The study will focus on how well the medication addresses these problems, with a concern for the patient's well-being.

“The study represents a real opportunity to evaluate the total impact of consumer choice and medication compliance in a new era of both real and long-acting second-generation antipsychotics,” said Wilson, professor and chair of psychiatry at Creighton. Michael Hogan, Ph.D., chair of the President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, endorsed the study.

“This research is of exceptional importance to determine whether such treatment can substantially reduce the enormous cost — both human and economic — that inadequate adherence to optimal treatment engenders,” he said.

Other local researchers involved in this study include Fred Petty, M.D., Ph.D., professor of psychiatry and biomedical study include Fred Petty, M.D., Ph.D., has been awarded a $1.1 million, five-year grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for a study focusing on the direct economic and clinical impact of the first available long-acting, injectable medication for the treatment of psychosis. Despite advances in treatment of psychoses such as schizophrenia, patients still experience relapse and incomplete recovery and significant side effects. The study will focus on how well the medication addresses these problems, with a concern for the patient's well-being.

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Students Present Research in Washington

For the fifth consecutive year, undergraduate students working in Isabelle Cherney’s psychology research laboratory at Creighton were selected to participate in the prestigious “Poster on the Hill” conference in Washington, D.C., this spring. Only 60 student posters are selected annually for display at the U.S. Capitol as part of the event, sponsored by the Council on Undergraduate Research. Cherney submitted two student posters for this year’s April conference; both were accepted.

They were “It’s All in the Family: Children’s and Parents’ Perceptions of Children’s Rights” by Leah Skovran and Emily Fitzkeck and “Bringing the Gender Gap: Increasing Women’s Performance on a Visual-Spatial Task” by Jarod Rendell and Ryan McDonough. Skovran and Fitzkeck’s research was funded by a grant from the American Psychological Foundation and the Council on Undergraduate Research. They interviewed parents and their 10- through 16-year-old children to examine their perceptions of children’s rights. What they found might shock a few parents. In each case, children were more reluctant than their parents to advocate for the right to choose a class, to see a movie, to decorate their room, to choose with whom to live, to consume alcohol and to pay for their own clothing. Despite some differences, parents and adolescents interviewed held similar views on what children should and shouldn’t be allowed to do.

Rendell and McDonough’s research was funded by a National Science Foundation EPSCoR grant. Previous studies have found that males outperform females on visual-spatial tests, which have been used to predict success in engineering courses. Among the individuals they studied, Rendell and McDonough found that those with “previsional spatial and computer play scored significantly higher,” leading them to hypothesize that “simulated performance [on these tests] may benefit from involvement in more spatial activities.”

Poet Laureate Comes to Creighton

U.S. Poet Laureate Ted Kooser read from a selection of his works during a visit to Creighton in April. Creighton’s World Literature Program sponsored the event. Kooser, an author of 10 collections of poetry, received the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for poetry for “Delights and Shadows.” Born in Ames, Iowa, he is a visiting professor in the English department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and holds numerous other awards and poetry prizes.

“Poetry is a lot of very hard work,” said Fr. O’Connor, who teaches theology at Creighton and serves as a liturgist and associate pastor at St. John’s Church. “But we also had fun together. Everything clicked.”

Morning Light features 12 newly written songs, including three by Fr. O’Connor. His “O Beauty, Everiseum” — a call to find renewal and “new life” in God — is based on a text by St. Augustine.

Creighton University honored four of the original five members at May commencement, with an honorary doctorate. Their responses,” Fr. O’Connor said. “It’s been very delightful.”

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“Morning Light is the group’s fifth album/CD in more than 20 years.”

Photo by Dave Weaver

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“We feel like we have new energy,” said Fr. O’Connor, one of the original five seminarians who met at St. Louis University in the early 1970s and formed the St. Louis Jesuits. The group's first album/CD in more than 20 years.

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Endowed Chair Honors Longtime Math Professor

Creighton University mathematics professor John Mordeson, Ph.D., was installed as the first holder of the John N. Mordeson, Ph.D. Endowed Chair in Mathematics on May 1. Endowed chairs are one of the main priorities of WALKING TO LEAD: THE CAMPAIGN FOR CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY.

Mordeson is the first professor at Creighton to have a chair endowed in his name and the first to hold a chair established by a former student.

The Mordeson Chair was funded by a $1.5 million gift from George Haddix, MA’66, to honor the tremendous work of Dr. Mordeson as a mathematician, a teacher and a member of the Creighton community.

Mordeson is the first professor at Creighton in 1963, has served as director of the University’s graduate program in mathematics and its computer science program. A noted scholar and researcher, he was recently elected president of the newly formed international society for Mathematics of Uncertainty.

“Mathematics has always been a critical element in Jesuit, Catholic education in the 21st century without a firm grasp of technological and social sciences fields. At its inception, the center was one of only a handful at U.S. institutions to concentrate in the study and application of mathematics — Lech Walesa

Walesa, an electrical engineer, trade union leader and anti-communist Solidarity movement in the 1980s, which began as a unison of shipyard workers and would usher in the fall of communism in Poland and, eventually, elsewhere in Europe.

In a speech laced with humor, former president Lech Walesa ended with a plea for greater public participation in national and world affairs.

“People need facts, not propaganda, to make decisions... The Holy Father gave us the right solutions, if you don’t want to be the superpower, share it with Poland. We’ll know what to do with it."

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WorldCom Whistleblower Speaks at Creighton Symposium

Cynthia Cooper, who blew the whistle on corporate fraud while working as an internal auditor at WorldCom in 2002, stressed the importance of ethical decision-making during a visit to Omaha. Cooper was the featured speaker at Creighton’s 2006 Beta Alpha Psi Accounting Symposium, held April 21 at the Qwest Center Omaha.

“It’s important to practice ethical decision making every day,” Cooper told an audience of approximately 800 students, faculty and business executives, adding that even “small decisions matter.”

“They’re like building blocks, brick by brick, throughout our lives. People don’t wake up and say, ‘Hey, I think I’d like to become a criminal today.’ Instead, it’s often a slippery slope. As people begin to push their ethical boundaries, those decisions that may have seemed very black and white begin to fade to shades of gray.”

In June 2002, WorldCom acknowledged $3.8 billion worth of accounting fraud—a number that has since grown to $11 billion. WorldCom’s CEO, Bernie Ebbers, was later convicted of fraud and sentenced to 25 years in prison (he is currently free on appeal). CFO Scott Sullivan pleaded guilty to fraud and is serving a five-year prison sentence; and controller David Myers received a one-year sentence. The fraud scheme uncovered by Cooper ultimately drove the No. 2 U.S. long-distance company—the pride of Mississippi (WorldCom’s headquarters) — into bankruptcy.

“These people weren’t just numbers to us,” Cooper said. “These were people we had worked with for years, people we trusted and respected.”

Cooper said her decision to come forward was “easy,” but the aftereffects were often overwhelming—meetings with FBI and SEC officials, the hot glare of the media spotlight. She lost weight, and battled depression. “Sometimes I struggled just to get out of bed.”

But she feels compelled to tell her story so that others may learn from her mistakes.

“In the end, each of us has an opportunity to help ensure that the moral fabric of our country and our world is strong,” Cooper said. “It doesn’t matter our position. We can all make a difference.”


Seeking Peace Through Poetry and Politics

Asian poetry and politics took center stage during Creighton’s second annual Non-Western Culture Event in April, which featured Chinese poet Luye and visiting political scientist Dae-Sook Suh. This year’s theme was “Seeking Peace: Poetic and Political Visions of the Asian World.”

Luye, who teaches literature at Jiaon University in China, recently was named China’s top young poet by the Chinese Writers Association. Suh, an assistant professor at the University of Hawaii, has been studying the roles political scientist Dae-Sook Suh (foreground) and poet Luye (background) discuss visions of peace for China, Korea and the United States. women’s basketball team to two Western Athletic Conference titles (1990-91, 1991-92) and two appearances in the NCAA Tournament (1992, 1994). She returns ranked in Creighton’s career top-10 in rebounding, scoring, scoring average (15.7), field goals (609) and field goal percentage (.533). Her 824 career rebounds still rank second in school history. A WAC Freshman of the Year, a first-team all-WAC performer as a sophomore and a first-team all-Missouri Valley Conference player as a junior, Struby concluded her career ranked fifth in school history with 1,499 points. Struby is currently a physical therapy assistant at Methodist Hospital Orthopedic Therapy and Rehab and serves as the assistant women’s basketball coach at Dana College in Blair, Neb.

Creighton Medical Experts Named to Health Care Commission

Creighton’s Daniel Wilson, M.D., Ph.D., professor and chair of psychiatry, and Chris Bradberry, Pharm.D., dean of the School of Pharmacy and Health Professions, were named to a 15-member, expert commission organized by U.S. Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., to examine and make recommendations on a wide range of health care issues — from access to care to rising costs to the role of technology in improving quality of care.

“It’s important to look at new approaches to health care in this country,” Bradberry said. “At Creighton, we are committed to continuing, responsibly, changing times and providing care that is equitable.”

Bradberry and Wilson join officials from other medical centers, physicians, insurers, insurance executives and consultants on the one-year effort.

Creighton Inducts Three into Athletic Hall of Fame

Former student-athletes Mike Heathcott, BS/BFA, Sharleen Struby, BA/BFA, and Heidi Geier Woodard, BA/BFA, were inducted into the Creighton University Athletic Hall of Fame on April 11. In addition, Leo Koobec, Ed.S./Ed.D., and his wife, Mary Ellen, were honored as the 2006 Joseph J. Vinardi “Jaybackers of the Year” for their support of Creighton athletics.

Heathcott holds the school record for career wins, with 33.

Heathcott was the top pitcher on the best team in Creighton baseball history and still owns the school records for wins in a season (15, 1991) and career (33). Heathcott was drafted by the Chicago White Sox, Chicago Cubs and Anaheim Angels. Heathcott, his wife and two children currently live in Scottsdale, Ariz., where he works for Southwest Airlines. Woodard, an infielder on Creighton’s softball team from 1996 to 1999, twice earned Academic All-American honors and was named a second-team All-American in 1999. She holds the school record for career stolen bases with 85. She also ranks second in school history in career hits (243) and third in career batting average (.358) and runs scored (129). She holds the distinction of being the first player in school history to record two 70-hit seasons. Woodard was a three-time first-team all-MVC selection and scholar-athlete honoree. She was twice named to the MVC all-tournament team, including in 1999, when the Bluejays captured their first MVC Tournament title. Woodard is currently the executive assistant to the president at The Coors and Blue-Stiel of Nebraska. She lives in Omaha with her husband and two children.
The whodunit plotline of this murder-mystery thriller, which begins with the discovery of a dead body in the Louvre, lures the reader, by labyrinthine twists and turns, into a far more sinister plot involving churchmen hell-bent on preserving their patriarchal power. To that end, so the story goes, they reduced Mary Magdalene, the true “holy grail,” to the status of whore and, in cahoots with the emperor Constantine, elevated Jesus to divine status at the Council of Nicaea. Ah, the plot thickens, and with it, readership and controversy.

Because the theories espoused by Brown’s cast of erudite characters, Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon, royal historian Sir Leigh Teabing and French cryptologist Sophie Neveu, call into question central tenets of Christian faith and theology, not surprisingly, the book has provoked the ire of Christians and the scrutiny of scholars. At the center of the controversy stands the figure of Mary Magdalene and the characters’ claims about her. With the movie directed by Ron Howard released this month, it is well to sort fact from fiction.

Much of the fuss over the book concerns what Teabing calls “the greatest cover-up in human history,” namely, “Not only was Jesus Christ married, but He was a father. … Mary Magdalene was the Holy Vessel, … the chalice that bore the royal bloodline of Jesus Christ.” Claiming to know of “countless references to Jesus and Magdalene’s union” that have “been explored ad nauseam by modern historians,” he declares their marriage “a matter of historical record.”

The character’s suggestion that “Jesus as a married man makes infinitely more sense than our standard view of Jesus as a bachelor” because “the social decorum during that time virtually forbid a Jewish man to be unmarried” hardly amounts to “historical record.” Granted, most Jewish men of Jesus’ day would have married and done their divinely mandated duty to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). But to conclude that Jesus must have married because he was expected to marry because he was expected to marry is a move no responsible historian would make. Furthermore, among Jews of the period, there were exceptions to the
marital norm. For example, Philo of Alexandria, a first century Jewish writer, describes a group known as the Essenes, some of whom repudiated marriage as they awaited end-time events.

As evidence of his theory about Mary Magdalene’s marriage to Jesus, Teabing cites the Gospel of Philip and the Gospel of Mary, two extra-canonical Gnostic texts written in the late second or early third centuries. Nowhere in these Gospels, however, is it stated that Mary Magdalene is the wife of Jesus or the mother of his child. These works contain nothing more than a passing reference to Mary as the “companionship” of Jesus and another to Jesus kissing her. Neither of these references establishes a romantic relationship, let alone marriage. Furthermore, the mere mention of a kiss hardly proves that their relationship was of an erotic nature. In Gnostic literature, kissing symbolizes the reception of spiritual teaching, as Jesus himself points out, “For this reason we kiss one another. We receive conception from the grace which is in one another” (Gospel of Philip 5:34 – 59.6).

Finally, if the Gnostic Gospels assume a marriage between Mary Magdalene and Jesus, as Teabing claims, then Jesus’ closing remark to the disciples in another Gnostic text, the Gospel of Thomas, “I myself shall lead her [Mary] in order to make her male,” is peculiar indeed. In sum, even scholars who have no inclination to defend the Christian faith, as well as those who confess that they wish (for various reasons) that Jesus had been married, conclude that there is, in fact, no reliable historical evidence in either canonical or extra-canonical texts, including the Gnostic Gospels cited by Brown’s characters, that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene or anyone else.

Teabing further claims “it was not Peter to whom Christ gave directions with which to establish the Christian Church. It was Mary Magdalene,” and “Jesus was the original feminist. He intended for the future of His Church to be in the hands of Mary Magdalene.”

Anyone who has studied the historical Mary Magdalene is severely hampered by the scarcity of sources of information. The earliest and most reliable are the four canonical Gospels, and yet, as narrative proclamations of the good news of and about Jesus, these texts are only incidentally about the supporting cast of characters, including Mary Magdalene. Not surprisingly, then, the Gospels contain only 12 references to her, 11 of them centered on the story of Jesus’ passion and resurrection. Thus, we can know far less than we might wish about her role during his ministry. Nevertheless, from these incidental references an impressionistic sketch emerges.

If Mary was not the “bride of Christ” and “holy grail” nor Jesus’ leader-designate of the Church, then who was she?

The four Gospels refer to her as Mary the Magdalene, or in Luke, Mary who “was called the Magdalene” (Luke 8:2). The surname “the Magdalene,” which is assumed to derive from her place of origin, Magdala, distinguishes her from the other Marys (Maries) who are frequent companions in Gospel scenes. Magdala is thought to be the same town that goes by the Greek name Tarrichea on the Sea of Galilee. Its location between Nazareth, Jesus’ hometown, and Capernaum, his apparent base of operations, might suggest that Mary was among his first followers, having encountered him even before the movement was based in Capernaum. That she is identified solely by place of origin and not by relationship to a man, as other women are (Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary the mother of Joses), indicates that she was an independent woman. Unfortunately, we know nothing of the circumstances that led to what would have been for a woman in that time and culture an unconventional status, independent of a husband, father or son.

That status might have had something to do with what Luke alone tells us about her. In what is the sole reference to Mary Magdalene outside of the passion and resurrection narratives, Luke describes her as one “from whom seven demons had gone out” (8:2). There is no evidence that this suggests sexual promiscuity, but possession by demons might well account for her lack of marital and familial ties, as the Old Testament text Tobit 3:7-17 confirms. It is not difficult to imagine that what Jesus did for her in freeing her from this...
affliction, led her to devote herself to his cause, as apparently she did, even to his death and burial. Luke further informs us that, along with the Twelve, she and other women traveled with Jesus from village to village, providing for him out of their resources (8:1-3; Mark 15:40-41).

It is above all the Magdalene’s presence at the cross and tomb that the Gospel tradition preserves for us. Hers was the first among the names of a group of women who, after following Jesus to his death and burial. Luke further accounts for him out of their resources (8:1-3; Matt 27:56). John alone places her at the foot of the cross with Jesus’ mother, the beloved disciple and other blood kin (John 19:25).

Both Mark and Matthew report that after the crucifixion, she went with one or more other women to visit the grave (Mark 15:47; Matt 27:61; 28:1), returning after the Sabbath was over to anoint him (Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1). That she is consistently named first in these scenes suggests her prominence among Jesus’ women followers. While at the tomb, she and the other women were the first to experience a vision in which a heavenly messenger announces the good news of Jesus’ resurrection (Mark 16:1-8; Matt 28:1-10; Luke 24:1-10). In John, Mary Magdalene is the first recipient of a resurrection appearance and the first to be sent to the disciples with a message from the risen Christ (20:1-18). It is this tradition that earned her the designation apostolorum apostola, apostle of the apostles, a title repeated as late as Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages and recently revived. 

**Early Christian sources** contain no evidence that Mary Magdalene was the penitent prostitute with whom many Christians remain familiar. 

Although most modern Christians, when asked to identify the apostles, conjure up an image of 12 men, analysis of early Christian literature, including the New Testament, indicates that in the first few centuries the term “apostle” was not reserved solely for the Twelve; moreover, that in some Christian circles women were considered “apostles.” In his discussion of the resurrection, Paul, for example, affirms that the risen Christ “appeared to Cephas [Peter], then to the Twelve” and later “to all the apostles” (1 Cor 15:5-8). Elsewhere he refers to a woman Junia who, along with a man named Andronicus, is “prominent among the apostles” (Rom. 16:7). In his commentary on The Song of Songs in the Old Testament, the third century bishop and martyr Hippolytus wrote: “Lest the female apostles doubt the angels, Christ himself came to them so that the women would be apostles of Christ.” 

Early Christian sources contain no evidence that Mary Magdalene was the penitent prostitute with whom many Christians remain familiar. This begins the question, how and why did this popular misconception come to dominate the Christian imagination? Dan Brown’s explanation—that it “is the legacy of a smear campaign launched by the early Church,” concocted to cover up her true role as the holy grail — does not bear up under scrutiny. 

Scholars researching the “harlotization” of Mary Magdalene acknowledge the role played by a sermon preached by Pope Gregory the Great in the late sixth century as disseminating the misconception. There is no evidence, however, that Gregory or other churchmen branded her with, in effect, the scarlet letter of prostitution in order to cover up her imagined role as “the holy grail.” The explanation is far less sinister: a faulty reading of the Gospels that conflated Mary Magdalene, the anonymous sinful woman (Luke 7:36-50) and the adulterous woman. (John 8:3-11). Respectively, this long-standing confusion obscured her role as “apostle of the apostles” for some 1,300 years. 

The Catholic Church, however, rectified the mistake in its 1970 revision of the Roman Missal, removing the designation “penitent” and changing the Gospel reading for her feast from the story of the sinful woman to that of her vision of the risen Lord at the tomb (John 20:11-18). That the Church’s official correction of this case of mistaken identity has, unfortunately, gone largely unnoticed is evidenced by Mel Gibson’s recent depiction of Mary Magdalene as the adulterous woman. Thanks to its blockbuster sales and media coverage, it may be hoped that The Da Vinci Code will accomplish what Church and Academy have not managed: putting an end to the image of a woman who, as apostle of the apostles, was about not a secret in her womb but witness in the world. 

**About the author:** Calef teaches New Testament at Creighton University. Her recent book is The Mary Magdalene of Gospel Women: Their Stories, Our Stories. 

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The world’s first city, so far as we know, was Catal Huyuk, founded around 6500 B.C.E. in what is now Turkey. As archaeologists have studied the ruins of Catal Huyuk, they have found that the people who lived there over 8,000 years ago, like people today, adorned their walls with images of things important in their lives. At Catal Huyuk, the images include ones of gods and goddesses, horned beasts and serpents, the sun and moon, and... butterflies.

My students, “You can add one to the list: mad dogs, Englishmen... and butterflies, come out in the noonday sun.”

Butterflies, Boterwvlieg, Schmetterlings

A good place to begin exploring butterfly myths and legends is with the common names of these creatures in languages around the world, as is done in Maraleen Manos-Jones’s wonderful book The Spirit of Butterflies. In English, of course, we call them “butterflies”; this is mirrored in the Dutch name botervlieg. I always assumed this was a reference to the yellow color of the commonest butterflies, in Europe as in North America, but one source states that the term may actually refer to their excretory droplets resembling the color of butter! The dairy connection continues in German, where they are called schmetterlings, which refers to cream. This is said to refer to butterflies’ proclivity for hovering around milkpails, supporting a folk belief that they are cream-stealing witches.

As an entomologist, I am fascinated with the lives of the small and six-legged. But it is a constant uphill struggle to get the general public to care as much as I do about these non-charismatic microfauna. There is one group of insects, however, that does seem to pique everyone’s interest — butterflies. People who couldn’t care less about saving Nebraska’s highly-endangered Salt Creek tiger beetle work up a passionate indignation about threats to the monarch butterfly. And this fascination with the scaled and beautiful is not a recent phenomenon of Western culture — it seems that most if not all human cultures, no matter when or where, have developed a rich set of myths and legends around butterflies.

Butterfly Biology

Along with their dastardly nocturnal relatives — moths — butterflies belong to the insect order Lepidoptera. The name means “scale wings”; if you have ever rubbed your fingers on the wings of a butterfly or moth, you have picked up a dusting of the scales that cover the wings (and bodies) of “leps.” In the day-active butterflies, the scales can be variously colored so as to produce the bright tints and patterns that make butterflies so beautiful. Butterflies, like most “higher insects,” exhibit complete metamorphosis, a life cycle of four stages (egg, larva, pupa, adult) that in butterflies features the incredible transformation of the glutinous eating-machine caterpillar into the beautiful, vulnerable, ethereal adult. The voracious caterpillar devours enough leafy matter to grow by a factor of as much as 3,000 in as little as a week or two, while the dainty adult flies about, occasionally stopping to take a well-mannered sip of nectar from a flower. Many butterfly myths and legends are built around that transformation and the airy and almost insubstantial nature of the adult.

Another highly relevant aspect of butterfly biology is that the adults are usually seen only in the warmer months of the year, and even then are seen most often in the heat of the middle of the day.
In Latin, the name for a butterfly was *papilio*, leading to today’s French name *papillon* (and the Monarch butterfly symbol for the Nebraska town of Papillion, near Omaha). In France, modern parking tickets take the form of folded pieces of yellow paper, the slang term for which is *papillon*.

A newfangled couple sees two butterflies together, that is, an omens for a long and happy marriage. But in Chinese the word “*fēi*” (flying) refers to 70 (in 70 years old), so butterflies are also phallic reminders that young lovers grow old. Although a little off-topic, I can never think of butterflies and China without recalling the famous poem by the great fourth century poet Chuang Tzu: ‘I dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither. To all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of following my fancies as a butterfly. And was unconscious of my individuality as a man. Suddenly I woke and there I lay myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I was a butterfly dreaming I was a man.”

Good for the Soul

In ancient Greek, the word for butterflies was *psyche*, which also referred to the soul and to the breath of life (and, of course, comes down to us as the mind or consciousness). In Russia, butterflies are called *svodil’, or “little souls,” a term that is often used for children. In many cultures, the light and ethereal nature of butterflies, so beautiful and liberated from the mundane earth, has independently led to this association of butterflies with souls. Here are a few more examples:

In ancient Rome, butterflies were associated with the souls of dead people. In Ireland, butterflies, especially white butterflies, represent the souls or spirits of the newly-departed on their way to their next destination. If the butterfly is clear and spotless, it is the soul of a Heaven, but if the butterfly is spotted, the next stop is Purgatory. I regret that entomological forces me to comment that almost all white butterflies have some spots — I draw no theological conclusions.

In southern Germany, some said that the dead are reborn as children who fly about seeking a new body, leading to the belief that butterflies predict an upcoming pregnancy. Reincarnation features in the beliefs of Solomon Islanders, too: a good person may choose which animal to become in the next life, and a butterfly is a common choice. To the Ngapag people of India, dead spirits are reincarnated in a succession of creatures, from butterflies, to sparrows, to pigeons, to men, to the Virgin Mary: from butterflies to sparrows to pigeons to men to the Virgin Mary.

In Scandinavia, the belief existed that dreams represented the wanderings in other realms of our soul — butterflies when we are asleep.

If a butterfly other than the “Death Butterfly” lands on you, it represents “the kiss of an angel” and predicts peace, happiness and good luck.

Special banquet were held regularly in honor of the ancient butterflies, in which men of high rank carried special bouquets to put out for butterflies to visit. And this explains why even today it is considered rude and ill-mannered to lean over a flower and sniff it from above, and to blacken the path of the butterfly trying to alight!

The association of butterflies with death expresses itself in other ways in Mexico. The appearance of a particular all-black butterfly, the “Death Butterfly,” is an omen of impending mortality. And it is probably not at all a coincidence that the rituals associated with the “Dia de los Muertos” or “Day of the Dead” occur around Nov. 1, the time when millions of Monarch butterflies are streaming into central Mexico from their birthplaces farther north in Mexico, the United States and Canada. But butterflies can mean good luck, too. If a butterfly other than the “Death Butterfly” lands on you, it represents “the kiss of an angel” and predicts peace, happiness and good luck.

The Native Americans of what is now the United States had a variety of mythological beliefs involving butterflies. To the Zuni, arrival of white butterflies meant the coming of favorable weather. To the Blackfoot, butterflies were the ones that bring us our dreams when we sleep. If a Blackfoot mother has a baby that won’t sleep, the solution is to tie the baby a piece of buckskin with butterfly images on it, to put the baby to sleep and allow the dream butterfly to visit.

In Aztec culture, two goddesses were associated with dozens of different themes. Those included: the sexes, weather, powers such as flight, qualities such as “lightness” or “fickleness,” states of being such as happiness, upcoming events such as birth or death, appearances such as beauty or symmetry, phases of life such as youth or old age, and, rather than a butterfly, elements such as meteorology, fire, and the spirits of the dead. The first of these goddesses, associated with fire, beauty, and the spirits of the dead, was regarded as a mother butterfly; she was regarded as a mother butterfly; she was the patron of domestic laborers and she was associated with obsidian knives and human sacrifice, the patron of war itself, rather than a butterfly, was the goddess of beauty, fire, and the spirits of the dead. The goddess of beauty, fire, and the spirits of the dead, was regarded as a mother butterfly; she was the patron of domestic laborers and she was associated with obsidian knives and human sacrifice, the patron of war itself, rather than a butterfly, was the goddess of fire, beauty, and the spirits of the dead.

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Thus the Creator grew sadder and sadder. Suddenly he smiled. “All those colors, they ought to be preserved,” he thought. “I’ll make some butterflies.” To the children he said, “I will put the flowers, the birds, the songs of birds, too. The Creator took his magic box and started collecting things: a spot of sunlight, a handful of blue sky, the whiteness of cornmeal, the blackness of a beautiful girl’s hair, the yellow of fallen leaves, the green of the pine needles, the red, purple and orange of the flowers. All these put in his bag. And, as an afterthought, he put in the songs of the birds. Then he walked over to where the children were playing and said, “Children, little children, this is how your good dreams come to you. Open it there something nice inside.”

The children opened the bag, and at once hundreds of brilliantly colored butterflies flew out and circled around the children, alighting on them or fluttering up again. The children were enchanted; they had never seen anything so beautiful. And then the butterflies sang, and the children had never heard anything so sweet.

But a songbird flew up, and chastised the Creator. “It’s not right to give our songs to these new pretty things. You told us when you made us that every bird would have its own song, and now you’ve given them to these.” The Creator said, “You are right. I shouldn’t have given away what belongs to you.” So he took back the songs from the butterflies, but they were allowed to keep their glorious colors. And that is why butterflies are silent even today. Therefore, if you want your wish to come true, one must capture a butterfly and whisper the wish in the butterfly’s ear. Since a butterfly can make no sound, the butterfly cannot reveal the wish to anyone but the Great Spirit, who hears and sees all. And in gratitude for releasing the butterfly and restoring its freedom, the Great Spirit always makes the wish come true.
At first glance, most readers of the Creighton Magazine will not find much humor in the above passage, which comes from the third chapter of the biblical Book of Judges. It is simply too violent.

For different reasons, an earlier verse from the same biblical chapter also seems distinctly devoid of anything to laugh about: “The Lord raised up a champion for the Israelites; the Benjaminite Ehud, son of Gera, a left-handed man.” What’s funny about this mini-genealogy?

In spite of such initial impressions, it is my contention that these texts convey what lies at the heart of much biblical humor: (1) a justified sense of vengeful pleasure at the downfall of Israel’s enemies and (2) a delight in plays on words and sounds. This section of Judges manages to combine both.

As is well known, no translation task is easy; where the sounds of words, in addition to their meanings, are involved, it becomes especially tricky. Let us look first at the way the biblical writers introduce the hero of this story. Instead of translating it, as I did above, I will provide a transliteration; that is, I will attempt to convey the sounds of the Hebrew using English characters for the second part of the citation, starting with “Ehud”:

*Ehud ben-gera ben-ha-yemini* ish itair yad yemino; literally, “Ehud, son of Gera, son of the south or the right (hand), a man constricted as to his right hand.”

This identification of Ehud plays on the word for right (hand): “Benjaminite” literally means “son of the south or the right (hand).” Ironically, but perhaps also providentially, this Benjaminite, Ehud, is left-handed (the simpler “left-handed” is found in almost all English versions, but the Hebrew literally means, as I indicated above, “constricted as to his right hand”).

Now, I’m not suggesting that ancient readers or hearers would have burst out in laughter at this, but the little detail about which hand he used, in for example drawing a sword, becomes very important in this narrative — and the play on words would alert Hebrew readers to this fact.

Returning to Ehud’s assassination of King Eglon, who controlled the Israelites at this time, we note what we might call an excess of gory details about the trajectory of the dagger and its very bloody aftermath. But ancient Israelites apparently drew from such descriptions the important lesson that God was fighting on their side when they were faithful to their deity.

In this case, another play on words drives the point home: Eglon’s name is formed from the same root as the
Humor in the Bible

Summer 2006

In the Book of Judges, Yael — whose name means “the Lord is God” — delivers Israel from the Canaanites by killing the Canaanite commander Sisera with a tent pin. That Sisera was slain by a woman added insult to injury. The artwork is by French painter James Tissot (1836-1902).

In the Book of Judges, Yael — whose name means “the Lord is God” — delivers Israel from the Canaanites by killing the Canaanite commander Sisera with a tent pin. That Sisera was slain by a woman added insult to injury. The artwork is by French painter James Tissot (1836-1902).

Although we might think of this lengthy, albeit poetic, description as rhetorical overkill, I think it brought a real sigh of relief, and a knowing smile, to ancient readers. A broadening smile, if not more, would have been evoked by the continuation of the narrative. Sisera’s mother looks askance out her window, wondering what could be keeping her son. She imagined that, after the Canaanite victory, he was spending much of his time with “a damsel or two.” Yes, indeed, her son had been passing a bit of time with one particular damsel — Yael, by name — but, as a result of that encounter, he would not be returning home, as his mother imagined, loaded with treasure. Because being killed by a woman added “insult to injury,” these scenes, in my opinion, would have exposed Israel’s enemies for what they were: powerless when on the attack against God’s people. This is made clear by the first part of verse 31: “So may all Your enemies perish, O Lord!”

The idea that God often turns carefully planned human endeavors toward his own ends, which is found throughout the Hebrew Bible, is one of the leading and most humorous motifs in the Book of Esther.

As David and Abigail ride off into the sunset (well, actually, this probably took place in the morning), soon to be husband and wife, readers of this text would surely have chuckled that all of the characters here got exactly what they deserved.

Throughout this article, we have been looking at the text, especially in its original language, of the Hebrew Bible. It seems to me that my observations are not at all dependent on whether these accounts “tell it like it was,” embellish historical memory or represent creative (that is, fictional) narratives. My last example takes us closer to such questions, and also demonstrates that the recognition of humor in the Bible can lead to new solutions to old problems.

As is fairly well known, the first half of the Book of Daniel contains some historical difficulties; so, in Chapter 5, Belshazzar is portrayed as the son and...
successor of Nebuchadnezzar as king of Babylonia, and in Chapter 6, Darius the Mede is said to have taken over immediately upon Belshazzar’s demise.

When faced with the contradictions between this line of succession and what is found in the Babylonian and Persian records themselves, some individuals try “every track in the book” to reconcile the data. Instead, it seems to me, it makes more sense to recognize that the writer of Daniel intentionally played loose with or garbled the historical record, as if to say, “It doesn’t really matter who the foreign monarch was.” If he goes against Israel, God will go against him. The same point is made, but in a very different way, in the early chapters of the Book of Exodus, where the Pharaohs of that period are unnamed — they are essentially interchangeable.

Pharaohs of that period are unnamed — they are essentially interchangeable when they persecute God’s people. Parallel to Daniel, but even more egregious, are references in the Book of Judith to Nebuchadnezzar as an Assyrian monarch, as in the very first verse of this book: “It was the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh.” Can we really imagine an ancient author unfamiliar with the well-known fact that Nebuchadnezzar ruled over the Babylonians, not the earlier Assyrians? The Book of Judith is different from the other “biblical” material cited in this article because this book is not part of the Protestant Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible that is canonical for Jews. It does appear in the Old Testament of Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians, however. Although it has been preserved in Greek rather than Hebrew or Aramaic, the Book of Judith is a product of the same world of communities, and the same interest in humor, that we have located throughout the Hebrew Bible.

It is unlikely that any of the writers of the Bible, or the characters they portray, would be at home in stand-up comedy or on Saturday Night Live. But we have many different venues for, and types of, comedy these days, and just possibly, the writers of the Bible would find a home with Garrison Keillor, of Prairie Home Companion fame, or Mark Russell, who skewers politicians and plays the piano at the same time.

Be that as it may, “humor” and “religion” are not (or, not necessarily) at odds with each other. This is just one of many lessons from The Good Book.

About the author: Greenspoon holds the Klutznick Chair in Jewish Civilization at Creighton and is a professor of Classical & Near Eastern Studies and of Theology. He frequently lectures on topics related to religion in popular culture and Bible translation, having been invited to institutions throughout the United States, Western Europe and Eastern Europe. He has now authored more than 70 articles, chapters and encyclopedia entries on these related topics. His column, “The Bible in the News,” appears in Bible Review and Biblical Archaeology Review, and he is presently at work on a study of Bible translations and translators.

Note on Translations of the Bible

Today’s English-language readers of the Bible are beneficiaries of the unprecedented increase in the number of modern versions produced over the past few decades. For the most part, I prefer to remain descriptive in my analysis and discussion of these versions; see, for example, my recent article, “The Holy Bible: A Buyer’s Guide,” in Biblical Archaeology Review 21:4 (2005), 37-44. In discussing almost two dozen versions, from the most literal to the freest, I allowed each group of translators to determine its own criteria, and it is on the basis of those criteria — rather than any set of standards predetermined by me — that I judged these English-language versions.

However, I need to be more evaluative or directive if our goal is to enable readers to perceive the humor, including word plays, inherent in the Hebrew original. In this case, I direct readers to translations that are more literal (often called formal equivalency) in their approach. Perhaps the best version for this purpose is the Schocken Bible, produced by Everett Fox. At present, this covers only the Five Books of Moses or the Torah.

Look, for example, at his rendering of Genesis 25:26, which narrates the birth of Esau (called here, Esav, a spelling that more closely replicates the sounds of the Hebrew) and Jacob (here, Yaakov).

“After that his brother came out, his hand grasping Esau’s heel, so they called his name Yaakov/Heel-holder.” The reader immediately sees that Jacob’s (Yaakov’s) name comes from the same Hebrew root as the word for heel.

But there is even more, as Fox makes clear in his translation of Genesis 27:36: “He [Esav] said: Is that why his name was called Yaakov/Heel-sneak? For he has now sneaked against me twice: My firstborn-right he took, and now he has taken my blessing! And he said: Haven’t you reserved a blessing for me?” The Hebrew root that yields the noun heel and the proper name Yaakov also produced a verb meaning to sneak or, more specifically, to supplant. Or, as we might say in English, Jacob was a real heel! — Leonard Greenspoon, Ph.D.
Summer Reading: Even the sound of it conjures the image of a mosquito-free afternoon on the screened porch, with only the sound of birds and the rustle of green, sunshine-dappled leaves as company.

With many Americans working harder and longer than ever before, time off in the summer seems more and more to be treasured.

So, we took a poll of Creighton faculty and staff as to their picks for your summer reading — or theirs — and below are some ideas.

One quick note: There’s a good reason for encouraging our alumni to tap this Creighton expertise. Our comprehensive and values-centered education prepares people to be citizens of the world, people who are lifelong learners.

What better way to engage in this process than to curl up with a good book, recommended by Creighton’s community of scholars?

Good reading to you!

_The Five People You Meet in Heaven_ by Mitch Albom. Publisher: Hyperion (September 2003). Recommended by Joy Volz, ODT’03, grant coordinator, Office of Interprofessional Scholarship, Service and Education, who says, “It is a quick but beautiful read.”


_Five Fat Ladies: The Truth about Your Weight and Your Health_ is a top pick for Anthony Bull of Creighton’s Department of Exercise Science. Bull says that author Glenn Gaesser, Ph.D., of the University of Virginia explains “the very complicated relationships between our body weight, our physical fitness, and our health” in this summer reading pick. Gaesser’s theory: the relationship between your fitness and your health is stronger than the relationship between your weight and your health. While the author never advocates “letting yourself go,” Bull explains, nor being “totally unconcerned about your weight, he instead promotes becoming more active no matter what your weight. I hope everyone will enjoy it!” Publisher: Gürze Books (2002).

Two tomes top the summer list for Bob Whipple, Ph.D., who holds Creighton’s A.F. Jacobson Chair in Communication. They are _Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper_ by Nicholson Baker, publisher: Vintage Books (2002), and _Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology_ by George P. Landow, publisher: The Johns Hopkins University Press (1997). Whipple likes the first for portraying, “the mad dash to microfilm, and then to discarding archived newspapers,” while the second delves into “the effects of hypertext and digital media on literacy.”

One of the most powerful novels I have read,” says Vice President for Academic Affairs Christine Wiseman, “is _The Kite Runner_. I would recommend that as summer reading.” Khaled Hosseini’s first novel (_Riverhead Books, 2003_) takes the reader from Afghanistan to the United States and back, while its psychological journey spans the decades and forever links two childhoods.

Flags of Our Fathers by James Bradley (Bantam Books, 2000) is the choice for a summer read for Cam Enerson, M.D. Enerson, vice president for Health Sciences and dean of the School of Medicine at Creighton, picks a book that traces the lives of the young men who raised the American flag on Iwo Jima nearly 60 years ago.

Meanwhile, Timothy Austin, Ph.D., dean of the Creighton College of Arts and Sciences, recommends _Göral_, by Marilynne Robinson; publisher: Picador (reprint edition, January 2006). “I have enormously enjoyed reading _Göral_,” writes Austin. “It’s a wonderful summer book, too, because it moves slowly, building its characters and its story line very gradually, until you find you are ‘hooked.’”

Looking for more spiritual inspiration? Visit Creighton Online Ministries at: www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/online.html

**Reflections**

**My Jesuit Journey**

By Daniel Hendrickson, S.J.

**An invitation:** Join Hendrickson for his ordination to the priesthood and First Mass, both at St. John’s Church. The ordination is Friday, June 9, at 7:30 p.m., with his First Mass on Saturday, June 10, at 6:30 p.m. “I hope to enjoy these ceremonies with the many Creighton students who impacted me so profoundly.”

I was stunned for a couple of reasons. Unlike some groups through the next several semesters, the classmates this guy met with twice each week were quite engaged, always excited, sometimes even by other students.

“About what … dude?” I asked.

“Ah, you know, I mean, I don’t know … say more,” was a friendly, informal imperative voiced from an unsuspecting character at an unlikely time. And that he addressed me so casually was one of the many ways by which God had woven me into his life and shaken me up. With this student at the back of the church, I was to be ordained to the priesthood, savvy God some time."

In the new semester we talked. A lot. I’m no longer at Creighton. I was there for the three full and last years of my Jesuit regency, an important time within the long formation program of Jesuits for working — usually as teachers — in Jesuit institutions. Upon its completion, I went back to graduate school, studying at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley (JSTB). Three years later, I’m now ending my time at JSTB. And I’m also ending that long formation program. The Creighton years, those preceding it, and those recent ones total 12. I am to be ordained to the priesthood, that Creighton students so often said “say more” is significant because, a long time ago, the Word dwelt among us. And among them it dwells.

**About the author:** Hendrickson taught philosophy at Creighton from 2001 to 2010. He will be ordained at St. John’s Church in June, and will travel to Morogoro, Tanzania, East Africa, in August to teach philosophy for one year at the St. Bonaventure Institute of Philosophy and Theology.

**Willing to Excel**

**Professor Christine Wiseman and Cam Enarson, M.D., in Creighton’s Reinhart Alumni Memorial Library, head an academic leadership team dedicated to**
**and focused on students. Their thoughts, below, reflect a continuing dialogue with colleagues here and throughout the Jesuit education system.**

**Life of the Spirit**

Creighton students are challenged to move beyond descriptive knowledge to normative and spiritual reflection, asking the ultimate question: How does one act humbly in today’s world? The rationale is simple: Students are empowered first to examine the world, then to engage the world, and finally, to evaluate and change the world.

**Our Willingness to Excel**

Today, more than ever, the world longs for people with the commitment that Creighton University instills: leaders who are “committed to shaping public opinions for the common good.” To further our mission, Creighton has embarked on a $246 million capital campaign. More than half of that goal funds critical academic needs: scholarships, fellowships and research; endowed chairs, deanships and visiting professorships; student support services, libraries and technology.

Your response to the campaign has been overwhelming, with $246 million raised to date. Together, we are realizing a bold commitment that Creighton University instills: leaders who are among the finest Jesuit, Catholic universities in the United States.

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**Life of the Mind**

The Jesuit tradition has dominated values-based education for more than 400 years — and at Creighton since our founding in 1878. It is characterized by an essential understanding of God, the human person and society. It is designed to ensure that students gain certain fundamental skills in reasoning and expression. It is collaborative — enabling students to move beyond the traditional lines that typically divide students and faculty, undergraduates and graduates.

**Life of the Heart, Life of the Imagination**

Creighton University typifies the development of the heart and the imagination. We challenge our students to explore the complexities of persons and societies in our increasingly globalized culture.