From the Editor  

The world in our backyard

I met Carlton Wilkinson on a wet November morning that was surprisingly cold for Nashville. As he opened the door to his small gallery and studio on Jefferson Street, I discovered a gallery packed with paintings by contemporary African-American artists as well as traditional carvings and weavings from countries across Africa. I was there to select a single photograph for Vanderbilt Magazine, and what could have been a 20-minute visit stretched to two hours that day and a half-day the next week.

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

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

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

Ken Schexnayder

From the Reader

American Terrorism

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

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

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

Sheryl Spradling Summe, MA’83  
Birmingham, Ala.

The Lawson Affair

Your article in the fall 2002 issue of Vanderbilt Magazine [“Days of Thunder: The Lawson Affair,” p. 34] brought back a flood of memories from that period. It’s evident how well you researched the Lawson controversy from the point of view of the Divinity School and the politically correct spin required today. I am giving you the benefit of the doubt and saying here that I believe you are quite sincere in your belief.

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

The Lawson affair made a national hero out of James Lawson and brought the national media to Nashville to sneer at Southern tradition and laugh at these backward, racist hicks. The other element in the equation was the matter of Christian witness. James Lawson was not only a hero,
James Lawson has prospered in his life, and I guess characterizes the politically correct attitudes today. He attributes his success to the local people (which Lawson did not) while to enroll at the University of Mississippi. He is God who judges, and weren't we taught that he during the ‘60s and ‘70s, students from would have been among those rioters. “Our movement,” he says, “was a response to the media. We saw an era in which almost any act was could have been averted. We’ll never know whether But a suffering saint!

Before the That unspoken judgment set the tone for the years of the free world status. Seems like it could for Gore. And that’s fine: A trip to the voting would have involved more discussion of the Civil War, and, as one person put it, “no one could have been there, but as the vice president of the U.S. and more recent political parties. (Do you remember now? It was all about the ‘60s.) \"Wow!\" I thought. \"Has our school ever had an alums who had risen to such a place of prominence in the world? \"This is a guy you have me with here, the answer is, \"Gee, never.\"\". But, amazingly, in all his 90s, as V.P., your magazine article, \"pigeon-holing and pigeon-driving,\" is not the same thing. I believe Jesus would have been among those riots.

The students today are likely to be different. They agree with those days.

It is with gratitude — and no small measures of honor” that still makes me smile. I’m glad to see something thought provoking and relevant that begs to be read.

The article \"A Nation in the New millennium are different critters than Were \"outflows\" and \"inflows\" that are featured in the pages of this magazine. I never wanted to receive information about Van-

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

Michael Pessin, BA’91 Madison, Wis.

The Vanderbilt \"Lawson Affair\" was always been a \"good read\", with subtlety, balance and frequency to be read. But it is also a place that is important to me.

However, the writers did not live the historical times that are featured in the pages of this magazine. I have never been upset and angry that Vanderbilt abolished the\"Hustler\". It seems proper to me that a university. What you have shown is that there are not just a few good pieces, but a significant impact upon the society in many, many ways. Bravo!

You asked for feedback on the new format, so I’ll give you my own. It’s great! Lots of good, original, relevant, real content is included. Articles I particularly liked include \"The Lawson Affair\" p. 34 particularly interesting. When I was a student (1947–51), in the first freshman class welcomed by Chancellor Branscomb, I remember \"Chancer\" not being allowed to a \"sight.\"

I have a few more points on the new format, which I will be happy to share with you in a separate note.

I think it is important that you continue to support the school in any way you can. Whether through subscriptions blended into the Vietnam War movement.

At the time I wondered, and still do, where God is who judges, and weren’t we taught that he loves everybody? That the \"Vanderbilt Affair\" Magazine came, I watched another James on TV’s \"Book Notes\" discuss his book. He is James Meredith, who was the first black man to enroll at the University of Mississippi. He was in the white-only Mississippi State National Guard and he was a Vietman, a champion of social justice, an uninvited stimulus for campus debate, and, most interestingly, a David-like gadfly of the \"pigeon-holing and pigeon-driving\" movement that had taken flight. Even now, just as that time, I find myself laughing at the thought of those \"outflows\" and \"inflows\" that are featured in the pages of this magazine. I never wanted to receive information about Van-

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

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

In response to William B. Hunter [“From the Reader,” p. 7], perhaps the “cannibalistic practices” invoked in the Eucharist may be explained by their symbolic nature and the forgiveness embodied in them. For the actual body of Christ to be present, invoking that I read it immediately. The James Lawson story was superb. I was finishing graduate school at that time and really had forgotten the whole episode. Praise the Lord the chancellor and J. Lawson had some time together before C. Branscomb died. It was an important ending.

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

P.G. Wiseman, BA’59, MS’60
Isle of Palms, S.C.

What a delicious southern breeze for us “damn Yankees” who had the good sense to earn at least one degree in the comforting climes of Nashville!

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

Leo J. Neifer, PhD’71
Hosmer, S.D.

For the first time since graduation (1984), I found an issue of the Vanderbilt Magazine serious, stimulating, illuminating and even provocative. I also receive alumni magazines from Berkeley and Stanford, but the fall issue of [Vanderbilt Magazine] is the only alumni publication I’ve ever passed around to friends and family. Cover to cover, that was a fine piece of journalism and a gigantic step beyond the usual fluff and propaganda of alumni publications. The new design is equally superb. The bad news: It now takes much longer than the walk from the mailbox to the front door to get through an issue.

Kevin D. Smith, BA’84
Burlingame, Calif.

Thank you for putting the name on the magazine so that I wouldn’t think it was People magazine or the Smithsonian. Very attractive but awfully slick. Are you planning to sell it on the newsstands? All you lack is advertising.

James Montgomery, MAL’63
Austin, Texas

Handsome, revealing and stimulating. I could be reading an academic Atlantic, Harper’s, The New Republic, etc., all geared to Vanderbilt. Most impressive. Thank you.

Lykke Reurush Carter, BA’42
Charlottesville, Va.

Vanderbilt’s “diversity” has turned sour. The Confederate Hall [was] built as a memorial to the memory of Confederate soldiers [and] paid [for] by the Daughters of Confederacy. Now there are blacks living in the hall. I understand that the blacks and Muslims insist on ripping out the marker at considerable cost. Next will be Al-Qaida.

Are there no students or faculty to raise a voice?

Edward L. Tarpole M.D., M’42
Nashville, Tenn.

[The new magazine is] imbued with political and social dogma that is not reflective of people’s values outside of [the] immediate university community. Well-written articles, but I’m so tired of having the race card crammed down my throat—write about something else for a change. I am no longer proud of anything VU does since you have declared my ancestors unworthy of being remembered. Deo Vindice.

Michael R. Bradley, MA’69, PhD’71
Tullahoma, Tenn.

I read the Class Notes thoroughly. The rest of the magazine only took me 10 minutes to skim. Just more political correctness.

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

What terrible covers!

Mary Davis, BA’50
Columbus, Ga.

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