



FALL/WINTER 2009

# THE COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

How alumni, parents, and friends support the College of the University of Chicago



## House Style

Ugly is the new beautiful? Not anymore.

**PITY** THE ARCHITECTS of the University of Chicago dorms of the 1950s and 1960s. Few tears were shed when Woodward Court, designed by Eero Saarinen in 1958, was demolished in 2002

to clear space for Chicago Booth's Harper Center. "As a science major," former Woodward resident Richard Hagey, AB'85, reminisced in the *University of Chicago Magazine*, "I was fascinated by how

the air temperature of my room could be broiling (being in the wing over the heating system) while the floor had frost on it (since it was directly over the air intake duct)." As well as the building's physical shortcomings, there were its aesthetics, described by another survivor—that is, resident—A. Gray Fisher, AB'04, as "ugly is the new beautiful."

Pierce Hall, designed by Harry Weese in 1960 on the corner of 55th Street and University Avenue, has long been the butt of jokes and rumors. According to one popular tale, bay windows were added when the University realized the tiny rooms would otherwise violate U.S. prison codes. **Continued »**

» Another rumor—which depends on a certain prescience about how the decade would end—holds that Pierce was built to be riot-proof. Yet another legend went out with the flash cube: on very dark nights, the sky would suddenly burn with an eye-reddening light and the entire building would rotate a quarter-turn clockwise.

Fifty years on, architects have realized something: why not ask students what they think? Better suggestions sooner, rather than complaints later. Thanks to surveys, focus groups, and a student advisory committee, the new South Campus Residence Hall should be a much more pleasant living experience. The building includes a two-story reading room, a coffee shop and convenience store that are open to the community, and an extra-large mail room designed to accommodate students' online shopping habits.

On September 21, the first students to live in South Campus Residence Hall loaded bags, boxes, and bins into orange carts and rolled them to their new living quarters. The spacious, sunny, eight-story complex is now home to just over 800 students, making it the largest dorm on campus. No word yet if students have found something to carp about. ■



South Campus Residence Hall: Where students are too comfortable to riot. Clockwise from top left: Move-in day; the dining hall, shared with Burton-Judson; main entrance; lounge kitchen.





## WHAT'S BEHIND THE NAMES?

Like all College residence halls, South Campus is divided into houses. Five of them have been named for University trustees and long-time donors, three after important places in University history. Each house already has its own “traditions,” which presumably will become more traditional once more time has passed.

### WEST .....

#### DELGIORNO HOUSE

**Namesake:** Bernard DelGiorno, AB'54, AB'55, MBA'55

**Traditions:** The Box, an all-hours snack store run out of a student room; Indiana Dunes trip

#### HALPERIN HOUSE

**Namesake:** Trustee Robert M. Halperin, PhB'47, and his late wife, Ruth L. Halperin

**Traditions:** Fall apple orchard trip with DelGiorno House, “Odds vs. Evens” (odd and even room numbers) competition, Awkward Date Night

#### KENWOOD HOUSE

**Namesake:** The neighborhood just north of Hyde Park

**Traditions:** Annual paintball trip, Chicago Riverboat tour, Speed Scrabble

#### OAKENWALD HOUSE

**Namesake:** An estate owned by Illinois senator Stephen A. Douglas, who donated land for the first University of Chicago (1857–1886)

**Traditions:** Movie nights, ski and rock-climbing trips, intramural sports

### EAST .....

#### CHAUTAUQUA HOUSE

**Namesake:** A New York educational institution where William Rainey Harper taught

**Traditions:** Halloween party, Super Bowl party with chili cook-off, Maxwell Street Market trip

#### CROWN HOUSE

**Namesake:** Trustee James Crown and Paula H. Crown, Women's Board member

**Traditions:** Valentine's Day study break with chocolate-chip pancakes, strawberries, and old-fashioned valentine-making à la kindergarten; botanical garden; library of trashy books

#### JANNOTTA HOUSE

**Namesake:** Trustee Edgar Jannotta and Deborah Jannotta, Women's Board member

**Traditions:** Karaoke night, Grillpocalypse, rice pudding

#### WENDT HOUSE

**Namesake:** Trustee Gregory W. Wendt, AB'83, and Lisa Roets Wendt

**Traditions:** Trips to Greektown and Broadway shows

### NAME THAT ROOM

In typical University of Chicago fashion, the room names are a mix of serious-minded and light-hearted. Donors have named rooms for their parents (Catherine and Warren Stookey, Lillian B. and Theodore Wells), a grandparent (Louis P. River, SB'22, MD'25), a daughter (Erin G. Nitti, AB'08), and an influential professor (Dr. Donald J. Bogue).

Then there is the Helens' Suite, a gift from an anonymous alumna in honor of her mother, Helen, as well as her sister and herself (Helen is their middle name). “We were thinking it also has a Greek/Western civ/Common Core ring to it as well,” said the donor. In a similar vein, two anonymous alumni named a room in honor of *Costantemente Funzionando*, meaning “constantly working” in Italian.

And finally, the room the undergrads probably fight over: the Room of Requirement, after a room in the Harry Potter series filled with whatever you need right then. Tonny and Fay Soesanto wanted to name a room to recognize their daughter Charlotte's College graduation in 2009, and that was the name she chose. Since the Room of Requirement is on the seventh floor of Hogwarts, UChicago's is on the seventh floor of the seventh house, Crown House.

### ➔ Your Name Here

For more information on naming opportunities at South Campus Residence Hall, please contact:  
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# Allez Cuisine!

Inside Burton–Judson’s own *Iron Chef* competition.

**THE** FINAL EPISODE of *Iron Chef*, the kitschy, cult-hit cooking competition from Japan, was produced in 1999. But the cultural impact of the show continues to radiate, from *Iron Chef America* on the Food Network to “BJ Iron Chef” at the College’s Burton-Judson Residence Hall.

Unlike the Japanese original, which required chefs to cook with one dramatically revealed secret ingredient (“*River eel!*”), the BJ version is built around a theme. Last year’s competition was held on Valentine’s Day—which also happened to be the eighth anniversary of the death of Dolly, the first mammalian clone, and the date of a 1955 University report recommending that BJ be converted to housing for professional students with “homogeneity of interests.” Only the twisted genius of resident master Joshua Scodel, a professor of English and comparative literature, could manage to combine those three unrelated events into a unified theme: “Sweet hearts, sharp minds, and defiant diversity.”

The *Iron Chef* competition is just one of several beloved house traditions at BJ, which include the BJ Olympics and fielding a Scavenger Hunt team. In addition, the resident masters sponsor weekly activities for dorm residents, ranging from theater and opera performances to hockey games and study breaks. All of the housing activities are heavily subsidized so that every student can participate, regardless of economic circumstances. ■

Christina von Nolcken levies her judgment.



## ➔ Bread and Circuses

Iron Chef is just one of the hundreds of house events underwritten by the Parents Fund for Housing Activities. The Parents Fund makes it possible for all students to participate in house activities, regardless of their financial circumstances. For more information or to contribute, please contact:

Kelly Finn, AB'06

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### BJ IRON CHEF 2009 COMPETITION RULES

(An Excerpt)

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**The BJ Iron Chef competition will take place on Saturday, February 14 at 3:30. The one day will include grocery shopping, food preparation, and judging.**

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Each of the seven houses of BJ dormitory will be invited to produce one team of Iron Chefs. Houses will be limited to \$35 for shopping for preparation of their prodigious meal platters. Houses will be expected to show receipts both to provide (inconclusive) proof that they have not exceeded the expenditure limit and in order to be reimbursed by the beneficent masters.

A house team may be composed of however many human components the house sees fit ranging from a minimum of three (of which two must be undergraduate residents rather than time-on-their-hands RHs) to a maximum of 15. House teams should consider factors such as kitchen space, decreasing marginal utility, and having to spread The Glory between multiple members.

The judges will consist of a panel of four hungry yet discerning VIPs (Andrew Abbott, Gustavus F. and Ann M. Swift distinguished service professor in the Department of Sociology and the College; John Boyer, Martin A. Ryerson distinguished service professor of history and dean of the College; Aramark manager Thomas Thorne; and Christina von Nolcken, associate professor in English and the College and associate chair for undergraduate studies in English).

The teams' creations will be scored according to two basic categories: taste and creativity. Each judge will rank each house team's platter 1–7 in each category, 7 being excellent and 1 being, well, rather crappy.

The judges will return to announce the first- and second-place winners. Awesome prizes will be distributed. Although in the end, we all know prizes are mere supplements to The Glory, the true motivating force behind BJ competitions. Everybody will go home sated and proud to have been part of the *Fourth Annual BJ Iron Chef Competition*. Yeah!



## Lost in Translation

### Gifts, grants, and gaffes.

“I’M PRETTY MUCH genetically incapable of speaking a foreign language,” says Steve Strandberg, AB’78. “I have absolutely no facility whatsoever.” As an undergrad, Strandberg, an economics major, was able to avoid language classes by substituting additional math classes instead.

After graduation, Strandberg spent four years working in the Middle East, mostly Saudi Arabia and Jordan, even though he spoke no Arabic. “I learned the numbers on a license plate,” he says, “and to say *shokran* (thank you). It would have

been helpful to understand that culture at a much deeper level.”

Last year, Strandberg and his family donated \$50,000 to underwrite Foreign Language Acquisition Grants (FLAG grants) for College students. FLAG grants are \$3,000 awards to help defray the cost of intermediate or advanced language study abroad. “It’s highly likely that kids going through school today will live and work internationally, unlike my generation,” says Strandberg. “It’s absolutely imperative for our citizens to be able to inter-

## The Big Picture

FLAG awards help defray the cost of intermediate or advanced language study abroad.



Left to right: FLAG recipients Edwin Sweeney and Alice Lee at the Forbidden City. FLAG recipient Emily Pramik rides a paddle boat at Beijing's Beihai Imperial Gardens.

In the summer of 2009, 16 College students used FLAG grants to study in Asia—13 in China, two in Japan, and one in Vietnam. *The College Newsletter* asked them, did you have any particularly embarrassing or frustrating moments?

## ONE DAY THE CLEANING LADY WAS SICK, AND I HAD SOME PEACHES. I OFFERED HER ONE, AND SHE CRACKED UP.

### FORBIDDEN FRUIT

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Peaches in Beijing are known for being beautiful, big, and delicious. One day the cleaning lady was sick, and I had some peaches. I offered her one, and she cracked up. It turns out that I messed up the pronunciation of peach, so even though my meaning was clear (I was holding a peach out to her), what I said was not “Would you like a peach?” I had instead asked her if she wanted to make love.

**Edwin Sweeney, Class of 2011**

### INK, EPISODE, AU PAIR

.....

One day I made a list of words I didn't know and could not explain with any amount of charades: neuron, ink, patriotic, U-turn, string beans, episode, satire, primary color, au pair, schizophrenia.... It is exhausting to have to water down all of your ideas.

Sometimes I asked myself, Why am I doing this? I know the moment I stop drilling characters daily, I will probably forget all of them. The only reason I could fathom for this masochistic pursuit is that learning Chinese is a kind of dare. Your brain is not supposed to be able to do this, the way the human body is not supposed to fly through the air like a Chinese acrobat.

**Lelia Glass, Class of 2012**

### CALL ME MR. DAI

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One of our professors was named Dai Yunjuan, and in the Chinese tradition we called her Dai Laoshi (Professor Dai). On a weekend trip she was accom-

panied by her husband. When we asked about him in class the next day, we called him Dai Xiansheng (Mr. Dai) and were very surprised when Dai Laoshi was overcome by a fit of the giggles. In China the woman keeps her own name, so by referring to her husband as Dai Xiansheng we were unintentionally calling him by her name.

Dai Laoshi has a great sense of humor, though. She told us to continue calling her husband Dai Xiansheng. My roommate still has trouble remembering what the poor man's real name actually is.

**Tara Beeny, Class of 2011**

### I WANT TO GO HOME

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I met a graduate student at the swimming pool, and we ended up working out together for a good part of the summer. One week he didn't show up, so the next week I asked him what happened. He said his parents came to visit him in Beijing. So automatically I ask: Have they left already? Except in Chinese that can also mean ‘Have they died already?’ as in ‘leaving the Earth.’ So he quickly corrects me, ‘Yes, my parents have gone home,’ and I feel bad for the next two hours while we swim.

**Angelica Wong, Class of 2011**

## Say the Word

For more information about contributing to the FLAG program, please contact:

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act with other cultures by speaking their languages.”

The Strandbergs' gift is earmarked for students who are studying in Asia. Strandberg chose that region, he says, because “it's an area that is going to become increasingly important in all realms—economically, culturally, socially.”

As for his own international experience, Strandberg laughs ruefully when asked to name an awkward moment. “They were all awkward,” he says. “There was not one that was easy and smooth.”

At a buffet lunch in Kuwait, for example, the food was labeled in Arabic. “I came back to the table with seconds of this particular dish,” he says. “All my Arab colleagues were laughing at me. I hadn't been able to read that I was eating sheep's brains, which I then stopped eating.

“It was good the first time around.” ■

# Meet the Katen Scholars

College students investigate breast cancer, the Internet as a health information tool, and more.



## THIS PAST SUMMER,

**FIVE EXCEPTIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS** had the chance to pursue their own research projects in medicine, under the supervision of top faculty mentors. The Katen Scholars—named for donor Karen L. Katen, AB'70, MBA'74, senior adviser at Essex Woodlands Health Ventures and a University trustee—worked side by side with senior researchers. The opportunity is “phenomenal at such a young age,” says J. Violet Gannon, director of the Chicago Careers in Health Professions program. “These students are being mentored at all levels, by faculty, postdocs, medical students, and researchers in the basic sciences. It’s a fantastic opportunity for undergraduates.”

In addition to their lab work, over the summer the Katen Scholars met in a weekly seminar, led by Gannon, on social aspects of medicine. Readings included articles on clinical ethics, health-care disparities, and alternative medicine. At the end of the summer, the scholars presented their work in progress at a symposium. They continue to work on their research during the academic year, which “will probably lead to a publication or academic presentation,” says Gannon—another significant achievement.

The Katen Scholarship is just one element of the Chicago Careers in Health Professions (CCHP) program, which is open to College students inter-

ested in pursuing a career in the field. On the academic side, CCHP sponsors collaborative study groups, test preparation for the MCAT, and workshops on interviewing for medical school. The program also connects students with public-service opportunities, internships, externships, and mentoring.

At the same time, the program helps undergraduates understand just how many options there are in the health professions, such as public health, dental practice, veterinary medicine, nursing, and much more. “We’re trying to deromanticize health and medicine,” says Gannon, “so students choose a career that’s right for them based on facts, not on Hollywood mythology.” ■

**1 HENRY FENG**  
Third-year, majoring in biological sciences, biochemistry, and chemistry

**Hometown:** Originally Jinhu, China; now Marlton, New Jersey

**Languages spoken:** English and Chinese

**Summer research project:** Design of a molecular tool that could be used to track certain populations of insulin granules within pancreatic beta cells

**Most important thing I learned this summer:** Even in carefully controlled and sterile experiments, unknown contaminations smaller than a speck of dust could easily set the plans back another week. Science can involve a bit of luck.

**Biggest surprise:** I learned more about science and lab techniques this summer than in my entire life.

**Insights at odd times:** I had a dream once that revealed what was going wrong in my experiment. I performed the protocol correctly in my dream, even though I had not in the lab.

**Second-choice fantasy profession:** Roller-coaster designer. Roller coasters constantly challenge what is possible.

**2 ADERONKE BAMBOSE**  
Fourth-year, majoring in biological sciences and international studies

**Hometown:** Lagos, Nigeria

**Languages spoken:** English and Yoruba

**Summer research project:** The role of the Internet in expanding access to health information

**Most difficult technical problem:** Academic-style writing. In classes, we prove our position as a lawyer or politician would. In scientific writing, we present our findings so others can assess our logic and further investigate our work.

**Second-choice fantasy profession:** A flight attendant—but only on international flights, only in first class, and the uniform must be acceptable.

Left: The scholars prepare for a presentation of their work. They will continue their research throughout the academic year.

**3 MEGHA SHANKAR**  
Third-year, majoring in anthropology and biological sciences

**Hometown:** I grew up in Tokyo from 1993 to 1999, I currently live in Buffalo Grove, and my parents are from Bangalore, India. I consider all three my hometown.

**Languages spoken:** English. I can understand Kannada and speak it minimally.

**Summer research project:** An investigation of increases in mitochondrial calcium in neurons as a main cause of brain cell death

**Most important thing I learned:** Research takes patience. My mentor would always tell the students in the lab, “Research is about repeating your work.”

**Second-choice fantasy profession:** Hip-hop artist.

**4 ADDIE HILL**  
Fourth-year, majoring in biological sciences

**Hometown:** Lebanon, New Jersey

**Summer research project:** I examined the P-Serine STAT1 protein levels in white blood cells of multiple-sclerosis and neuromyelitis-optica patients to determine if there was a significant difference between how the two diseases act in the body.

**Most important thing I learned this summer:** Science takes time.

**Most difficult technical problem:** Human subjects are extremely variable, so the data was sometimes hard to interpret.

**Level of parental understanding:** My parents came to visit me last summer, and I was able to show them what I do in the lab. I don't think they completely get the science behind the techniques, even though they are both physicians.

**How I spin down after a long day in the lab:** I watch *The Bachelorette*, *Desperate Housewives*, or *30 Rock*.

**Second-choice fantasy profession:** Wildlife photographer. Animals don't pose for the camera and never complain about you photographing their bad side.

## → ...Doctor in the House?

For more information about the Chicago Careers in Health Professions program, or to contribute or mentor, please contact:  
J. Violet Gannon  
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**5 NANCY KASVOSVE**  
Third-year, majoring in biological sciences and public policy

**Hometown:** Harare, Zimbabwe

**Languages spoken:** English, Shona

**Summer research project:** Investigation of breast-cancer risk, looking at TP53 genotyping in a Nigerian population

**What no one knows about my lab:** It is probably one of the biggest labs on campus and like a little United Nations (almost everybody is foreign). My work is very novel—nobody has ever done the study I am doing on the Nigerian population. And my mentor is a great dancer.

**Level of parental understanding:** My parents do not have the least idea what I am doing. They are more concerned about when I am going to become a doctor with a Nobel Prize on my desk, and of course when I plan to come home. Before that I plan to find a cure for AIDS.

**Second-choice fantasy profession:** A particular type of policewoman in Zimbabwe—I would like to play in the police band. I got the idea from going to Independence Day celebrations. The actual police work doesn't interest me.



Gannon (right) observes Kasvosve in the lab.



When Charles Jacobs, AB'53, JD'56, was an undergraduate, he was one of the founding members of the Compass Players, the famous improvisational comedy troupe that spawned Second City and later *Saturday Night Live*. Jacobs's life and career have been no less improvisational, spanning law, real-estate development, managed-care systems—and now, in his role as president of Friends of Madame White Snake, opera production and promotion.

# Show of Support

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the time it was brand-new. And we had this amazingly sophisticated audience at the University of Chicago. When the audiences suggested what the scenes ought to be, you can simply imagine the kind of thing that they would do—asking for a Schopenhauer soliloquy, etc., etc.

Eventually, Bernie Sahlins [AB'43] relocated the theater to the Near North Side and changed it to Second City. But Compass Cabaret could not have been the success that it was if it hadn't been at the University of Chicago. It was exactly the right environment, at exactly the right time, for this kind of experimental, improvisational activity. And we had great fun doing it.

## Did you miss theater once you stopped doing it?

I went to the Law School and got kind of busy—I worked at the *Law Review*, as a research assistant for a legal textbook, and after graduation, as a teaching fellow—twice, because the first time was interrupted by the draft and a term at the London School of Economics. By then Compass was Second City. But of course I missed it. I missed it terribly.

## Did your theater experience influence your law practice at all?

I did become a litigator, but I didn't practice law for very long. You've got to have fire in the belly to do that kind of thing. Throughout the '60s I engaged

The InterQual set became the backbone of managed care in the '80s and '90s.

## How did you come to be president of Friends of Madame White Snake?

My wife, Cerise, is ethnic Chinese, raised in Singapore. She took a famous Chinese myth, Madame White Snake, the story of a demon who yearns to be human, and wrote a libretto based on it, just for fun. But the libretto was good; it really was powerful.

We found an opera company, Opera Boston, that wanted to produce it, and together we found Zhou Long, a well-known Chinese American composer, to write the music. Then the Beijing Musical Festival wanted to co-commission it. It's going to premiere in Boston in February 2010 and then travel, we hope, to Hangzhou—the myth's site, to the Shanghai Expo, and to Beijing.

But opera is an art form that requires a lot of money to mount. So we set up an organization called Friends of Madame White Snake to raise the money needed to do a first-class production that can travel internationally.

## You've been a generous longtime supporter of the College. Which programs particularly appeal to you as a donor?

Having run organizations myself, I'm a great believer that you find somebody to run an organiza-

## What was Hyde Park like when you lived there?

I came to the University of Chicago in 1950, the very end of the Hutchins era. How can I describe it? It was like being in an intellectual Greenwich Village—eye-opening and extraordinary. We had this enormous collection of very, very bright people, all crammed into this very small space, from 55th Street to 60th Street, Stony Island to Cottage Grove. Nobody went away in the summertime, because things were so exciting and so much was going on. I lived on 57th Street, right above what was then *the* leading off-campus bookstore in the area. That was really being right in the middle of the ferment.

## What was it like, performing with the Compass Players?

I wasn't strictly a "performer" with Compass, though I did occasionally do a bit on stage—but rather the impresario, if you will. I found the space, arranged the lease, saw to the renovations, found the proprietor for the connected tavern, helped engage the players, saw to the promotion, and helped produce some of the earliest scenes.

Everybody knows about improvisational technique now, because of *Saturday Night Live*. But at

**IT WAS** EXACTLY THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT, AT EXACTLY THE RIGHT TIME, FOR THIS KIND OF EXPERIMENTAL, IMPROVISATIONAL ACTIVITY. AND WE HAD GREAT FUN DOING IT.

in a variety of activities: real-estate development, performance-improvement consulting, computerized law searching, health-care-law seminars.

## How did you get into managed-care systems?

I created a structured methodology for looking at hospitals—an accountability system. The American Medical Association developed a set of guidelines that were unusable, whereas my company, InterQual, developed a set that were very, very useful.

tion and support that person. So if I'm going to support the College, what I do is I support John Boyer. I give money to the Dean's Discretionary Fund for John Boyer to spend the way he thinks he ought to spend it, because I'm in no position to know, really, the best way to spend that money.

I do the same thing at the Law School. I give money to the Dean's Fund. Every dean is fighting for his own things against every other dean, so what you want to do is support your guy. ■



one in my house—and I’m a very expressive person, physically and otherwise—so on the hallway there was someone who was in the pep band, and she saw how energetic I was, and she expressed that the person in charge of the pep program was feeling around for a new mascot.

**Does the Phoenix have a name?** Yes. His name is Phil.

**Phil the Phoenix?** Mmhmm. I’ve said to a few people, when I felt like being creative, he enjoys long walks on the faces of the opposition, and being engulfed in flames.

➔ [college.uchicago.edu](http://college.uchicago.edu)  
 Read the full *Maroon* interview and more about College life at [college.uchicago.edu](http://college.uchicago.edu).

## College Online

### Read all about it.

This fall, the College launched a new Web site, [college.uchicago.edu](http://college.uchicago.edu). Edited by Susan Allen, AB’09, the site features the work of student writers, photographers, and videographers, as well as links to student newspapers and blogs.

**Q&A: Shaking a tail feather with the Phoenix mascot (excerpt) by Jordan Holliday, originally published in the *Chicago Maroon*, November 13, 2009**

Since last fall, Stephen Bonnett, ’10, has been the man behind the University’s Phoenix mascot, boogying along the sidelines at football and basketball games in a threadbare, maroon-and-white suit that you wouldn’t figure to be a phoenix unless you asked (and many do).

**How did you break into—I don’t even know what to call it. Is it “mascoteering”?** I knew some-

Front and Back Cover Photographs: Dan Dry



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1116 EAST 59TH STREET  
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