

# OPINIONS & EXPRESSIONS

## A Legacy of Leadership

The passing last fall of legendary professor S. Lane Faison '29 spurred thoughts on his remarkable impact on students as well as the influence of our faculty as a whole.

Those touched by Lane's presence at Williams, as so many of us were, will be happy to know that he was an active member of the community well into his 99th year—full of insight, sparkle and wit.

Since he arrived in Williamstown as a freshman in fall 1925, the man who would become the Amos Lawrence Professor of Art, emeritus, charmed generations of Williamsfolk—charmed *and* inspired, since his influence was profound. He was a respected scholar and widely read author on the art of his time, and he played a central role in the return to rightful owners of art plundered in World War II. But Lane's finest legacy is undoubtedly his students.

With Whit Stoddard '35, Bill Pierson and others in the department, Lane turned countless young people on to the beauty and challenges of art. A remarkable number of them went on to become leading administrators, curators, scholars, creators and supporters—the famous Williams Art Mafia. Many more were enriched by a lifelong engagement with art.

Lane personifies the Williams faculty in many ways, especially in the work of generating future leaders, which happens across the College. As examples, look at the majors of this year's Bicentennial Medalists, alumni cited by the College for remarkable achievement in any field:

Stanley O. Foster '55 (biology), a leader of the successful effort to eradicate smallpox; Eric Reeves '72 (philosophy), a noted citizen activist for human rights in Sudan; Anna L. Waring '78 (psychology), president of Josephinum Academy in inner-city Chicago; Gregory M. Avis '80 (political economy), venture capitalist, philanthropist and community developer; Elizabeth A. Andersen '87 (history, Russian and Soviet studies), developer of legal systems in emerging democracies; and Cathy Salser '88 (studio art), artist and founder of a program that uses art to help victims of domestic violence.

You can learn more about these inspirational people and see the impressive list of all Bicentennial Medalists at [www.williams.edu/alumni/news/awards/](http://www.williams.edu/alumni/news/awards/). To do so is to look at the legacy of the Williams faculty. Graduates of this small college have a disproportionate impact for good in the world as leaders in their fields and in their communities. And when you ask what influenced them, as I often do, the answer almost invariably includes homage to one or more professors at Williams.

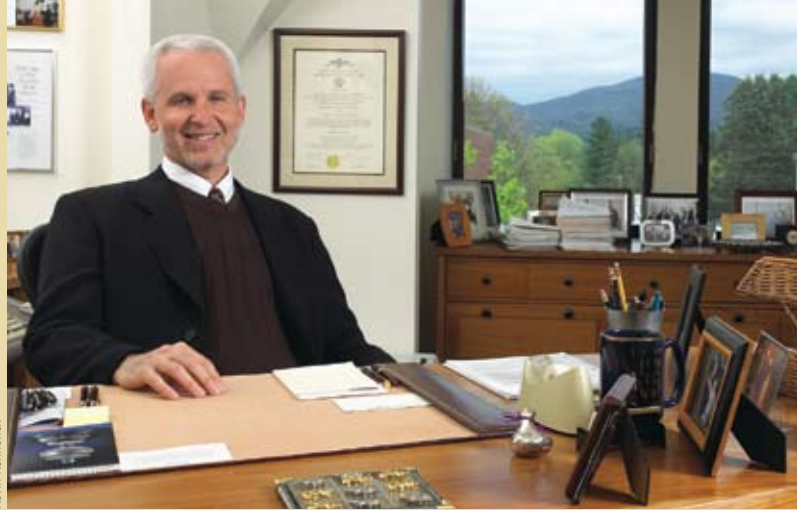
Long known as a college that produces leaders, Williams in recent years has begun to study formally the phenomenon of leadership. Our leadership studies program (see [www.williams.edu/leadership/](http://www.williams.edu/leadership/)) joins a movement within the academy to focus scholarly study on a subject of such importance to society.

That movement is itself inspired by the person widely regarded as its intellectual founder, James MacGregor Burns '39, Woodrow Wilson Professor of Government, emeritus, whose 1978 book *Leadership* established the field. Jim remains at 88 as engaged and productive as ever. It must be something in the water.

"The ultimate test of practical leadership," he wrote, "is the realization of intended, real change that meets people's enduring needs."

That's what so many Williams alumni over many generations have been contributing to society. Their leadership is a great legacy of the influence of the Williams faculty. And that influence is why the College has expanded the number of professors, so that the Faisons and Burnses of today—and indeed they do exist—can ever more deeply inspire, challenge and shape our students and, through them, the world. ■

—Morty Schapiro



Kevin Kennefick

I enjoyed reading Kevin Delany's '50 article "The Saigon I Left Behind" in the September 2006 *Alumni Review*. My two early encounters with the war were seeing my oldest brother enlist as a Marine in 1966 and getting my lottery number in Baxter

## a memory of vietnam

Hall. (Luckily the war was winding down and at a stage where student deferments were still valid, and draftees were conscripted with lottery numbers well below mine.)

My brother survived 13 harrowing months fighting on the Demilitarized Zone (that's an oxymoron!) in all the major battles of the time (1968-69). The nightly news told us the Marines in Con Tien had been overrun by Viet Cong, only to learn the next day that the Marines had retaken the outpost. We didn't learn of my brother's fate until about six weeks later. (He survived physically unharmed.)

I visited Saigon last year for business and visited many of the same places described by Kevin. Most poignant was the museum of which he wrote, and the picture that stands out in my mind is of the camera with the bullet hole right next to the eyepiece; if it was in use at the time, the user couldn't possibly have survived.

I think many of today's generation don't understand what happened to the South Vietnamese after we pulled out—ingloriously, I think. I believe Mr. Delany understands, and I hope today's and future generations learn about the aftermath.

—Bruce K. Entwisle '76, Lower Gwynedd, Pa.

I am outraged by President Morty Schapiro's remarks in the September 2006 *Alumni Review* ("Faith in the Liberal Arts").

Neither Williams nor the world needs more organized religion. The

entire purpose of a liberal arts education is eviscerated

## religion vs. liberal arts

if ideas are to be taught through the distorted prisms of irrational beliefs. It is a tragic day when the president of a major institution of higher learning believes that a grab bag of contradictory tales and murky myths should be placed on equal footing with reason and scientific method.

—Michael Menard '70, Belfast, Maine

As the Field Memorial Professor of Astronomy, I was especially interested in "The Brothers Field," March 2006. The money for my professorship was given

## field in the field

by David Dudley Field, Class of

1825, in memory of his grandchild Harriet Louisa Dudley Field. The professorship was established in 1865, and I am only the fifth Field Memorial Professor.

In the late 19th century, a Field Memorial Observatory was set up atop The Knolls (the street is still called Observatory Lane). I recently came across the 1901 membership certificate for the observatory from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific.

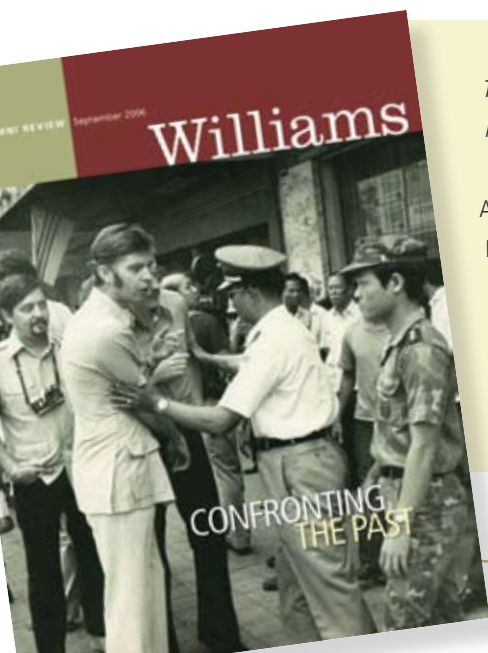
—Jay M. Pasachoff, Williamstown, Mass.

## LETTERS

## editor's note

In the September 2006 article "Leadership Study," the *Alumni Review* ran a list of Williams faculty who became college or university presidents. The list was compiled from recent memory, so, naturally, we heard from several alumni whose memories were better than ours. Thanks to Paul W. Hannan '71 and Bob Furey '64 for pointing out that we omitted English professor William Glasser, president of Southern Vermont College, and religion professor Robert Spivey, president of Randolph-Macon. Also, history professor Mark Curtis became president of Scripps College. If you know of any others, please let the editors know by contacting [alumni.review@williams.edu](mailto:alumni.review@williams.edu).

The *Alumni Review* welcomes letters related to topics in the magazine. Send letters to: *Alumni Review*, P.O. Box 676, Williamstown, Mass., 01267-0676; fax: 413.597.4158; e-mail [alumni.review@williams.edu](mailto:alumni.review@williams.edu). Letters may be edited for clarity and space.



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## Looking at Art, Lane's Way

by Eugene "EJ" Johnson '59

Turn the slide on the left upside down, Steve," Lane Faison '29 said to his trusty projectionist, Steve McNichol, some time in the winter of 1957, when I was taking Art 1-2.

What? Turn the picture over? I was sure that Lane, a pixy grin on his face, was playing a joke on us, but he was serious as well as sly. Turning a painting upside down, Lane then explained, cancels out the interference of subject matter and gravity when one is trying to understand its purely visual qualities.

Sure enough, the brilliance of the composition came through, once the picture, now inverted, was freed of distractions visually illiterate students find all too tempting. In his lectures, Lane taught us little about subject matter and a lot about how to look at a painting for its abstract qualities. That lesson can last a lifetime.

What is more daunting to the neophyte than telling a Manet from a Monet from a Pissarro from a Renoir from a Sisley? Lane showed us how to distinguish the styles of these artists with an ease I still find breathtaking and memorable after almost 50 years.

I proved the value of Lane's technique again to myself this past summer on my first visit to the Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek. I walked into a gallery filled with Impressionist pictures I had never seen before and named their authors with an accuracy that amazed me and the people I was with. Monet always inserts a big form that stops your progression into the space. His shapes

are large in scale. Renoir's curvy brushstrokes are like no other's. Pissarro often looks like Monet, but his sense of scale is smaller, and he doesn't block entry into his pictorial space the way Monet does. Sisley generally makes his buildings and trees float above a flooded landscape. Manet doesn't look like any of the others.

Can you tell Picasso from Braque in the years 1910-12? Almost nothing to it, if you know the Faison method. (Lane did admit that here even he could sometimes be fooled.) Braque remained a classical painter, even when inventing cubism. His compositions almost invariably have a base, his forms almost always respond to gravity, his shapes are less jagged. Picasso levitates his figures; his forms have a nervousness of outline and a more broken, angular quality.

Lane didn't teach us that Picasso drew much better than Braque, however. I learned that for myself before a Picasso and a Braque in Stuttgart. Lane doubtless knew this perfectly well. I believe that he chose not to tell us, because by the time you are close enough to a picture to evaluate the quality of the drawing, you are close enough to read the label and cheat. Lane always made you respond to the forms themselves.

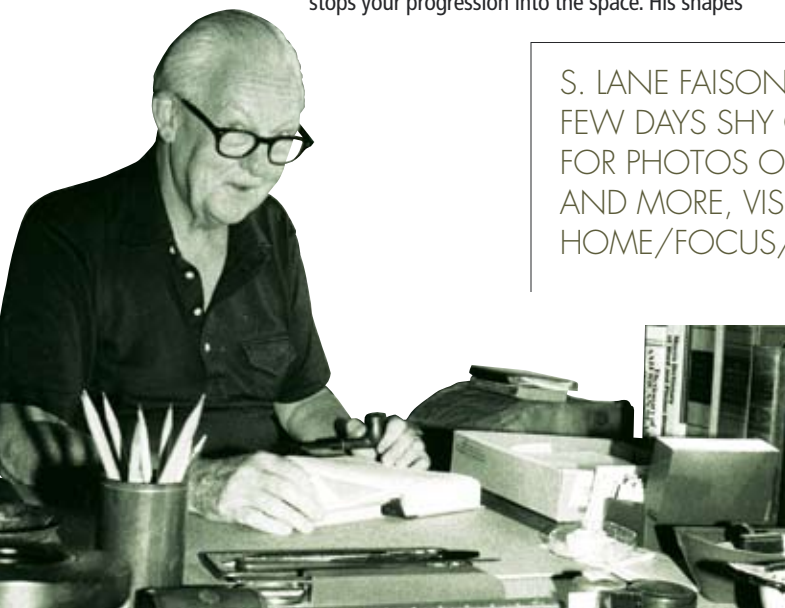
Lane went for the visual jugular. He was not necessarily a great speaker. Sometimes he mumbled a bit, and his voice was rather soft and soothing. But when it was time for the big, revelatory thrust, one word would erupt from his throat like a trumpet blast, cutting

through extraneous if fascinating detail to get to the essence of a work.

Early in my teaching career I was trying to explain to a class of art majors the complex workings of the overlap-

ping elements of the façade of Alberti's Sant'Andrea in Mantua, my dissertation topic. "It's the VERTICALS, the VER-TI-CALS," Lane called from the back of the room. It is, of course, the verticals. They unify the façade and make it one of the great moments in Renaissance architecture. Lane saw the TREEEE, while I was still in the woods. ■

*EJ Johnson '59 is the Williams Class of 1955 Memorial Professor of Art.*



Kate (Leslie) Christianson '80

S. LANE FAISON DIED ON NOV. 11, A FEW DAYS SHY OF HIS 99TH BIRTHDAY. FOR PHOTOS OF FAISON, INTERVIEWS AND MORE, VISIT [WWW.WILLIAMS.EDU/HOME/FOCUS/FAISON](http://WWW.WILLIAMS.EDU/HOME/FOCUS/FAISON).