

# AGORA

NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

The University of Alabama College of Arts & Sciences Fall 2006 Issue 4

*"It is the habit alone of reasoning which can make a reasoner."*—Shaftesbury (1671-1716)

Greetings and welcome to the fourth edition of *Agora*, the Philosophy Department's Annual Newsletter!



James R. Otteson  
Chairman

I should begin by saying that my only contribution to the newsletter this year, aside from this brief introduction, is to have given the newsletter its new name, *Agora*. I chose that name because that was what the ancient Greeks called their open-air public gathering spaces where people met for conversation and exchange. That is the function I hope this newsletter can serve—as a virtual *agora* for the growing UA philosophy community of faculty, students, alumni, and friends.

Everything else in the newsletter is due to the hard work of its founding and continuing editor, Professor Norvin Richards, and our design editor (and department secretary!), Dorothy Bazemore. Thank you, Professor Richards and Ms. Bazemore!

As you will see, the Philosophy Department has been a busy place this past year. We are now located on the third, not the second, floor of ten Hoor hall. Although it was hard to leave our beloved home of many years, our new digs are swell. I like to call it the Penthouse Suite—clearly an acknowledgement of our importance. Or perhaps of our close proximity to the intelligible realm of the Forms. Or, somewhat less charitably, of our close proximity to the clouds. In any case, come visit us and tell us what you think.

Despite our move, our teaching and research are continuing unabated. One member of our department got tenure and promotion this past year, another is applying for tenure and promotion this fall, and yet another is applying for full professor. Two others had one-semester leaves during which they did significant work on important projects. Others are traveling to give papers, are being invited to contribute to prestigious projects, are conducting research in areas outside of philosophy, and on and on.

The Department, moreover, is working on several interesting projects. It is maintaining, first of all, its close alliance to the Blount Undergraduate Initiative. It has also begun a working relationship with Moral Forum, an arm of the new Center for Ethics on campus. Its three new “tracks”—Mind and Brain, Pre-Law, and Philosophical Foundations of Civil Society—are attracting good students. It is a principal, with New College, in the new interdisciplinary minor in Civic Engagement and Leadership. And it is participating in a new Pre-Law Freshman Learning Community.

It is with great pride that I serve as chairman of such an active and interesting department.

Please stop by, e-mail us, or visit our website when you can. We would be happy to hear your thoughts—“philosophical” or otherwise!

Respectfully yours,  
James R. Otteson



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# FACULTY ACTIVITIES

**Torin Alter** wrote several articles on consciousness and intentionality ([www.as.ua.edu/philos/talter/scholarship.htm](http://www.as.ua.edu/philos/talter/scholarship.htm)), some of which he presented at conferences, including the APA Central Division Meeting. He also finished his term as Secretary-Treasurer of the Alabama Philosophical Society and began his term as Vice-President. He says that whether this was a promotion or demotion is anyone's guess.



**Scott Hestevold** published an online review of Georges Charpak and Henri Broch's *Debunked!* in *Metapsychology*. He has recently begun (with W.R. Carter) a new paper on time and identity, and he will also continue to work on papers about mercy and compassion.



**Max Hocutt** (Emeritus) published "Was Bentham a Utilitarian?" in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, "Sunstein on Rights" in *The Independent Review*, read proofs of "Education v Indoctrination" for *Academic Questions* and of a review of Stephen Hicks's "Explaining Postmodernism" for *Ayn Rand Studies*, wrote three entries for a forthcoming *Encyclopedia of American Philosophy* and three entries for a new website for the Institute for Humane Studies.



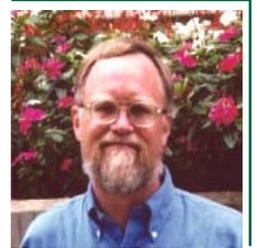
**James Otteson** reports that he has weathered his first year as chairman of the department relatively successfully, and that most of the psychological scarring will fade in time. Last October he traveled to Santiago, Chile to deliver the Fondecyt Lectures; the lectures are currently being translated into Spanish and will be published early in 2007. This spring he was a UA representative on an "academic exchange" to the University of Havana in Cuba, where he and a small group of other UA professors made presentations on their research in the hopes of encouraging joint or collaborative research projects with faculty at the University of Havana. (He can neither confirm nor deny that he smoked Cuban cigars and drank several mojitos while conducting his research.) His book *Actual Ethics* was published by Cambridge University Press this June, and he has just signed a contract to write another book, *Adam Smith*, for Continuum Press. This summer he will be a Visiting Teaching Scholar at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, where he will teach a graduate course jointly listed in the Economics and Philosophy departments on Adam Smith's moral theory. Finally, last but not least, he and his wife are expecting their fourth—yes, fourth!—child at the end of the summer.



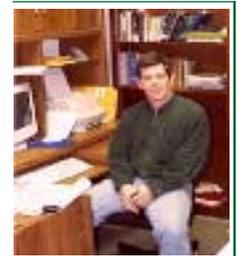
**Stuart Rachels** devoted his sabbatical leave and his year's research to continuing the work of his father, James Rachels, who died in 2003. Stuart submitted the manuscripts for three books, all of which continue Jim's work: *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 5th edition (Stuart Rachels; previous editions by James Rachels); *The Right Thing to Do: Basic Readings in Moral Philosophy*, 4th edition (Stuart Rachels; previous editions by James Rachels); *The Legacy of Socrates: Essays in Moral Philosophy* (James Rachels; edited by Stuart Rachels). The first of these books (*Elements*) is the best-selling textbook in philosophy; in its 20 years, it has sold over half a million copies.



**Norvin Richards** published "Choosing When To Die" in the *Journal of Ethics* and "Life or Death Decisions in the NICU" in the *Journal of Perinatology*. (an NICU is a Newborn Intensive Care Unit, and the journal is for physicians who specialize in care of newborns.) Definitely time for Norv to write about something more cheerful.



**Richard Richards** was granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor this year, both richly deserved. He also published "Reply to Dickie" in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, "Evolutionary Naturalism and the Logical Structure of Valuation" in *Cosmos and History: the Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* and "Is Domestic Breeding Evidence For (or Against) Darwinian Evolution?" in a volume entitled *Scientific Evidence: Philosophical Theories and Applications*. In addition, he and Rita traveled to Buenos Aires for the annual Congreso Internacional de Tango Argentino.



**Chase Wrenn** and Michelle Hurd (2003) were married in October, 2005. Chase's more minor achievements include three forthcoming articles: "Inter-world probability and the problem of induction" (*Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*), "Why There are no Epistemic Duties" (*Dialogue: The Canadian Philosophical Review*), and "Epistemology as Engineering?" (*Theoria*). Anyone who places *one* article a year is doing great. Chase comes up for tenure this coming year: talk about easy cases!



# News Of Philosophy Alums

**Ronald Higgins** (BA 1967, MA 1970) took his law degree from Cumberland in 1981, and worked as a Court referee in Gadsden for 23 years, retiring last year. He has served as organist at Attalla First United Methodist Church for 12 years, and as organist at Temple Beth Israel of Gadsden for about 20 years. He will begin teaching Ethics at Gadsden State Community College this summer. He and his wife have one son, who expects to receive his bachelor's degree in marketing and computer science from UA this summer.

**Karen Nelson Dice** (1975) is an attorney here in Tuscaloosa with a specialty in divorce work. Her husband, Ric, teaches English at Shelton State and creative writing for the University's Distance Education program. Their son Hunter has just completed his first year at the University, and their daughter Lena is 14 which is probably a full-time job.

**Jo Hood** (MA 1977) and his sister Heather own and operate H. L. Hood, in Orange Beach, a women's specialty store featuring clothing, accessories, shoes and swimwear, and are opening an additional store, H2O by H. L. Hood, also in Orange Beach. Jo lives on Ono Island and has raced sailboats in the Gulf Coast area for over 30 years. He believes he may have competed last against Max Hocutt at the Buccaneer Yacht Club (Mobile) Summer Regatta. Wouldn't you like a chance to try to humiliate one of your old pros, boys and girls?

**Margie Brooke** (MA 1977) is Manager of Human Resources and Payroll System Services at Vulcan Materials in Birmingham. She is the mother of one daughter, Anna, and one son, Jeb, who finishes this year at Furman, where he majored in theatre.

**Carl Sosnin** retired this year from Protective Life Insurance Company in Birmingham, where he was an assistant vice-president. Carl is active in theatre in Birmingham, and he and Carol have a 16-year-old son, also named Carl.

**Craig Alexander** (1977) has left Adams and Reese and is now practicing law with Rumberger, Kirk and Caldwell. "It is a Florida-based firm with a small Birmingham office that we're going to try to expand. RKC is a litigation firm, rather than a general practice firm with a litigation department, and I think I'll find it a good fit."

**Ken Smith** (1978) is a neurosurgeon in Kingsport, TN, running a three-doctor practice at the Blue Ridge Neuroscience Center. It's not brain surgery, but...no, wait, it *is* brain surgery. No one who knew Ken is the least surprised!

**Neal Flum** (1985) continues as Associate Director of Athletic Bands here at the University. He and Jeanne Baker have been married for two years, and live in Birmingham.

**Nick Sella** (1985) owns and operates Nomadic, Inc., a Tuscaloosa business specializing in computer systems, networking, and software engineering. Nick also runs ultra-marathons; see the Dec. 6 issue of Tuscaloosa Magazine for a great article about this part of his life.

**Brian Carver** (1996) finished law school at Berkeley this spring. He writes "I take the California Bar Exam at the end of July. This September I'll be joining the Litigation Group in the Silicon Valley office of Fenwick & West LLP. By February of 2007 I expect



Jackie, Brian & daughter Cora Carver

to have moved to their San Francisco office. Fenwick & West provides comprehensive legal services to high technology and life sciences clients. (clients include Google, Cisco, Apple, Amazon.com, etc.)"

**Michael Casiday** (1997) has published a monograph that includes his translation of writings by Evagrius, an early father of the church, with an

introduction by Michael. A second monograph based on Michael's doctoral dissertation is scheduled to appear in December. He and his family live in Durham, England, which allows Michael a great deal of academic travel to Europe. Last but not far from least, he and Rachel happily await the October arrival of their fourth child.

**Amy Henry** (1998) has left Proctor & Gamble and is in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, "working for Sealy (the mattress company) in the marketing department. I'm the assistant marketing manager for Stearns & Foster. It's pretty cool, my boss and I get along well, which is really important to me. I plan to stick with it a couple of years then move on." She is "happily married since February, with the greatest 12-year-old step-daughter anyone could ask for."

**Travis Vaughn** (1998) is an Instructor in history and Latin and assistant football coach at Marion Military Institute, which the state is in the process of acquiring as the newest of its community colleges. He and his wife also own a restaurant in Marion, and have a son who is 18 months old this May. What, no hobbies in their spare time?

**Shane Weldon** (2001) passed the bar on the first try, and is an Associate at Galese and Ingram in Birmingham.

# News Of Philosophy Alums

**Monica Free** (2002), her sister and a fellow musician visited this summer, and Scott Hestevold and I had a wonderful time talking with them over tea at Ferguson Center. In a recent email, Monica said “I plan to finish my German degree in June and then take a break from studying and just work. I’ve got my eye on orchestra positions in the Netherlands which might become free, and until that happens, I’ve got my kabillion students to keep me busy.”

**Brett Smith** (2003) is an aquatic biologist for the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. His report: “My work is delightfully split



Brett Smith & friend

between lab and field work. Studying philosophy from splendid faculty has given me the ability to get some sort of handle on any claim thrown at me from any source. I can’t imagine an undergraduate education being complete without philosophy. Philosophy, and liberal arts in general, has the amazing benefit of eliminating any form of boredom from life.”

**James Seales** (1999) has been working as a tutor in a

high school for math and science. This fall, he will enroll in Divinity School at Vanderbilt.

**Ron Andress** (2003) has completed law school at Alabama and is headed to Mobile to work for a law firm there. The day of our alumni gathering, he also became engaged to Susan Martin, who graduated this spring with a B.S. in psychology.

**Scott Slover** (2003) worked in banking for a time, and has now completed his first year of law school at Ole Miss.

**Zac Dover** (2003) is a graduate student in German at UA with an interest in German linguistics.

**Alex Joyce** (2003) is in Chicago, working for two family businesses. “For my dad I sell chemical grouts that stop leaks in concrete... boring but cool. For my mom I sell English toffee, ([www.steeplechasetoffee.com](http://www.steeplechasetoffee.com)). For the past couple of weeks I’ve been doing stand up comedy. It had always been my biggest dream and biggest fear given I’d always been phobic of public speaking. It is the greatest feeling ever. Making strangers laugh is great. What’s even greater is the silence as the audience waits for the next joke. That silence means they’re listening. Powerful.”

**Jessica Kesler** (2003) has just completed her second year of law school at LSU. She made Moot Court this past fall, and was a finalist in LSU’s Tullis Competition, arguing an

appellate brief before judges of the First Circuit. Even with all that success, she says she knows beyond doubt that she does not want to be a trial attorney. She especially enjoys her classes dealing with securities, mortgages, banks, fraud, etc.

**Robin Preussel** (2003) has just graduated from the School of Law at Yale University. She will clerk for Judge R. David Proctor in the Northern District of Alabama.

**Katie Terry** (2003) has just graduated from the School of Law at the University of Virginia. Katie will work for Freeman, Mathis & Gary of Atlanta, specializing in government and corporate liability.

**Gabriel Walvatne** (2003) has finished his second year of law school at Maryland. He will work this summer in Baltimore for Miles & Stockbridge as part of a ten-week program with nine other people from all over the east coast. Half his summer’s work will be in litigation and half in transactions.

**Jeremy Berthon** (2000) graduated from law school at LSU, passed the bar, and does legal work for an insurance company that provides workers’ comp and longshore coverage to Louisiana employers.

He also reports that he “got married in September 2004 to a wonderful girl. We were dating when I was still at Alabama and now we live in Baton Rouge. She produces the morning news for our CBS affiliate. We bought a house in May of last year and have two cats. No children yet but I still feel like a grown up.”

**Josh Bell** (2004) has just completed his first year of medical school at UAB, where he is preparing for a career in family practice. One of 10 Rural Medical Scholars at UAB, Josh published a fine article in Business Ink on December 31, 2005, titled “Health Care for All: The Shortage of Rural Physicians and Ways it can be Addressed.” At this point, he has completed the course work for a Masters of Public Health, as well as making his start toward his medical degree. Last but far from least, he is engaged to be married this summer to Brooke Kennedy, who works as an athletic trainer at the Rec Center.

**Larry Pender** (2004) received his M.A. in sociology from Manchester University (UK) this past December. Starting this fall, he will attend law school at Boston University.

**Parker Sweet** (2004) has just completed his second year of law school at Alabama. He will spend the first part of the summer in Worcester, Mass, working for the Office of the United States Trustee, a division of the Department of Justice. His work for them will be subsidized by a grant from our law school’s Faculty Public Interest Law Committee. In the latter part of the summer Parker will work for Crabtree and Sweet in Mobile, and in the fall he will work with the law school’s Criminal Defense Clinic at the Public Defender’s Office and will also Intern with Judge Stilson, the bankruptcy judge here in Tuscaloosa.

# News Of Philosophy Alums

**Gaines Johnston** (2005) will begin law school at Alabama this coming fall.

**Christine Scott** (2005) has just completed her first year of study at Georgia State, in a program leading to an M.A. in Religious Studies. She has been appointed as the editorial assistant to Jeff Ruff of Marshall University, editor of the journal *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*.

**Derek Tokaz** (2005) has just competed his first year of law school at NYU. He will work this summer as a research assistant to one of the professors in the school, mostly on the curriculum for a class in legal research and writing but also on research in interdisciplinary legal studies.

**Charity Daniels** (2006) will take a semester off from school, after graduating in August. She is considering law school, and her tentative plan is take the LSAT in December.

**Robert Davis** (2006) will begin law school this coming fall, but isn't sure yet whether it will be at Alabama, Cumberland or Ole Miss.

**Matthew Satcher** (2006) is a summer intern in the Cancer Research Experience for Students program at UAB's School of Medicine, where he will begin medical school in the fall. Earlier this year Matthew's thesis for his Honors B.A. in philosophy was published in *Dialogue*, the journal for Phi Sigma Tau Honorary in philosophy.

**Bryant Mehaffey** (2006) will begin medical school this fall at UAB.

**Laura Coker, Sam Seigal and Nicholas Smith** also graduated this year, but we do not know their plans.

## In Memoriam

**John Thornton**, sophomore major in philosophy at the University, died in a one-car automobile accident near Pritchard. John was a gentle young man with a quiet passion for philosophy, which he pursued with great ability not only in his classes but at meetings of the philosophy club and at the Crimson Cafe coffeehouse. His early death is a terrible loss.

## HONORS & AWARDS

### Chase Espy

The University now has a Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility, housed in the Honors College and directed by Stephen Black. Its initial centerpiece is a course called "Moral Forum," the students in which prepare to debate a leading social issue of the day. This year's issue was whether the United States should legalize physician-assisted suicide.

The course terminates with a debate tournament, in which each two-student team must prepare to argue each side of the

issue. First prize this year was a \$2000 scholarship. The winning team were Chase Espy, a junior majoring in philosophy, and Zac Simon, a freshman majoring in American Studies. I attended the finals, and though both teams did well I was especially impressed with Chase's performance. He was well-prepared, clear, quick, and convincing—qualities his philosophy professors get to see on a regular basis. We're proud of him, and look forward to following his many successes to come.

### Kathryn Picard

Kathryn Picard, double major in philosophy and biology, has received a Randall Outstanding Undergraduate Research Award. She is attempting to discover close relatives of a fungus responsible for killing frogs, in order to discover how that fungus evolved. She plans a career in biological research, but is so good at philosophy that it could easily have been her career as well.

Next fall, Kathryn will study at the University of Glasgow, before returning to Alabama for her final semester.

## Departmental Awards

### Iredell Jenkins Endowed Memorial Scholarship

**Winner:** James Cook

**Second Prize:**

Matthew Satcher

Hugh Thompson

**Honorable Mention:**

Nicholas Gajewski

Bryant Mahaffey

Karissa Rinas

\*

### Marten & Marie ten Hour Prize

**Winner:** James Cook  
for his paper  
"Carnap's Real Argument:  
A Reexamination  
of 'Logical Behaviorism.'"

## Courses Offered 2005-2006

The department offered thirty classes this year, with its faculty also offering three classes for the Blount Undergraduate Initiative. In addition to the standard courses, we offered one 200-level class in aesthetics and another on philosophical issues in the criminal law, and the following seminars: Philosophy of Religion; Philosophy of Mind; Philosophy of Law; Truth and its Value; The Enduring Self: Fact or Fiction?; Capitalism and Morality; and Philosophy, Film and the Performing Arts.

# The Carl Sosnin Civil Liberties Lecture

On April 28, the Department was privileged to present the Carl Sosnin Civil Liberties Lecture, delivered by Professor Jeremy Waldron of Columbia University School of Law. Professor Waldron is the author of three important books in philosophy of law and too many highly influential articles to count, and was recently described by the New York Observer as “a Goliath in legal philosophy.” He titled his lecture “Waterboarding and Archetypes: The Importance of the Rule against Torture.”

At least to those in charge of our country, torturing a prisoner is no longer unthinkable, now that we are engaged in the War



left to right: Carl Sosnin, Carol Sosnin, Margie Brooke, Carl A. Sosnin, & Jeremy Waldron (Photo by John Northrop)

on Terrorism, though (as Professor Waldron made very clear) it remains prohibited by international law and by a number of accords to which we are signatories. Alan Dershowitz, of the Harvard School of Law, has argued that the fact is that prisoners will be tortured, and that it would be better to control this by adding a procedure through which the authorities could obtain a warrant to torture someone, as they have traditionally needed a warrant in order to enter someone’s home or tap someone’s phone. Professor Waldron’s talk argued against the Dershowitz proposal, urging that to do as he urges would run counter to a deep aspect of the spirit of our laws. The legal prohibition against torture is central to a broader refusal to employ brutality in our legal system, Waldron argued, a refusal manifested elsewhere in the prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment and in leading cases defining what it is to receive due process of law. If we were to make torture part of the system, that would convert it from a system in which refusal to employ brutality is a matter of principle to one in which it is only a technical question whether to be brutal *this time*, he contended, and that would be akin to becoming corrupt as a person rather than having principles.

His stimulating lecture was followed by a session of questions-and-answers, which continued later at dinner.

The Carl Sosnin Civil Liberties Lecture was a sixtieth birthday present for Carl Sosnin, provided by Margie Brooke, his friend and former fellow student in our M.A. program. Margie conceived the idea of surprising Carl with a present that somehow suited his great interest in the Patriot Act and the balancing of civil liberties against concerns over terrorism. She and I decided that a talk on a related topic by a philosopher of Jeremy Waldron’s caliber filled the bill perfectly. As I told the group in introducing Professor Waldron, for Carl it was something like actually getting that pony you wanted your parents to give you when you were about nine years old.

What’s more, Jeremy Waldron turned out to be an extremely nice and likeable man. After his talk, sixteen of us repaired to dinner at the Café Venice, a party including Carl and his wife and son, Margie, their friend and third former fellow MA student Jo Hood, and four of our current undergrads. Jeremy enthusiastically took the seat I offered near the undergrads,



front left to right: Carl A. Sosnin, Margie Brooke, Jeremy Waldron  
back left to right: Jo Hood, & Norvin Richards (Photo by John Northrop)

where they were able to continue to discuss his talk with him. These are all very bright kids with plans for careers in the law, and I think that a dinner with one of the world’s leading philosophers of law will be high on their list of great memories.

I’m grateful to another of our alumni, Brian Carver, who made that possible. Brian remembered the days when the philosophy club would take a visiting speaker out to dinner, wanted the current group to have the same opportunity, and sent us a donation for that purpose: this was as close as we could come. Sadly, the University of Alabama does not provide funds for bringing in visiting speakers, much less for taking them out to dinner with our students. More than happily, Margie Brooke (with a matching gift from her employer, Vulcan Materials) and Brian Carver did, and we had a great evening.

# News Of Philosophy Alums

## Alumni Gathering



Prof. H. Scott Hestevold

On April 22, the Department hosted a gathering of alumni, faculty, and friends of the department at the Gorgas House, featuring a talk by Prof. Scott Hestevold titled “The Nature of Time.” Professor Hestevold discussed what he called The Common Sense Theory of Time, which consists of the beliefs that there is a present time, that this present time is “a durationlessly thin slice of time that lies between the past and the future,” and that past things are moving ever further into the past and future ones are moving ever closer to the present. He showed what seemed to be terrible problems with this way of understanding time. His talk too was followed by a lively session of questions and answers.

The gathering was meant to give our alums and friends of our department an excuse to come back to campus, do a little philosophy again, see some old friends and make some new ones. About a dozen were able to come, and seemed to greatly enjoy themselves. We’ll probably try this again. If you have a topic or an area you would like to hear one of the current faculty address at such a gathering, let me know. We can’t talk about everything, but we can talk about a lot! (e-mail me at [nrichard@tenhoor.as.ua.edu](mailto:nrichard@tenhoor.as.ua.edu))

(more pictures of Alumni Gathering p. 9)

## Financial Support

**The Philosophy Department is very grateful to our supporters.**

✚ Craig Alexander, for a \$200 donation the Department used to help fund what we hope was the first of many gatherings of its alums.

✚ An anonymous donor, for a \$250 donation to the Martin and Marie ten Hoor Award for Excellence in Philosophy.

✚ Margie Brooke, whose \$500 gift helped to fund the Carl Sosnin Civil Liberties Lecture, and to her employer, Vulcan Materials, for their matching gift of \$500

✚ Dean Robert Olin of the College of Arts and Sciences, who added \$100, completing the funding for the event.

✚ Brian Carver, whose \$500 donation enabled the Carl Sosnin Civil Liberties Lecture to include a dinner at which four undergraduate philosophy majors had the opportunity to talk philosophy with our distinguished speaker, Professor Jeremy Waldron of the Columbia University School of Law.

# Financial Support

## The Beverly & Steve Davis Endowed Support Fund



Beverly & Steve Davis

Beverly Davis minored in philosophy at the University. She has fond memories of all her philosophy professors, especially the late Iredell Jenkins, who directed her Senior Honors Thesis. She also has a lively mind, a continuing interest in philosophy, and a desire to help our faculty think hard and well about the wonderful questions that drew us to our subject in the first place. She and her husband have endowed the Beverly and Steven Davis Endowed Support Fund for Philosophy for this purpose.

It will begin by providing a much needed grant next year of \$500 to support the scholarly travel of one of our faculty. For philosophers, scholarly travel mainly takes the form of going to a convention to give a paper on our current work. The discussion following the paper is often a great help, as is the chance to hear other papers and to join in discussing those. It sharpens what we are able to do on our own, it gives us new ideas, and it helps us keep in touch with the latest work of others. The trips are expensive, though, since the conventions generally last three days and are held in major cities, none of which seem to be in Alabama. The \$500 travel grant from the Beverly and Steve Davis Endowed Support Fund will be a great help.

Beverly and Steve hope to increase the endowment in the years to come. That would provide further support for scholarly travel and faculty research and teaching. We are delighted beyond words.

## The Norvin Richards Award In Philosophy & Law



Thelma Richards

Thelma Richards, my mother, was lucky to finish high school. She was born in a small town in Nebraska in 1913, and her stepmother thought that when the girls reached their teens they should leave school and go to work cleaning people's houses instead.

Although her stepmother prevailed in virtually everything where the house and the family were concerned, in this case my grandfather wouldn't allow it. Mother finished high school, and went off to Omaha—the Big City—to do secretarial work.

That was the kind of work she did her whole life. She was good at it. I think what she liked best was a new job where the work had overwhelmed someone, and things were a mess. She loved to figure out how to manage what had been thought unmanageable. I think the men who were in charge of the work often found this absolutely terrifying, perched as they were on the lowest rung of management and evidently not doing all that well at managing before this woman showed up.

As things turned out, my mother ended up raising both of her children alone on the wages she made at office work, from the time I was three and my sister was six. My sister was the valedictorian of her high school class, a Phi Beta Kappa math major at Duke, and one of the first women hired by IBM as a systems engineer. I got a PhD, studied an extra year at Cambridge, and got to be a professor. My sister and I are both good people. Mama did all right.



Norv, Jessica, & Thelma

Shortly after Janet and I came to Tuscaloosa, we convinced my mother to move here too, where her first grandchild was and her second one was soon to be.

That meant she was here during the dozen years or so when I was the one who presented our best students with the Iredell Jenkins award, and during the several years when Lawson Jenkins also gave several deserving students about \$500 each. This gave my mother the idea that the department should also have an award honoring me. I tried to get it to bear her name instead, but that wasn't what she wanted.



Norvin Richards

What she and I did was to arrange a gift annuity. Those guarantee the donor a certain income per year for as long as she lives, with the remaining principal going to the University at the time of her death. In our case, the funds will make about \$2500 available to the department each year, which we will award to the best of the philosophy majors who intend careers in the law. We will make no more than two such awards each year, to ensure that the winners receive a substantial amount. There will also be a plaque on public display, which will bear the names of each year's winners. I like to think of them bringing their children by some day to see what mom or pop did.

I have to say that it feels a little strange for there to be a Norvin Richards Award, especially given what I know of the guy, but I have to confess that it also feels pretty good.

# AGORA

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy  
The University of Alabama

We welcome the help of anyone who wishes to add to those endowments, or to the Martin and Marie ten Hoor Award for Excellence in Philosophy. Doing so increases the awards the endowments enable the Department to give. If you would like to do this, please send a check made out to the University and marked as for the endowment you have in mind to: Ms. Dorothy Bazemore, Department of Philosophy, University of Alabama, Box 870218, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487.

We also welcome donations sent for other purposes, or just for our use. These greatly improve the life of the department.

**Finally, please send us news of you; that's the best part of this newsletter!**

## Pictures from the Alumni Gathering



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