



## ON OUR SHORT LIST

# COME OUT, COME OUT

*Michelangelo Signorile is calling gay men and women out of the closet.*

NEW YORK NEWSDAY/ERICA BERGER



Michelangelo Signorile, best known for "outing" public figures who are homosexual, chronicles his own gay experience in *Queer In America*. Signorile says the book is a "call to arms" for America's gays and lesbians.

**A**s a youngster growing up in Brooklyn, Michelangelo Signorile dreamed about writing a book. But not this one. Not something as contentious as *Queer In America: Sex, the Media, and the Closets of Power*.

"I always thought it would be about something less controversial," admits Signorile, a surprisingly soft-spoken

New Yorker who majored in public relations at SU's Newhouse School of Public Communications and graduated in 1982. "But at the same time I do remember, when I was a teenager, coming to terms with being gay, having fantasies about speaking to large groups of people and explaining to them that this was okay."

Homosexuality, he says, isn't a

lifestyle, but a life. In his book, published this summer by Random House, Signorile argues that it's a painful life when lived in the proverbial closet. That's why he wants everyone out, ready or not.

Signorile has long advocated exposing public figures who are homosexuals, a practice dubbed "outing." Writing primarily for gay and lesbian magazines, he has outed the late Malcolm Forbes, Hollywood billionaire David Geffen, and Pentagon spokesman Pete Williams.

No new names are outed in Signorile's book; he didn't want the controversy to overshadow his call to arms. Instead, Signorile wants to help dismantle the closet erected by a powerful American triumvirate: the New York media, Washington politicians, and Hollywood entertainment moguls.

"I think there was a perception that the closet was a place where gay people went on their own when they realized they were gay, that this was a safe place to be," he explains. "But it's destructive."

Despite the anonymity of many homosexuals, there has been progress in the fight for gay rights, especially in the era of AIDS. "There have been enormous changes in the last five years," says Signorile. Those changes have brought about more media coverage, political debate, and a higher gay profile in Hollywood, including the upcoming release of *Philadelphia*, a film starring Tom Hanks about an AIDS-infected man. But change has yet to bring about acceptance, says Signorile.

"We haven't won anything except the right to have our grievances aired," he contends. "That's it."

But for Signorile, that's a start. It's also the most satisfying aspect of his first book. "Inspiring people," he says, "that's the real accomplishment."

—KEVIN HAYNES





Charles Richter and Ellen Baker Baltz run the Pennsylvania Stage Company in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Regional theater is not only an integral part of the community, says Baltz, but an incubator for what's seen on Broadway.

## ALLENTOWN OR BUST

*Ellen Baker Baltz '73  
Charles Richter '73*

**I**n a renovated old brick church in Allentown, Pennsylvania, a woman wearing a large cowboy hat greets theatergoers with a friendly "Howdy."

Ellen Baker Baltz, managing director of the Pennsylvania Stage Company (PSC), strives to welcome the community into the theater and the theater into the community. She considers the survival of her company to be at stake.

"Many people in the arts take for granted that the arts are also fundamental in other people's lives, but that's not so," she says. "The arts are competing with videotapes, sports, TV, and a whole host of other activities that don't ask you to donate money like we do."

Recently arrived from Texas, where she started a professional touring/teaching theater company, Baltz now uses some of the same techniques to send actors from PSC, a nonprofit regional company, to visit schools, nursing homes, and other institutions, and to bring groups into her theater for workshops.

While the number of regional theaters in the nation has seriously declined in the past decade, with many of the remaining ones in debt, the 60 or so left are vital to the American cultural scene, Baltz says.

"Some really exciting theater is coming out of regional theater," she says. "Even your Stephen Sondheim's are using them as an incubator."

Baltz, a 1973 speech communication graduate, was recommended for her job by PSC's artistic director, Charles Richter, also a 1973 graduate of the College of Visual and Performing Arts. The two have kept in touch since they met on their first day at Syracuse University, when they were paired as acting partners in a drama class.

Richter, chairman of theater arts at Pennsylvania's Muhlenberg College, strongly supports regional theater.

"We can do plays that are not primarily commercial," he says, "plays of significance and meaning, in high-quality productions with honesty and artistry."

—MARGARET BLOCH EISEN

## ACTING OUT

*Susan Micari '76*

**W**hen Susan Micari created a literacy program for New York City's Women in Need shelter system five years ago, she realized everything did not begin "once upon a time." An actress, Micari uses multicultural folktales, acting improvisation, and storytelling to enhance the reading and critical-thinking skills of homeless women and children.

"One thing I know from acting is that you can be free in your imagination in a way that you might never be able to be free in life, depending on your circumstances," says Micari, a 1976 theater graduate. "But if you can give yourself experiences through your imagination, it can really help you to overcome hardship in your life."

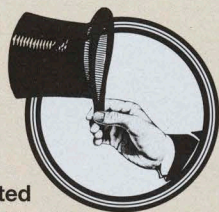
Some of her students have left the shelter and moved on to attend college or enter the work force with their new skills. Perhaps fairy tales sometimes do come true. —KERRY L. RYAN



JILL WACHTER



HATS OFF

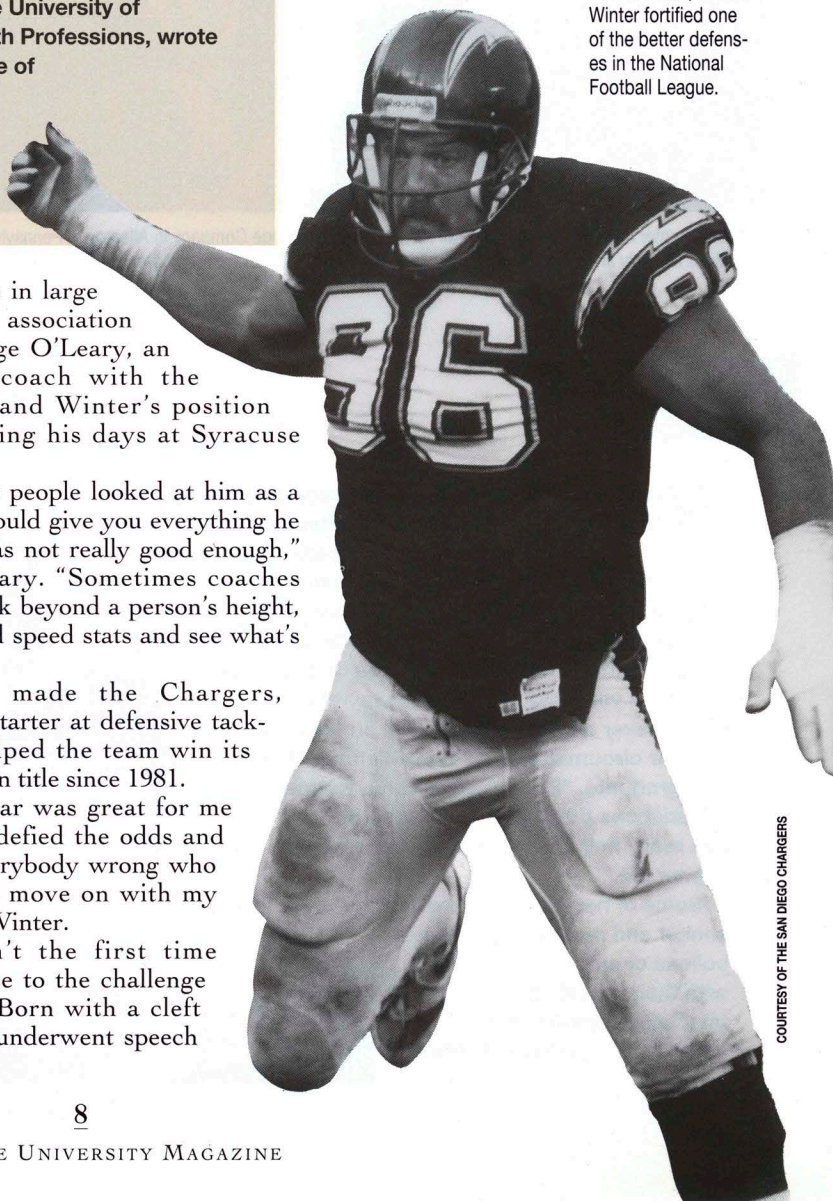


- **Michael S. Shapiro**, who received his bachelor's degree in American studies from the College of Arts and Sciences in 1970, was appointed by President Clinton as general counsel for the National Endowment for the Humanities. Shapiro, a former historian and museum director, was a senior attorney with the Washington, D.C., law firm of Weil, Gotshal & Manges before his appointment.
- **Barbara D. Livingston**, a 1984 graduate in experimental photography from the College of Visual and Performing Arts, received the Eclipse Award for outstanding photography for her photograph of three-year-old filly Turnback the Alarm. Eclipse awards are given annually to honor outstanding horses and people involved in the racing world. A free-lance photographer, Livingston resides in Saratoga Springs, New York.
- **Edward H. O'Neil**, executive director of the Pew Health Professions Commission and co-director of the University of California at San Francisco Center for the Health Professions, wrote a policy paper for the White House on the future of the primary care work force at the request of Hillary Rodham Clinton. O'Neil, who has been at the forefront of health care reform, earned his doctorate in American studies from the Maxwell School in 1984.

therapy as a child and was briefly mistaken for a developmentally disabled student. Tumors were removed from both Winter's ears, leaving him 90 percent deaf on his right side. He became a football star in high school but wasn't highly recruited by colleges. He received the last available scholarship from Syracuse in 1980, and then only because another player decided to go elsewhere. He eventually became a co-captain during his senior season in 1983.

"I've always felt I have to work every day to prove my worth and overcome the labels put on me," says Winter. "I enjoy proving people wrong."  
—BOB HILL

As a defensive tackle with the San Diego Chargers during the 1992 season, Blaise Winter fortified one of the better defenses in the National Football League.



COURTESY OF THE SAN DIEGO CHARGERS

IN HIS OWN DEFENSE

Blaise Winter '85

My life seems to have been a series of overcoming challenges," says Blaise Winter, whose seven-year career as a football player appeared to be over when he was released by the Green Bay Packers after the 1990 season. Unable to latch on with another team, Winter was forced to sit out the 1991 season and was advised by many people to retire. He told them to think again, then went about a determined quest to return to the National Football League.

Winter, a 1985 SU physical education graduate, spent \$2,000 to produce a short video titled *Blaise Winter Wants to Play Football*, which he mailed to all 28 NFL teams. He wrote letters, spent hundreds of dollars on phone calls, then drove more than 7,000 miles to visit NFL clubs to request a tryout.

He got his opportunity in San

Diego, due in large part to his association with George O'Leary, an assistant coach with the Chargers and Winter's position coach during his days at Syracuse University.

"I think people looked at him as a kid who would give you everything he had but was not really good enough," says O'Leary. "Sometimes coaches need to look beyond a person's height, weight, and speed stats and see what's inside."

Winter made the Chargers, became a starter at defensive tackle, and helped the team win its first division title since 1981.

"Last year was great for me because I defied the odds and proved everybody wrong who told me to move on with my life," says Winter.

It wasn't the first time Winter rose to the challenge of doubt. Born with a cleft palate, he underwent speech





Tammy Tarbell celebrates her Iroquois heritage through sculpted clay dolls. She hopes her work—decorated with fur, feathers, and beads—helps viewers appreciate the diversity of Native American culture.

## NATIVE IMAGES

Tammy Tarbell '80

Tammy Tarbell has her own line of dolls, but she doesn't sell them in department stores. Tarbell makes clay dolls, sculptures that depict and celebrate Native American women.

In pieces such as "Clan Mother" and "Turtle Woman," which has a turtle shape, the artist draws upon her Iroquois heritage, exploring Iroquois ideas in a new format. Iroquois lore, for example, often places North America on the back of the "Great Turtle."

Tarbell, a 1980 graduate of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, says this piece and her other dolls communicate on both a visual and an emotional level. She believes she passes along energy to her creations and that each of them has its own spirit. "The dolls speak to you," she says. "They draw you in. People who look at my dolls say they stir something inside them."

She hopes her pieces help viewers gain some appreciation of Iroquois culture and of the diversity of Native Americans. "Too often, people put us into one category," she says. "When they think of a Native American, the image is of a Plains Indian in a Western headdress. There are hundreds of tribes, each with its own identity."

In making her sculptures, Tarbell rolls and shapes clay, carves out faces with a wooden probe, and fires the pieces in a kiln. The dolls' faces, hair, and blankets are all made from clay. She decorates the pieces with fur, feathers, and glass or brass beads.

"I start a piece, set it aside, and then do some more work," says Tarbell. "I worked on 'Strawberry Woman,' a large piece, for over two years."

She recently completed an internship at the Iroquois Indian Museum in Howes Cave, New York. At the museum, she coordinated "Women of the Haudenosaunee," a show exhibiting her own work and that of 14 other Iroquois women.

—CARL MELLOR

## WELL READ

Robert O'Connor G'85

Debut novels don't get much better than Robert O'Connor's *Buffalo Soldiers*. Published last spring, the 324-page book makes a mockery out of peacetime army life and a celebrity out of O'Connor, who earned a master's degree in creative writing from Syracuse in 1985.

*Buffalo Soldiers* received rave reviews from fellow writers and the *New York Times*, which surprised O'Connor, a lecturer at the State University of New York College at Oswego and an adjunct professor at SU. "You sort of prepare yourself for the worst," he says. "A lot of friends had books come out and go down quietly, so I was prepared for that. I was really gratified when the reviews came out and a movie deal came through. Really, I was astonished."

—BOB HILL

