

3-2017

## Monarch Extra, Vol. 1

Philip Walzer (Editor)  
*Old Dominion University*

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# monarchextra

Vol. 1 March 2017

## BAHAMAS BOWL CHAMPS



## Welcome to the first issue of Old Dominion University's newest e-publication, Monarch Extra.

**W**e publish two print issues of Monarch magazine every year. We realized that wasn't nearly enough after roughly half of the respondents to our e-readership survey last year said they wanted more news about campus developments and alumni success stories. So we've launched Monarch Extra, which will appear twice a year, now and in the fall.

(When I announced the new e-zine in our fall 2016 print issue, I called it Mini-Monarch. We subsequently switched the name to Monarch Extra. Sounded better, and it didn't conjure any images of the evil Mini-Me from the "Austin Powers" movies.)

You can read Monarch Extra on your phone or laptop but not on paper. It differs from Monarch magazine in other ways, too. Our art director, Karen Smallets, has created a sleek and attractive look for Monarch Extra, with a unique interactive format that will provide a stimulating visual experience for readers.

The stories also differ - in subject matter and form - from those in Monarch magazine. For instance, our first Monarch Extra recounts the health struggles of two alumni: Joe Porfert '11, who battled heroin addiction, and Molly Kate Brown '97, who lost the ability to walk after contracting dysentery during a trip to India. Both won writing awards, and their prose and poetry are featured in the articles.

Of course, the first issue allows you to relive the big news of the winter: The football team's sweet 24-20 defeat of Eastern Michigan at the Popeyes Bahamas Bowl. See more photos of the big game on Pages 10-11.

Let me know what you think. Email me at [pwalzer@odu.edu](mailto:pwalzer@odu.edu) or call me at 757-683-3692. We want to keep getting better and better. And look for your spring 2017 issue of Monarch magazine in the mail and online in May.

Phil Walzer  
Monarch Magazine and University Editor



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Monarch Extra  
Old Dominion University  
Vol. 1, No. 1

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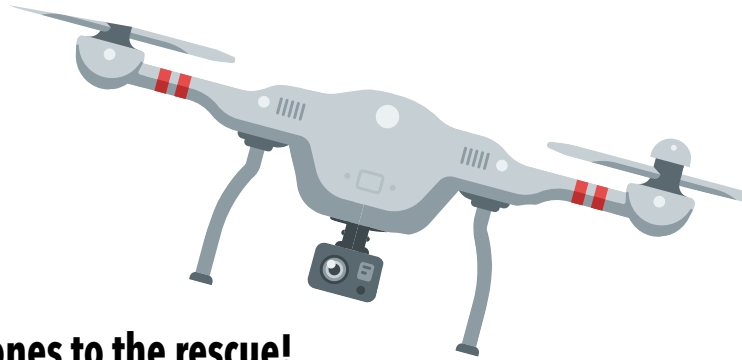
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Photo by Shara Weber



**Drones to the rescue!**

For the third consecutive semester, Thomas Alberts is co-teaching a class on drones in collaboration with two other universities.

About a dozen Old Dominion University students are in the course, along with counterparts from George Mason and James Madison universities, said Alberts, a professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering at ODU. The classes are taught in real time via videoconferencing technology.

The course this semester, Drone Technology, teaches students how they work, how to fly them safely and how to modify them. Last semester, each university developed a drone application. ODU students teamed with the Fire



Department in Carova, N.C., a northeastern community in the Outer Banks with no paved roads, to create prototypes for two drones – one to spot fires and the other to locate people fighting rip currents in the water. Students this spring will continue to work in Carova, Alberts said.

Brian Duvall, now a doctoral student in aerospace engineering, took the course last year. He's been dabbling with drones for about seven years. "It helped broaden my perspective on how to solve problems, and it educated some people on how to safely operate them and avoid hurting themselves and other people that are around them." He plans to continue volunteering in Carova this year.

Alberts is also a drone enthusiast who introduced them to students even before the joint project. "It's something new that you can do a lot with," he said. "You can take about any business, find some application and make a drone for it, and do a better job."

**Glass expert to lead museum**

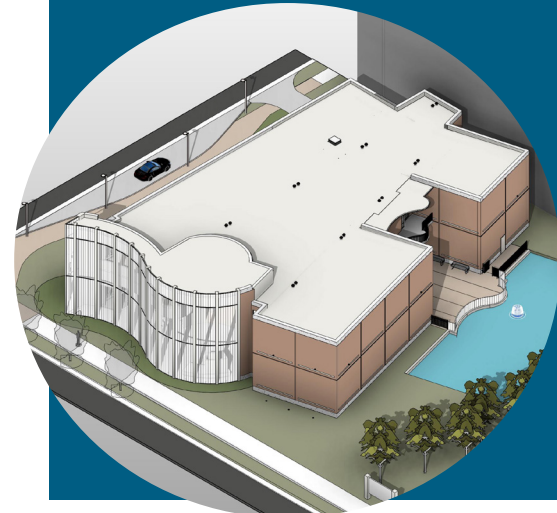
If you build it, they will come. And sometimes they will come even before you build it.

An internationally acclaimed glass curator recently was named executive director of the Barry Art Museum at Old Dominion University, which is expected to open in 2018.

Jutta-Annette Page, senior curator of glass and decorative arts at the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio, will begin her job this month.

Her former boss, Brian Kennedy, president, director and CEO of the Toledo museum, said Page has "outstanding knowledge of glass, jewelry and decorative arts" and is "a foremost expert in her field." Page won the 2016 Lifetime Membership Award from the Glass Art Society. She is a past president of the society.

The Barry Museum will be on Hampton Boulevard and 43rd Street near the Ted Constant Convocation Center. It will feature more than 200 glass sculptures, paintings and other works, as well as revolving exhibits. Richard Barry, a former rector of Old Dominion's Board of Visitors, and his wife, Carolyn, last year provided the largest gift in the University's history – valued at more than \$35 million – to establish the museum.



Old Dominion President John R. Broderick said: "The size and quality of the Barrys' generous gift enabled us to attract one of the world's leading experts in glass art. I am confident that Dr. Page will help create what will soon be a major cultural destination in Hampton Roads."



**Old Dominion was recently named to the "Tree Campus USA" list of universities for the fifth consecutive year.**



**'Hidden Figures' author speaks**

**B**efore "Hidden Figures" became an Oscar-nominated movie, it was a book. The author, Margot Lee Shetterly, told an audience at Old Dominion University in January that the three female black mathematicians she profiled were "part of our great American epic."

Shetterly was the keynote speaker for Old Dominion's 33rd annual Martin Luther King Jr. observance. She spoke at the Big Blue Room at the Ted Constant Convocation Center and received two standing ovations.

The mathematicians, who overcame racism and sexism at NASA to help propel space flight, tackled issues "familiar to us all," said Shetterly – "the search for meaningful work, the fight to provide a better future for our families, the restlessness of personal ambition, the fear of the unknown and what it means to be American."

Stephanie Adams, dean of ODU's Batten College of Engineering and Technology, said Shetterly's book "not only breaks stereotypes about who can study these subjects, but it shows that it's cool to be smart."

Adams also helped organize a free screening of the movie in Norfolk for female middle and high school students, who met their counterparts majoring in STEM-H (science, technology, engineering, math and health care) at Old Dominion, as well as faculty members.

In 2010, Old Dominion awarded an honorary doctorate to Katherine Johnson, one of the three women portrayed in the film who was also honored at the Oscars. Two years later, Christine Darden – another analyst at NASA who was chronicled in the book but not the movie – received an honorary doctorate from ODU.

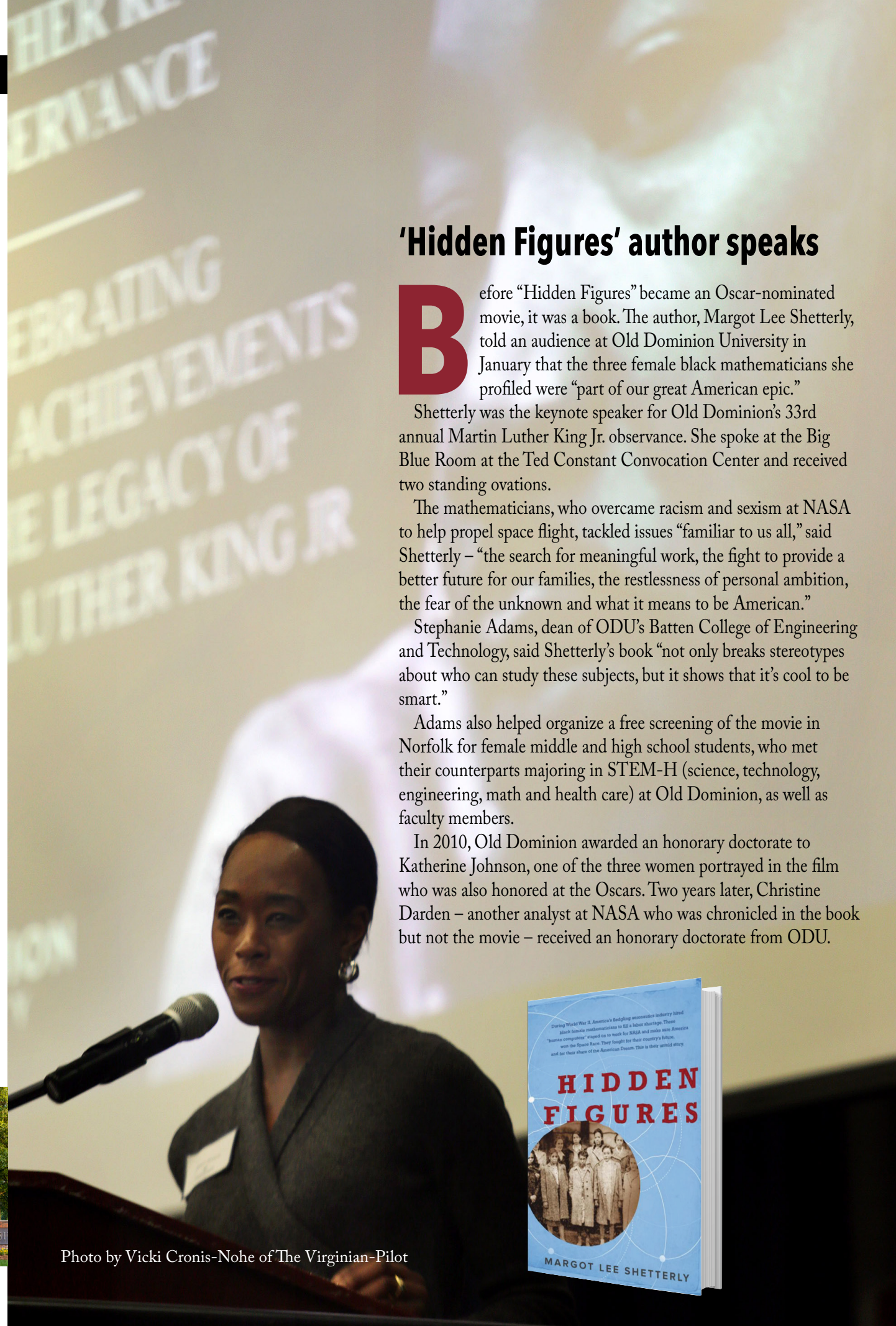
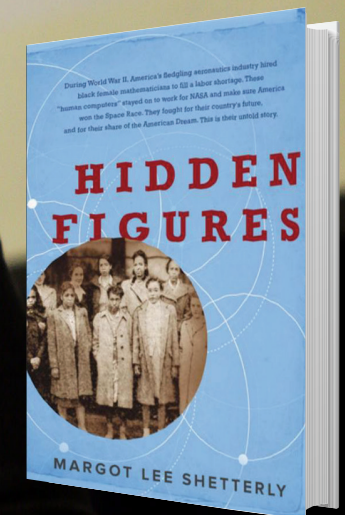


Photo by Vicki Cronis-Nohe of The Virginian-Pilot



**Broderick wins two awards**

Old Dominion University President John R. Broderick recently received two awards.

He won an Impacting Lives Award last fall from The New Journal & Guide, Virginia's oldest African-American weekly newspaper. The New Journal & Guide cited Broderick for his "leadership in forging progress at Old Dominion, solving real-world problems and building on the region's strengths," as well as his "commitment to diversity and inclusion."

Broderick also received the Dr. Hugo A. Owens Sr. Humanitarian Award in January from the Epsilon Nu Lambda chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. Owens, a dentist active in the local civil rights movement, was the first African-American rector of Old Dominion's Board of Visitors.

**Hailstork's fanfare celebrates museum**

How sweet the sound.

One of Adolphus Hailstork's compositions, "[Fanfare on Amazing Grace](#)," (click link for audio) was performed by the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington last fall to celebrate the opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Hailstork, an eminent scholar and professor of music, has been at Old Dominion since 2000. He estimates that he's completed about 250 compositions, including symphonies and operas, during his career.

As Hailstork described it, the piece, which is about 3 1/2 minutes long, wraps the fanfare around the famous Christian hymn. Hailstork composed the original version of "Fanfare" in 2005.

He called the composition "uplifting and positive. It worked nicely."

Hailstork's honors include the Virginia Cultural Laureate Award, the state Outstanding Faculty Award and the Governor's Award for the Arts.



Old Dominion University.

Zentz, a local folk music presence for more than five decades, last year announced that he would donate his archive and memorabilia to Old Dominion. In addition, he and his wife, Jeanne McDougall Zentz, established the Ramblin' Conrad Folklife Institute - named after the legendary music store that once sat across Hampton Boulevard. The institute last year began holding concerts and seminars on campus and other locations.

Zentz was a student at Old Dominion for two years in the mid-'60s and subsequently performed and taught classes there. Zentz hopes the collection and institute will help fans and newcomers appreciate folk music in all its forms - including sea shanties, blues and bluegrass.

Two events remain in the folklife institute's first series: Alan Reid, co-founder of Scotland's Battlefield Band, with Rob van Sante, on March 8; and Caroline and David Paton, founding family of Folk-Legacy Records, on April 5. Each act will have a seminar at 2 p.m. and a concert at 7 p.m., both in the Diehn Composers Room in the Diehn Center for the Performing Arts.



**Adolphus Hailstork and Bob Zentz both received stars on Norfolk's Legends of Music Walk of Fame in February.**

**Folk music legend donates collection**

To his surprise, Bob Zentz got a fan letter in the mid-'70s from a musical superstar, praising a series of songs he'd written about a Hampton Boulevard regular. It was from Johnny Cash.

A copy of that letter will soon be housed at



**Calling All Tailgaters**



**Monarch magazine** wants to spotlight the best tailgates in its winter 2017 issue. If you think you're among them, send us a photo and tell us what makes yours special. Email [pwalzer@odu.edu](mailto:pwalzer@odu.edu) or tag [@odupics](https://www.instagram.com/odupics) on Instagram.

**NOMINATIONS ARE BEING**

**ACCEPTED** for the Alumni Association board of directors.

For more information, contact the Office of Alumni Relations at [odualumni@odu.edu](mailto:odualumni@odu.edu).

THE DEADLINE IS MARCH 30.

*The student music group gave a concert last month in honor of its 40th anniversary.*

*Celebrating 40 years*  
**THE EBONY IMPACT GOSPEL CHOIR**

Crushed by heroin, *but*

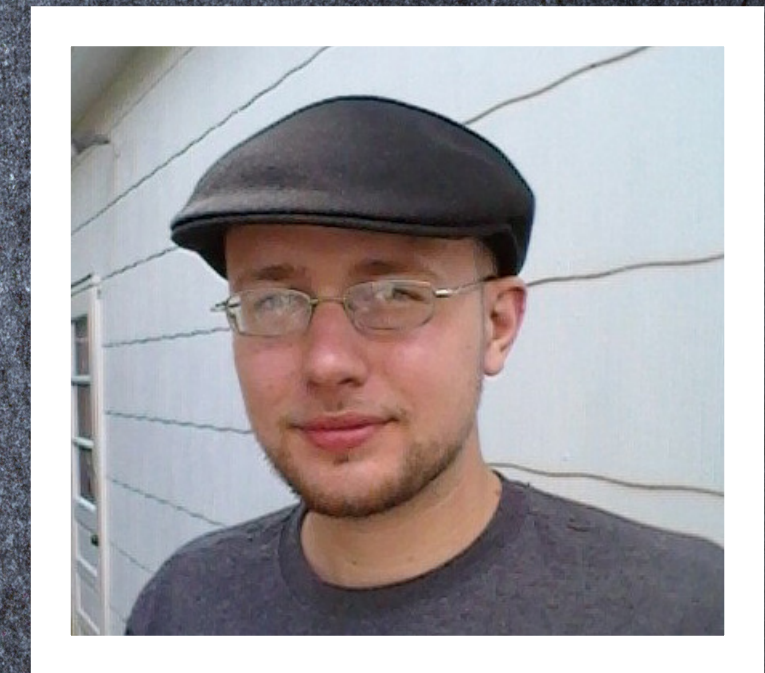
**HIS WORDS**

**LIVE ON**

*By Philip Walzer*

**Joe Porfert '11 died in Norfolk on May 5, 2015, after taking heroin, a drug he had wrestled with for more than a dozen years.**

**Heroin sent him to jail for 2 ½ years and ultimately brought him down. But Porfert was more than an addict. He was a writer with a clever mind and an intolerance for half-truths. He cast a luminous glow on everyone he met and invested himself in scores of friendships.**



At Old Dominion, Porfert was a 3.98 student, dazzling his professors and winning second place in an English department essay contest in 2011.

"I really do think he would have been an outstanding professor," said Sarah Appleton, a senior lecturer in the English department. "It wasn't just that he knew the language; he knew the heart. He looked into the heart of things. He asked the best questions."

In his last years, he worked in restaurants, engaging customers and fellow employees. "He wasn't one of those 'I'm smarter than you' guys," said Joshua Christy, head chef at Andrea's La Bella Italia in Ghent. "But when you had a conversation with him, you realized how deep his intelligence was and how passionate he was about the things he was involved in."

He continued writing essays, letters and poems, even in jail. His friends and family collected excerpts in "I'll Be All Right: The Life and Writing of Joe Porfert," published last fall.

This is the story of Joe Porfert, including his own words.



# PORFERT

grew up in the Roland Park section of Norfolk, an only child encircled by a gaggle of friends. In some ways, he was a typical boy – watching “Power Rangers” as a youngster, lifting weights later. Not in others.

“He was always so social,” his father, Harry, said, “but yet there was always a part of him that was private.”

A passionate reader, he grabbed onto subjects that don't attract most teens – Buddhism and the Celtic religion, for example. And Joe had a quirky sense of humor: On a ride home once from Busch Gardens, he begged for a fast-food stop, saying, “But I'm this nation's future.” “He was a free spirit,” said his mother, Roni. “He never played by the rules. He always did what he wanted.”

Porfert began writing poetry in high school. He also started smoking pot and gravitated to heroin his junior year, when he was 16. The start of his senior year, he was convicted of breaking into houses to support his habit. He spent eight days in jail and went through a drug rehab program.

“Everything that happens in *The Handmaid's Tale* has a precedent in history or has begun to emerge as a trend in human history; therefore, this story should serve as a warning and as a wake-up call to the dangers to which our society could fall prey in the near future.”

From “Hell on Earth: The Feminist Dystopia of *The Handmaid's Tale*”

After Porfert was released from jail, he finished high school and received an associate degree from

Tidewater Community College. From 2008 to 2011, he attended Old Dominion, where his promise and passion shone through. It might have been the high point of his 28 years, Roni Porfert said.

“He loved that place; it changed his whole life,” she said. “He learned so much there.” Porfert majored in English and planned to be a teacher. He often attended poetry readings on campus.

In his senior year, he won second place in a literary essay contest for a paper on “The Handmaid's Tale,” a novel by Canadian author Margaret Atwood. He wrote it for Appleton's Women Writers class. She said it was “graduate-level work” that

**I've been awake for an hour  
Just standing in the shower  
Awake but not aware  
Open eyes but vacant stare  
Wandering the backroads of my brain  
In a quaint, old fashioned train  
Gentle ride, cloud of steam  
Open eyes just lost in dreams**

From “Awake, but not Aware”

could have appeared in a scholarly journal. “It was *that* good,” Appleton said.

She also appreciated his interest in feminism, which foreshadowed his sensitivity to women's issues for the rest of his life.

“I can see him right now,” Appleton said – wearing his Irish tweed cap, leaning forward in his seat when a point captured his attention. “He

would stay quiet all through class and then he'd catch fire about something.” And sometimes stay after class to pursue it.

Porfert talked about teaching in high school, but Appleton saw him as a professor: “He was made for academia. He was a thinker, a critical analyst. He was somebody who really, really got into the depths.”



*“You'd think coming to jail would make people never want to come back, yet unfortunately it has the more immediate effect of making people crave the vices from which they've been removed so that, when released, they run right back toward senseless gratification.”*

From jail journals, Nov. 24, 2012

Porfert fell back into heroin right before he graduated. He had a new girlfriend who'd been a user. He started breaking into houses again and was sentenced to 2 ½ years in Norfolk City Jail.

Why he gravitated to heroin baffles his parents. “I don't know what really happened to him,” his mother said. “He said that it was everywhere.”

Porfert's dark moods and almost self-destructive capacity to empathize with people in pain may have made him more susceptible. Plus, “He didn't like himself very much,” Roni said. “He got self-confidence when he was helping other people.”

Which he continued to do in jail. Porfert helped other inmates study for the GED exams, fill out tax forms, complete legal filings. But he also despaired that he'd never get a teaching job after his release.

And he kept writing. His letters home, reflecting his literary studies, were sprinkled with references to such writers as Shakespeare, D.H. Lawrence and Dostoevsky. Porfert also wrote poems and essays, not flinching from the ugliness surrounding him: “Jail teaches you to be a survivor, an opportunistic hustler, a fighter, a stone-faced, close-mouthed, hard-hearted bastard.”

Joe Jackson, a friend of the Porferts who holds the Darden Chair of Creative Writing at Old Dominion and helped edit the collection of Porfert's writings, said, “If he'd lived, I think he could have written a great memoir about addiction and jail somewhere down the line.”

Porfert was released the night of Christmas 2013.

After his release, Porfert became a part of the Ghent scene, editing a Facebook page called “Ghent Confessions,” which led him to counsel fellow addicts. He worked in restaurants, hung out at parties and attracted a wide circle of friends.

“He was an awesome server, and he was a people person,” said Christy, the head chef at La Bella. “I don't think he ever met anybody that didn't like him. His energy kind of rubbed off on everybody.”

Christy also noticed his commitment to a women's shelter: “He'd say, ‘Hey, can I get this morning off? We're having an event I'm helping out at.’”

Porfert overdosed in a restaurant on Cinco de Mayo in 2015. He had been off supervised probation for two months, but his Facebook posts had gotten darker, and he was struggling with the deaths of three people he knew.

The title of the book, “I'll Be All Right,” was Porfert's standard line (sounding more like “I'll be a-ight”) when his mother asked if he wanted anything, like a sandwich.

For the Porferts, “I'll Be All Right” has been therapeutic. “In the book, he's still writing; he's still teaching,” Roni said. “It's helped me put aside a lot of the hurt and bitterness. This book has made me return to the good in Joey.”

To buy a copy of “I'll Be All Right,” go to [www.QbyQpress.com](http://www.QbyQpress.com). The proceeds will be donated to a local drug-prevention program.

**Ups and downs in an endless chain  
Like the clouds watching the rain  
Or a broken soul escaping the pain  
Of cravings it can't contain  
Ravings it can't restrain**

**It just wants one more fix  
To feel the needle's kiss  
It just needs one more fix  
To reach that peaceful bliss  
Who ever thought it would come to this?**

From “Untitled”

Illustrations by Kristin Mehaffey  
reprinted from “I'll Be All Right:  
The Life and Writing of Joe Porfert,”  
published by QbyQ Press.

SD116

# GRAY'S PHARMACY

## 'A GREAT HANGOUT' WITH FIRST-CLASS SERVICE

By James R. Sweeney

**O**n Nov. 29, the ODU community lost an old friend. Gray's Pharmacy, which opened in 1918, a dozen years before the Norfolk Division of the College of William & Mary admitted its first students, passed into history. When William F. Gray and his son Duryea established the pharmacy, it looked out on a cornfield, not a college. Yet the two-story wood-frame building occupied a strategic location. The Naval Base streetcar line ran behind Gray's and proceeded up what is now Hampton Boulevard. The pharmacy was just two blocks from the Norfolk County line and four miles from downtown. Looking north, the Grays could see the expanding suburban neighborhood of Larchmont.

The pharmacy, with its inviting soda fountain and luncheonette, was a "great hangout" for students, recalled Linwood Leavitt, himself a pharmacist, who attended the division in the mid-'30s. The magazine racks never lacked readers.

D.D. Gray Jr., a graduate of the Medical College of Virginia like his father, Duryea, joined the business in 1939. As the years went by, the pharmacy flourished. It was the first in Norfolk to provide home deliveries by car. After World War II, it was evident that the store required more space. In 1951, the Grays demolished the old building and built a structure (with air-conditioning!) that would accommodate five stores in addition to the pharmacy. By constructing the building in stages, they kept Gray's open, not missing a day.

The store's heyday ran from the 1950s to the 1980s. As Larry Maddry wrote in *The Virginian-Pilot* in 1983, Gray's was "a social center, pharmacy and canteen for Old Dominion University students and faculty." The "regulars" would congregate at tables at the front of the store. Many were ODU professors, such as Peter Stewart of the history department and Franklin Ross Jones, the dean of the School of Education.

Stewart quipped to an interviewer in 1989, "I first came here in 1964, and I've been sitting here ever since. I start my day off here faithfully." Stewart recently recalled that he met many people at Gray's who became lifelong friends.

**Jimmy Boyles and Arliss "Boots" Culler** bought the business from the Grays in 1969. "We tried not to change the image of Gray's Pharmacy any more than we had to," Boyles said. The soda fountain, presided over by Helen McCullough in the 1970s and '80s, continued to dispense freshly squeezed limeades and legendary milkshakes made "from scratch. No prepared mix. Fresh syrup, milk, and ice cream."

Mindful of students' habits, McCullough posted a sign behind the tables:

"During Lunch Rush. 11:30-1:30 Tables Are For Meals Only. Study Hall Will Resume At 1:30. Thanx. Your Loving Den Mother." She also had a rule of thumb for young romantics: Courting students were allowed two kisses at the tables before she would yell, "You kids cut that out."

With a Gray's check-cashing card, students could cash one check per day with a \$10 limit. Clerk Martha Buck was known to make small loans and give advice to students. Another clerk, Willie Walters, who started at Gray's in 1950, kept a drawer of items left by absent-minded faculty. Gray's also had a small post office, Norfolk's Substation No. 1, used primarily by students and professors.

"This place has become a kind of a human institution," John Patterson, an industrial arts professor who frequented the store for 21 years, told *The Pilot* in 1986. "You can relax here, meet your friends. Just be with the crowd. I would be very sorry if anything happened to Gray's Pharmacy. I'd almost grieve."

**Changes in the industry**, including the proliferation of drugstore chains, ended the halcyon days of Gray's. In 1989, Boyles and Culler sold the business to pharmacist Dave Halla, who faced some grim realities. The store was near bankruptcy and needed expensive renovations. The soda fountain, which occupied one-quarter of Gray's, was no longer profitable and had been cited by the city because there was no sprinkler system. On Aug. 4, 1989, the fountain served its last meal. "We didn't find another place to meet at," Stewart said. "So that whole business ended. Kind of a traumatic development."

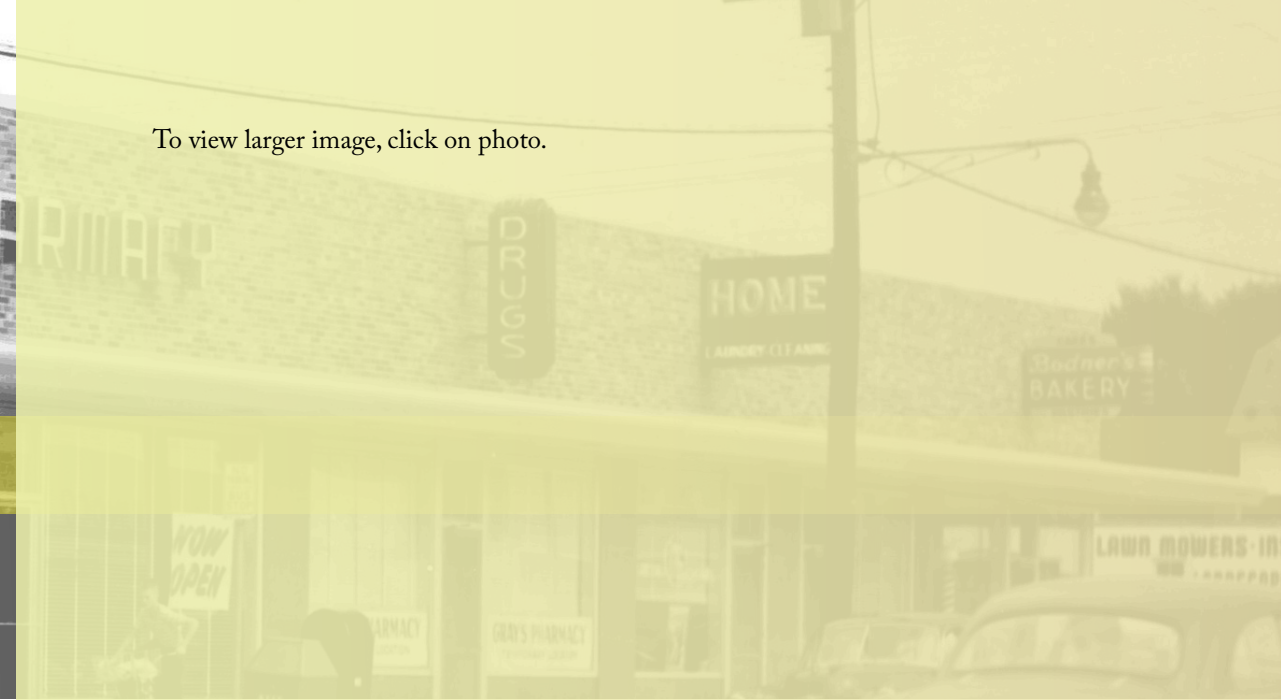
Competition from chain stores intensified, overhead costs went up and insurance reimbursements for prescriptions declined. Nevertheless, working 70 hours per week, Halla maintained the pharmacy's reputation for providing first-class service to its customers. "My greatest love is filling prescriptions and waiting on customers," he said in 1989.

He continued to do so for 27 years, earning the affection of many, including Judy St. George, who was a nurse practitioner at ODU's Student Health Services. When a student could not afford a prescription, she would call Gray's and Halla would say, "Just send them over and I'll take care of it."

Gray's Pharmacy provided just short of a century of service to its customers, among them ODU students and faculty. Now it is part of our history.

*James Sweeney, an associate professor emeritus of history, joined Old Dominion University in 1970. A specialist in 20th century Virginia history, he is the author of numerous articles and two books and served as university archivist from 1974 to 1981. Although not a Gray's "regular," he fondly recalls the friendly people at the fountain and the cash register in front of the store.*

To view larger image, click on photo.





# LEARNING TO WALK AGAIN

# IN INDIA

By Philip Walzer



**Molly Kate Brown '97** experienced a frightening descent into immobility not in her later years, but as a 32-year-old. And it occurred not in the United States, but in India, one month into an extended honeymoon/vacation.

For 11 days in 2007, she was hospitalized in Mumbai, sometimes sinking into doubt that she would ever walk again – or even survive. “Around me is despair so great it threatens to envelop me entirely,” Brown writes in her recent book, *Learning to Walk in India: A Love Story*. “I sense its presence hiding in the shadows of my room. ... I wonder if I am going to die here.”

In an interview, Brown, a nurse practitioner in a hospital emergency room in Boulder, Colo., explained what happened to her in plain terms:

She'd contracted dysentery after eating uncooked vegetables in India. “Basically, because of my genetic makeup, that kicked off my immune system. I developed reactive arthritis. In different people, that affects different parts of the body. My knees became enormous, and I couldn't bear weight on them.”

It took a year for her to walk comfortably without crutches. She still suffers occasional bouts of inflammation and has stopped running, but “good enough is the new perfect,” Brown said. “If I can just go for a walk or a hike, that's elation.”

And that attitude, honed from a lifetime of meditation and weeklong silent retreats, permeates the book, chasing away even her darkest thoughts.

Even as she contemplated the 10-year anniversary of her travails in India, Brown said: “I'm incredibly grateful. ... We go through life not remembering on a daily basis how fortunate we are to have received the gift of the human body and how it functions.”

**Brown grew up** in Lynchburg and began college at what was then Mary Washington College but transferred to Old Dominion in 1994, when she decided she wanted to major in nursing.

“ODU was a fantastic university,” Brown, 42, said. “It's got a huge, diverse population. There is so much going on there. It opened my eyes to a lot, and the nursing school was excellent.”

After she graduated, she moved to Colorado. “I felt called to check out the West,” Brown said. “That's how I do things. I don't tend to analyze.”

She felt a similar calling to visit India. Her book, reflecting her “glass-half-full” attitude, doesn't stint on the pleasant moments during her trip:

“My swollen knees have begun to resemble ruby red grapefruits. It feels like someone is pressing on them with the flat metal head of a large hammer... My ability to walk is diminishing by the hour...”

Her encounter with masala dosa, “a mouthwateringly delicious...large fried crepe made from lentil flour that comes filled with a savory potato-onion-curry leaf creation.” Sitting with her new husband against a massive magnolia tree, “listening to the whisper of the breeze in the leaves and the back-and-forth call of the mysterious birds.” Petting an elephant and getting “a slimy bonk on the head” in response.

But then her knees began to swell and hurt. “For the first time in my life, I had no control, and it was terrifying,” Brown said. “Until then, I was a very healthy person. I never had anything wrong with me except for occasional migraines.”

She bounced back from depression during her recovery to reaffirm the value of surrender and acceptance, which she had cultivated through the silent retreats, yoga and Vipassana meditation. “If we truly surrender to life...,” Brown writes, “we hold the key to the secret of deep peace and happiness and all that underlies it.”

**Brown described the quality** of care in India as “excellent,” though she winced at the subservient treatment of nurses. “I found myself in the best hospital in the biggest city in India where Bollywood stars go.” Her book offers vivid portraits of her caretakers, such as a nurse, whom she nicknames Mother Teresa, who envelops Brown in a tight hug when she cries, and Mr. Gaikwad, an attendant who brings her meals with a mile-wide grin and the assurance that “God is great.”

The book's subtitle, “A Love Story,” refers partly to “the community of people who took care of me in the hospital when I couldn't take care of myself.”

It also refers to her husband, Dan Conser. “I feel like he and I had to go places quickly that most people don't get to in 20 years of marriage. As a newlywed, he's literally changing my diaper, and all of a sudden I can't even walk.”

But most important, Brown said, is self-love. “A lot of the time, we're so hard on ourselves. We've forgotten the essence of who and what we are.”

Kirkus Reviews called the book “a touching chronicle” and “an evocative travelogue.” Self-published under Diamond Sky Press and available on Amazon, the book last year received two awards from the Colorado Independent Publishers Association: first place for travel and second place for autobiography.

The experience hasn't soured her on India. Brown plans to return to visit the doctors and nurses who helped her learn to walk again.



*Brown will lead a four-day silent retreat Nov. 2 to 5 in Madison, Va. For more information, go to her website, [mollykatebrown.com](http://mollykatebrown.com).*

See scenes of Molly Kate Brown's experience and recovery in India.

# Alumnus **ignites** new business, with sister's help

By Philip Walzer

**Mike Beyrodt**  
at his "office,"  
formerly  
his sister's  
playhouse.

**When Mike Beyrodt '15** was snowboarding in West Virginia in subzero temps a few winters ago, he longed for one thing. "I wished I could start a fire with the push of a button."

After several tries in an unlikely lab space, he's achieved his dream, with one significant difference: You pull it.

Pull Start Fire is a 5-by-2-inch package with simple ingredients including sawdust and wax that can ignite with the pull of a string. The fire lasts for up to 40 minutes and, Beyrodt said, can withstand winds of up to 200 mph.

"It's an experience," said Beyrodt, 23, who lives in Norfolk. "People like to pull the string, hear the pop and watch the fire grow."

Beyrodt's invention and growing business won the best in show award, with a \$6,000 prize, at Old Dominion University's first Lion's Lair entrepreneurial competition last fall. The prize was donated by Hillier Ignite, a foundation run by Luke Hillier '94.

"Mike is a remarkable 'left brain and right brain' person with both technical and artistic/visionary skills," said Nancy Grden, executive director of ODU's Strome Entrepreneurial Center. "I was impressed by his clarity of thought about the product and problems he wanted to solve, as well as his homework about the market and draft provisional patent. He is an entrepreneur who reaches out for advice from others to help him chart his own way."

Even as an alumnus, Beyrodt still seeks help from Old Dominion. "It's kind of like my GPS," he said.

**Beyrodt has already logged** years of experience as an entrepreneur. In the lunchroom of his elementary school in Virginia Beach, he traded candy for better food, such as pizza.

Later, he made money in a couple of two-person ventures: Mike N' Dales, specializing in spray-paint art shows, and 8 Feet of Keys, which featured "dueling pianists."

Beyrodt went to work on his fire igniter in 2015 while still a mechanical engineering student. First, he had to find a location to design it. When he did, he had to negotiate with the occupant, his younger sister, who drove a hard bargain:

"She wanted a bucket of ice cream every month." No way he was going to agree to that. They settled on his treating her to a dinner and a movie. Ever since, he's used her 6-by-8-foot outdoor playhouse for research and development.

There've been hits and misses along the way, none dangerous. "I wouldn't call them accidents," Beyrodt said. "I'd call them learning."

One of the early lessons: A push mechanism wouldn't be ideal. Trouble is, an accident during delivery could set it off. With a pull string, "you could smash it with a sledgehammer and nothing will happen."

Beyrodt's product, which he said is made of 89 percent recycled materials, is designed for outdoor use. "You don't have to worry about newspapers or wet wood," he said. "Pull Start Fire takes care of all of that."

A three-pack sells for \$13.98. Beyrodt estimates he's manufactured about 1,500 so far. They can be bought from his website, [www.pullstartfire.com](http://www.pullstartfire.com), as well as a handful of stores. Dick's Sporting Goods has also expressed interest, he said.

**It's been a busy year** for Beyrodt.

He got married. (His wife, Alyssa, will graduate this year with a degree in human services.) And while he's expanding Pull Start Fire, he works full time as an automation specialist for APC Automation.

He's made the most of Old Dominion's entrepreneurial services. As an undergraduate, Beyrodt was a regular at the Strome Entrepreneurial Center, which helps students and faculty members launch and expand their businesses.

Now, as an alumnus, he frequents the ODU Innovation Center-Norfolk, a partnership with the city that provides collaborative space and services in downtown Norfolk to budding entrepreneurs.

"It can be daunting to just stay with something," Beyrodt said. "Having this support system encourages me to keep doing it."



[Pull Start Fire demo](#)



Photo by Lex Selig

# Monarch CHAMPS

The Monarchs broke a fourth-quarter tie to beat Eastern Michigan, 24-20, at the Popeyes Bahamas Bowl on Dec. 23 in their first bowl appearance. The game was the fifth-most-watched cable program that day, with more than 3 million viewers, and it attracted 88,435 page views on ODUSports.com. It was the perfect end to a near-perfect season: Old Dominion became the youngest program to win 10 games since the founding of Division I in 1978.

Right-hand photos from top: Wide receiver Jonathan Duhart, who ended up scoring the game-winning touchdown, clears the way for wide receiver Isaiah Harper. Fans celebrate and so does head coach Bobby Wilder. After the game, WAVY-TV sportscaster Bruce Rader interviews wide receiver Zach Pascal, who scored the Monarchs' first touchdown.



Photo by Lex Selig



Photo by Chuck Guthrie '72 (M.B.A. '73)



Photo by Chuck Guthrie '72 (M.B.A. '73)



Photo by Chuck Guthrie '72 (M.B.A. '73)



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Photo by Chuck Guthrie '72 (M.B.A. '73)

On left-hand side from top: Zach Pascal, who caught a record 233 passes for ODU, was the first Monarch to be invited to the NFL Combine, where prospective players practice in front of scouts. Tim Seibles, professor of English and faculty athletic representative, with Jennifer Fish, professor and chair of women's studies. Bruce Stewart, senior associate athletics director, shared the day with his family – wife, Trina, and son, Quincy.



Photo by Lex Selig



Photo by Lex Selig



Photo by Lex Selig

On right-hand side: Carlton Bennett '72, rector of Old Dominion's Board of Visitors, and his wife, Beth. Old Dominion President John R. Broderick and First Lady Kate Broderick, with Dennis Ellmer, founder of Priority Automotive, and Lex Selig, son of Old Dominion's athletics director, Wood Selig.



Photo by Lex Selig



Photo by Chuck Guthrie '72 (M.B.A. '73)



# Kent Bazemore: His 'engaging personality' and competitive drive bring home honors

By Brendan O'Hallarn (M.S. Ed. '12, Ph.D. '16)

(For two seasons, Brendan O'Hallarn was the official blogger for the Old Dominion University men's basketball team. Kent Bazemore '12 was one of the stars of the team, which played in consecutive NCAA tournaments. O'Hallarn brought back the blog for Bazemore's Ring of Honor induction ceremony on Dec. 10.)

The roar of the crowd at the Constant Center drowned out the last part of the introduction. Kent Bazemore, former Monarch basketball star now starting for the NBA's Atlanta Hawks in his fifth NBA season, returned to his alma mater, where his No. 24 jersey was added to Old Dominion's Ring of Honor. "To be up on the Ring of Honor with those legends like Leo Anthony, Odell Hodge, Nancy Lieberman – I can't tell you what it means to me," Bazemore said at the halftime ceremony during a game against Virginia Commonwealth. The crowd chanted "O - D - U!" and, for one night, it felt as if Bazemore were back in the Monarch lineup. The memories he created for Monarch fans haven't faded. Jim Corrigan, an assistant coach under Karen Barefoot for the Lady Monarchs, was associate head coach for men's basketball under Blaine Taylor during Bazemore's time. Corrigan said Bazemore is scarcely recognizable from the 155-pound freshman who joined the team. "But two things haven't changed: the engaging personality with the infectious smile that is contagious, and the tremendous competitive desire that has fueled his journey from unknown recruit to NBA starter," Corrigan said.



Bazemore with Wood Selig, athletics director; ODU President John R. Broderick, and former teammates during ceremony.

Photo by Rick Voight



bered that during Bazemore's redshirt year (he didn't play his first season on scholarship), he gave one of the kids who mopped the floor during timeouts "the biggest high-five and smile. I remember thinking, 'I like that guy,'" Morris said.

Longtime Virginian-Pilot sportswriter Ed Miller took over the ODU men's basketball beat in time for Bazemore's sophomore season. The personable Monarch soon made an impression on the veteran journalist.

"Kent was always such an earnest striver," Miller said. "He got better each season, and no one outworked him. He had a clear idea of where he wanted to go and how to get there."

Several teammates from his 2010-11 team, which won the Colonial Athletic Association tournament and lost to Butler at the buzzer in the first round of the NCAA tournament, attended the ceremony. Good friend Darius James, now working for the Old Dominion Athletic Foundation, recalled the time Coach Taylor criticized Bazemore for not being tough enough to play through an injury.

"That made him mad," James said. "He was in street clothes, and he went and got changed. First possession, he stole the ball and dunked on somebody. Then he did it again. He just wanted to show Coach."

Rick Henn, a longtime member of the scoring crew who sits on the sidelines during home games, recalled that Bazemore made a habit of going down the row and fist-bumping courtside officials before tipoff of every game. "He was always polite, and not every player is that way."

He hasn't changed. Bazemore signed autographs and posed for selfies for hundreds of young and old ODU fans who queued up

before the VCU game.

"Kent is one of those guys who always had time for everyone," said Maceo Harrison, who started in game operations at the Constant Center when Bazemore began his career here. "He'd know your name, shake your hand. He was always so personable."

At a news conference before the game, Bazemore said, "I can't tell you what this school has done for me. I'm a 27-year-old, and I've learned so much from everyone here."



Bazemore made an indelible impact, with steals and break-away dunks that thrilled a packed Constant Center. That on-court success, Corrigan said, was fueled by his desire to get better every day. "He worked on the court, he worked in the weight room, and he worked in the classroom, smiling every step of the way," he said. "Spring, summer and fall, outside of the season, I will always remember how hard he worked. And know that it is no accident that he is where he is."

Ask an ODU fan for a favorite Bazemore memory, and then take a seat. You'll be listening for a while.

Longtime Monarch fan Bart Morris remem-

**BAZEMORE BY THE NUMBERS** 140 GAMES FOR ODU 1,416 CAREER POINTS 250 STEALS



Photo by Chuck Thomas

## From struggling student to top engineering graduate

**D**erek Davis was the honor graduate in December from the Frank Batten College of Engineering and Technology, with a grade point average of 3.93 and a dual degree in electrical and computer engineering.

Davis enrolled at Old Dominion after working as a forklift operator. If not for a faculty member's encouragement and persistence, he might never have graduated.

At the senior honor banquet, he acknowledged his debt to Lee Land, a senior lecturer in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics:

"I chose to attend ODU at the age of 26, and by the end of my first day I was convinced that I was so far behind that I was never going to succeed. During my last class, Calculus I, I had decided that I was withdrawing from all my classes when I got home.

"I told Professor Land this, and she immediately wrote down all of her office hours. I spent the next year and a half going to her office two to three times per week learning not only the math, but also developing the study habits that would see me through the rest of my time in school.

"I don't think that anyone graduating with honors in an engi-

neering program can do so without having a team of inspirational professors behind them. However, if it weren't for Professor Land's efforts my first year, I would have quit before I ever got the chance to meet any of them."

Land had some thoughts of her own about Davis: "I was the lucky one," she said in an interview. "He was the student every teacher wants to have."

When Davis voiced concern about calculus as a freshman, Land suggested that he sit in on her pre-calculus course, an invitation she'd given to other struggling students.

"They'll come to one class, and you'll never see them again. Derek was persistent. He showed up for every class. ... He's someone who really understands the value of education and where it will take him."

Davis, who conducted research at NASA's Langley Research Center, returned to Old Dominion in January to begin a master's program in electrical and computer engineering.

## MVP, First Team ... and graduate

**M**onarch magazine published a full-page photo of TJ Ricks in the fall 2016 issue. He's tackled many more accomplishments since then.

The linebacker from Hampton, who started his career as a walk-on, was the only Monarch named to the First Team All-Conference USA team in December. In Old Dominion University's 24-20 victory against Eastern Michigan in the Popeyes Bahamas Bowl, Ricks chalked up nine tackles and was named the game's defensive MVP.

Ricks became the first Old Dominion football player to record two 100-tackle seasons. He had a career-total 323 tackles, just 17 behind all-time ODU leader Craig Wilkins.

At the team's sendoff to the Bahamas, ODU President John R. Broderick acknowledged Ricks' success off the field, noting that he had just graduated with a degree in electrical engineering technology.



Photo by Roberto Westbrook

A record **1,693 students** received undergraduate and graduate degrees in December.



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# LOOK FOR OUR NEXT MONARCH EXTRA IN THE FALL,

when we'll get you  
in the spirit for Homecoming.

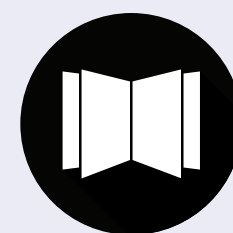
In the meantime, look for our  
spring Monarch print issue,

which will feature alumni in the  
entertainment industry, ESPN

anchor Jay Harris '87 and NFL

long snapper Rick Lovato '15.

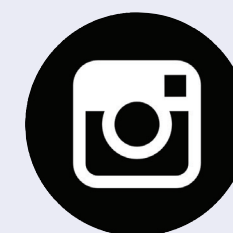
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