

monds are in beach towns scattered along the Cape. At night, the whole town comes out to see the ballgames, says Albright. "It's a pitcher-dominated league—a .250 batting average in the Cape Cod League is good," he says. "You face the top pitchers in the country and are able to play with some of the best players anywhere. That has to elevate your game. It's relaxed, fun, and really serious baseball." Defensively, Albright is ready for Cape Cod play, though he acknowledges that facing such high-caliber pitching will be "a big challenge." But when your trade is catching, it's the time behind the plate, not next to it, that counts.

—CRAIG LAMBERT

Spring Sports

Crew

The **men's heavyweight crew** won all its races until finishing a close second to Brown in the Eastern Sprints. The **lightweight varsity** won four races, then was edged by Princeton in both the Goldthwait Cup and the Eastern Sprints, although Harvard won the Sprints' Jope Cup for overall supremacy in lightweight events.

Radcliffe's heavyweight varsity finished less than a second behind Yale at

the Eastern Association of Women's Rowing Colleges sprints, placing third in the overall team standings. The **Radcliffe lightweights** took fourth.

Tennis

The **women** (13-8, 6-1 Ivy) shared the Ivy championship with Princeton—their first win since 2006, the last year of a four-title run. Senior Beier Ko was the unanimous choice for Ivy League Player of the Year. The **men's team** (13-9, 5-2 Ivy) tied with Cornell and Yale for second in the Ivy League. (Princeton won.)

ALUMNI

Slaying Dragons

A crime novelist explores everyman—with a twist.

IN A 1974 ISSUE of *The Amazing Spider-Man*, Marvel Comics unleashed a character of magnificent natural force called The Punisher (a.k.a. Frank Castle). He was, and is, a post-Vietnam antihero: an ex-Marine so haunted by the mob slayings of his family that he avenges their deaths and becomes a vigilante. Schooled in guerrilla warfare, torture tactics, martial arts, and all forms of weaponry, he roams the crevices of the world stamping out evil, wherever it lies.

His quest is moral (only the baddies get what they deserve), but The Punisher's unapologetic nature and willingness to kill separated him from the usual superhero. He soon warranted his own series,

with a huge run from 1987 to 1995, which caught the wide-eyed attention of a seventh-grader named Gregg Hurwitz.

Still a Punisher fan, Hurwitz '95 is now a well-known crime novelist in Los Angeles who recently found himself in the dream-like position of stepping in to create his hero's latest narrative arc, a four-comic-book series called "Girls in White Dresses." The Castle epic, Hurwitz says, is essentially "a gritty, compelling family tragedy, and a story of vengeance." But because Hurwitz is also a devoted student of Carl Jung, he knows how to layer a tale, and taps more deeply into Castle's psychic struggle. "This arc deals with the anniversary of the death of his family,

whom he could not protect, and his reflecting on the fact that his response to their deaths has left *him* dead," Hurwitz says. "He is trying to move out of the dark shadows of his life in order to feel—and to feel human again."

Heady stuff for comic books? Not really. The world of traditional comic superheroes is rife with psychological angst and archetypal journeys played out in the perennial battle of good versus evil. In "Girls in White Dresses," Castle is asked to help Mexican villagers terrorized by the mysterious, grotesque murders of their innocent daughters and sisters. He finds the culprits (ruthless leaders of a desert methamphetamine operation) and



LEADERS OF 2009: The class marshals, elected by fellow seniors last fall, showed the flag before the Baccalaureate service on June 2. Clockwise, from back row, left, they are: Christopher Lo, from Mather House and Shanghai (a biology concentrator); second marshal Philip Perez, from Kirkland House and Cypress, Texas (neurobiology); first marshal Lumumba Seegars, from Dunster House and Houston (social studies); Kameron Austin Collins, from Cabot House and North Plainfield, N.J. (literature and comparative literature); Joyce Yan Zhang, from Leverett House and West Bloomfield, Michigan (government and economics); Heidi Kim, from Lowell House and Irvine, California (social studies); Amanda Kay Fields, from Lowell House and Vista, California (religion); and Margaret M. Wang, from Winthrop House and Kingston, New York (economics and history of art and architecture).

solves the case not as a hero or hired gun but, as Hurwitz writes, “a guy who does what needs to be done.”

The series features the in-your-face, yet oddly poetic, illustrations of Laurence Campbell, which, along with the text, trigger an adrenaline rush: reading it is akin to watching an adult action thriller. There's blood-and-guts violence, dead bodies strewn about, sexy prostitutes, heinous drug lords, babbling junkies, fiery explosions, big guns (and baseball bats, chains, and knives)—and even a giant shark attack. Yet *The Punisher's* core existential question is there throughout, complete with suicidal ideation. “He is this walking Jungian shadow figure and yet he's a real man—he's not flying around with invisible skills wearing Spandex—and his motivation comes from a tortured and psychological burning place of grief,” Hurwitz says. “That is and always has been the kind of character I'm drawn to.” In the end, the surviving women gather in victory to kill the drug kingpin. Castle is seen walking alone, back home in Times Square—a freakish, hulking figure in the pouring rain.

MURDER, vengeance, psychological torment: it's also the stuff of Shakespeare, as Hurwitz well knows. An English and psychology concentrator at Harvard, he also spent a year at Oxford, publishing papers on Freudian and Jungian analyses of *Pericles* and *Othello*, respectively—and finishing his first crime thriller, *The Tower*, which features an underwater escape from an Alcatraz-like prison (Hurwitz grew up in the Bay Area) followed by a killing spree.

Though Hurwitz does not exactly marry seemingly opposite genres—classic literature and popular crime fiction—the two are “mixed up in the

blender” of his brain and have served him well in concocting the comic books (he has also written *Wolverine* and *Foolkiller* arcs, and is working on others for Marvel), occasional screenplays, and nine critically acclaimed crime novels published since 1999.

“Obviously I have a fixation on and a love of language and I'm trying to make something as beautiful as possible,” he says. “But I'm not a social-ennui, suburban-short-story writer. The comics and the books have to work well, first and foremost, as dark, kick-ass pieces of writing.” He makes no distinction between commercial and literary success: “I aim for page-turning experiences while addressing issues of larger import. The bar is to write compelling stories that are effective on many levels—like Dickens and Hitchcock and Shakespeare. I've always thought *Macbeth* is the perfect mob thriller.”

Hurwitz's earlier books are more traditional thrillers, such as *Do No Harm* (a

madman stalks the UCLA Medical Center and the ER chief is drawn into solving the crimes; Hurwitz comes from a long line of doctors). His latest novels, *The Crime Writer* (2007) and *Trust No One* (due out June 23), offer the same external thrill rides, but with more interpersonal psychic lure. “I've worked through a lot about myself,” he says. “When I'm writing well, it's from the gut; writing is hard, gut work. There is really nothing to recommend it—unless you love it.”

The craft also offers him the best kind of continuing education. His friends range from cops, U.S. Army Rangers, ex-spies, and forensic scientists to cardiothoracic surgeons, solid-state physicists, models, and actors in adult films. “One of the best things is meeting people whose viewpoints may be in opposition to my own. This eliminates ossification of the mind,” he says. “So much of writing is about living your life well, fully, and openly at all times.” Moral indignation is

his “most hated emotion—all that nonsense where people's mouths are hanging open and they're feeling morally disgusted at what's going on,” followed by smugness.

Hurwitz is also a big believer in confronting physical fears, something else he satisfies through crime fiction. His research has taken him aboard a stunt plane, on a swim with sharks in the Galápagos, and even onto a demolition range, where Navy SEAL friends sneaked him in to witness car explosions. To write authentic scenes for his four-book series about U.S. Marshal Tim Rackley, whose daughter is murdered, Hurwitz went undercover in a few mind-control cults, learned how to pick locks, and rode Harley Davidsons through the streets of Los Angeles. “The Rackley books are a meditation on vigilante justice,” he explains, “and



Gregg Hurwitz takes on one of his characters.

the consequences of trying to play God.”

Violence and murder have always been compelling plot elements—the ancient Greeks knew that. “In many ways, crime novels have now replaced novels of social realism,” Hurwitz says. “Dennis Lehane’s *Mystic River* is not about a murder, it’s about a slice of Boston and all the different groups and their reaction to a human crisis. Stephen King’s *Gerald’s Game* is not about S and M gone awry, it’s about a Freudian crisis and a woman in a dysfunctional marriage.”

“The Punisher” is the classic comic-book antihero.

Hurwitz also champions the “hard-boiled” crime fiction popularized by writers like Mickey Spillane, Raymond Chandler, and James M. Cain, author of the 1934 classic *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, about a crude drifter and his affair with a femme fatale. Once banned for its violence and sexuality, it has since become the basis for four movies, and is one of Hurwitz’s all-time favorite stories. “It was the inspiration for Camus’s *The Stranger* because it is really about existential disaffection,” he says. “These writers were slicing into a part of America that others were just not getting at.”

Hurwitz’s *The Crime Writer* is a noir tale, but it also showcases paranoia: a novelist is forced to investigate a murder he is accused of committing while trying to outrun the police—he’s a character in one of his own plotlines. *Trust No One* explores masculine identity, destructive character flaws, and degrees of heroism—but does so through the eyes of an ungrounded young man drawn into a web of historic secrets, presidential agendas, and murder.

“Part of the shift in these novels comes from my own maturation,” Hurwitz says, “so there is less of a focus on weaponry and physicality and graphic violence than in the earlier books. They are written in the first person, the characters have less explicit motives; the novels hinge on the psychological development of the men, who live lives just like you and me, but with the dial offset by about 15 degrees. They are the everyman—with a twist.”

WRITING IS pretty much all Hurwitz has ever wanted to do. On a shelf in his home office is the first mystery he created,



in third grade: *Willie, Julie, and the Case of the Buried Treasure*. A lean man with close-cropped hair and an intense gaze, he is a former pole-vaulter who was a three-time letter winner at Harvard, and has always played league soccer. He has an athlete’s singular focus. When deadlines require, he can write steadily for 16 hours—and normally goes for about nine. “When I’m in the rough-draft phase, it’s hard to get out of the story and into real life, which can sometimes be difficult to balance with my family,” he says. (He and his wife, Delinah, a psychology professor, have two daughters.)

Growing up, Hurwitz was not allowed to watch television unless the Red Sox were playing (his father is from Boston), so he read, especially everything by Stephen King, and soaked up the feeling of being in bed late at night, scared out of his mind. The Punisher was appealing because “he had all this dark stuff and yet was a real man who existed in the real world—he was not a superhero.” He was always drawn to violence and crime—something his (culturally) Jewish, liberal parents, a doctor and a social worker, were initially baffled by, but came to accept; it was more troubling that he has had no formal profession, and chose an artistic field. “What I do,” he adds, “is a big detour for the family.”

At Harvard, he took courses that would provide the widest band of knowledge for future novels—English, the arts, and psychology. His discovery of Jung’s ideas shaped his world view and narrative forms. A favorite quote comes from *Alchemical Studies*: “One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. The latter procedure, however, is disagreeable and therefore not popular.”

“I like the emphasis on the yin and yang, the dark and the light,” Hurwitz says. “We have to be in touch with the much darker impulses. Don’t think that just because you are not recognizing them, you are safer or morally superior. The safest position is to be in touch with all of that dirty stuff we are all made of so you know where it is and how it forms you.” Jung’s focus on storytelling and archetypal characters also appeals to Hurwitz’s sense of life’s purpose. The hero’s journey, a storyline found throughout cultures, across all ages, he says, is “the road map for psychological growth and confronting the unknown in the external world—and humans need that.”

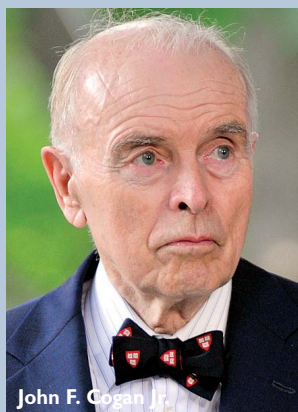
One obvious example is Beowulf, who even in old age risks his life and faces fear to confront the dragon (who is often guarding a hoard of gold). “Jung wrote that the most beautiful things are in the grimmest places,” Hurwitz asserts. “Freedom comes only when you are willing to go into the cave—go into your unconscious and get the gold, which is self-enlightenment and power. These are what the best stories are about. If it’s not a god-damned exciting story about a guy going in to kill a dragon, then nobody cares.” Comics and crime novels alike build on that truth.

In the openings of both *The Crime Writer* and *Trust No One*, the men are yanked out of bed and thrust into a world of danger, intrigue, and contemporary dragons. Nick Horrigan, of *Trust No One*, is literally grabbed by a SWAT team that breaks into his apartment, bundled into a Black Hawk helicopter, and sent to meet a terrorist threatening to blow up a nuclear reactor. (“This opening sequence fell out of my head one night when I couldn’t sleep,” Hurwitz says. “Then I write until I

Harvard Medalists

Three people received the Harvard Medal for outstanding service and were publicly thanked by President Drew Faust during the Harvard Alumni Association's annual meeting on the afternoon of Commencement day.

John F. Cogan Jr. '49, J.D. '52—*Consummate counselor and University citizen, you have set the pace for generous and thoughtful alumni leadership, serving as chair of two Harvard Law School Campaigns and member of Visiting Committees to the Law School, the Davis Center for Russian Studies, and Harvard's art museums, combining your keen knowledge of the law, international business, and the arts to strengthen your Alma Mater.*



John F. Cogan Jr.



Harvey V. Fineberg



Patti B. Saris

Harvey V. Fineberg '67, M.D. '71, M.P.P. '72, Ph.D. '80—*Loyal and illustrious alumnus, holding posts as Provost of Harvard University and Dean of the Harvard School of Public Health, you have successfully brought together professors, practitioners, and the public throughout your career, helping to improve health and human rights by your commitment to science and civil discourse.*

Patti B. Saris '73, J.D. '76—*From Boston to the federal bench, you have been an inspirational and enthusiastic leader for Harvard, daring to make a difference while serving with dedicated distinction as President of the Harvard Board of Overseers, Chief Marshal of the Alumni for the Class of 1973, and Chair of the HAA Nominating Committee for Overseers and Elected Directors.*

see what else falls out, and find out if the plot and characters have legs of their own.")

Horrigan, haunted by a childhood mistake and an ensuing grief from which he fled, is thrown back into the scene of the crime, and forced to grapple with the ambiguous legacy of his stepfather, a Secret Service agent, within a larger political vortex. "You cannot outrun your history or your true identity. And if you are not aware of what those are yourself, then other people are going to shape them for you—and write your narrative for you," Hurwitz concludes. "If you want that pot of gold, that love relation-

ship, then you have to not be passive, you have to *act*."

It is something akin to what Hurwitz does every day in the creative process of writing, tussling with the dragon that is the empty white page. "I don't know if we ever know why we are doing something creative in the moment—what it means personally," he says. "But because I was geared to do this, to write crime fiction, I *do* know that if I don't get a good eight hours of sublimation in in a day, I'm pretty unpleasant to be around."

—NELL PORTER BROWN

And the Winners Are...

THE NAMES of the new members of the Board of Overseers and the new elected directors of the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA) were announced during the association's annual meeting on the afternoon of Commencement day. The 30,383 alumni ballots mailed back in the

GSAS Medalists

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Centennial Medal, first awarded in 1989 on the school's hundredth anniversary, honors alumni who have made contributions to society that emerged from their graduate study at Harvard.

This year's honorands are (from left) Nobel Prize-winning astronomer **Joseph Hooton Taylor, Ph.D. '68**, McDonnell professor of physics at Princeton; Pulitzer Prize-winning historian of slavery and abolitionism **David Brion Davis, Ph.D. '56**, Sterling professor of history emeritus at Yale; noted art historian **Svetlana Leontief Alpers '57, Ph.D. '65**, professor of Northern Renaissance art emerita at the University of California, Berkeley; and Nobel laureate in economics **Thomas Crombie Schelling, Ph.D. '51**, Littauer professor of political economy emeritus at Harvard and now Distinguished Professor at the Maryland School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland, College Park, an expert on national security, nuclear strategy, and arms control.



Photographs by Stu Rosner