

# Commencement Confetti

JIM HARRISON



Carl F. Muller



Stephanie Wilson

**THE SOUTH, RISEN.** At the Harvard Alumni Association's annual meeting on Commencement afternoon, president Carl F. Muller '73, J.D.-M.B.A. '76, noted a hat-trick unprecedented for Harvard: President Drew Faust is from Virginia, speaker Oprah

Winfrey from Mississippi, and he himself from South Carolina. In heaven above, he said, "Our Puritan fathers are scratching their heads and wondering what is going on." As a proper Southern gentleman, he felt obliged, he said, to refer to the honored guest as "Miss Winfrey." Farther afield, he noted that the chief marshal of the twenty-fifth reunion class, astronaut Stephanie Wilson '88, might open a Harvard Club on the moon. (At lunch, Wilson gave Winfrey a magazine article about the honorand's South African girls' academy that had flown on *Discovery* with her in 2010, for 6.2 million miles: straightened out, enough for several trips to lunar club events.)

## Weather Watch

Everybody *talked* about the weather, but....During the Senior Chapel Service on Thursday morning, the Reverend Jonathan L. Walton—concluding his first year as Pusey minister in the Memorial Church and Plummer professor of Christian morals, but already wise to the

ways of fundraising—suggested an air conditioner as an apt naming opportunity. He urged the class of 2013 to

use their privilege and power to "shift the cultural climate. We need you to be thermostats, not thermometers." *The Boston Globe's* live blog showed Oprah Winfrey (gowned, like all the honorands, but more experienced with hot studio lights) mopping her brow at 10:16 A.M. President Drew Faust made the weather a theme of her afternoon address—a segue to research on climate change and energy—and observed that Harvard, which had not closed for meteorological reasons since 1978, did so twice this year. While Cambridge melted, the thirty-fifth re-

union class playfully recalled the great Boston blizzard that closed Harvard (and everything else) during their senior year. South Carolinian Carl Muller came prepared, in a light jacket, for his afternoon speaking duties as president of the HAA.

## Deans, Entering and Exiting

"This is more nerve-wracking for me than presenting my own thesis defense," confessed Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) dean Xiao-Li Meng, presenting the Ph.D. candidates for the first time—in front of a world media figure, no less. "If I mispronounce anything, all your theses will be wasted and you will not get your degrees." (He didn't.) Harvard's longest-serving dean, the Extension School's Michael Shinagel, who is retiring, introduced himself as "the lame-duck dean" for extension studies.

## Guests and Grads

Among those celebrating were Louise Richardson, Ph.D. '89—principal and vice-chancellor of the University of St Andrews, former executive dean of the Radcliffe Insti-

tute—who picked up a GSAS Centennial Medal (see page 66), and her husband, Thomas R. Jevon '75. Their daughter, Fiona Jevon '13, graduated from the College, as had sister Ciara Jevon '11. President emeritus Neil L. Rudenstine and Angelica Rudenstine were part of the extended family attending nephew Jason Wagner, M.B.A. '13, newly "ready to lead people and organizations in enterprises that will serve society."

## Early Birds for a Day

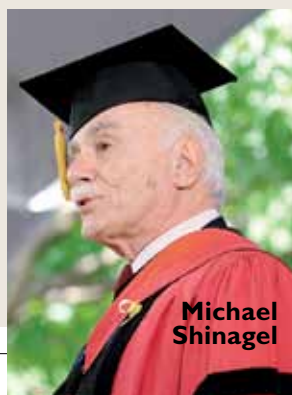
At the Quincy House champagne breakfast on Commencement day, beginning at 6:30 A.M., master Lee Gehrke observed to the seniors as they ate, "I am here for breakfast nearly every morning and I don't think I have ever seen 90 percent of you here at this hour." Offering granola bars and bottled water to go, co-master Deborah Gehrke warned of the rigors ahead: "You won't eat until 1:00" (regular breakfast time, perhaps, for many).

## CommencementX

Ever more events are streamed online. Gluttons for graduation oratory with enough screens could have taken in simultaneous live versions of the College's and several professional schools' class days. Priming the pump, the Harvard Alumni Association's associate director, alumni digital engagement, e-mailed graduates to encourage submissions of "gradvice" to 2013 degree recipients (complementing the wisdom they would hear from speakers, live or streamed, presumably) by tweeting to @HarvardAlumni #gradvice to #Harvard13, posting #gradvice on Facebook to the HAA group, and via other channels. Among the pearls shared: "Follow your dreams" and, pertinently, "Be skeptical of crowd-sourced advice."

## Crimson Cred

Beyond her crimson dress, Oprah Winfrey established her Harvard smarts early in her talk. Referring to the former Radcliffe, now College, Houses considered less desirable than those closer to the Charles River,



Michael Shinagel

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she said she hoped to offer inspiration to “anybody who has ever felt inferior or felt disadvantaged, felt screwed by life—this is a speech for the Quad.”

### Degrees Data

Harvard conferred a bumper crop of 7,321 degrees and 44 certificates: 1,651 from the College, 950 from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 909 from the Business School, 744 from the Education School, 740 from the Law School, 650 from the Extension School, 564 from the Kennedy School...and on down to 79 from the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and 73 from the School of Dental Medicine—reversing their order of finish in 2012.

### Top Theses

Radcliffe awarded the Captain Jonathan Fay Prize for the most original theses to three College seniors. Mathematics concentrator Ashok Cutkosky wrote about DNA topology. Benjamin Naddaff-Hafrey, a history and literature concentrator, explored the “War of the Worlds” radio broadcast. History concentrator Laura Savarese was recognized for research on slavery in antebellum St. Louis.

### Nobelists Need Not Apply?

After the Centennial Medalists luncheon, GSAS dean Xiao-Li Meng, Jones professor of statistics, noted that there is no Nobel Prize for mathematics or for statistics. With so many candidates to choose among for GSAS’s medal, he

### AN ORTHOPEDIST IN THE HOUSE?

Honorands Thomas M. Menino, mayor of Boston (recovering from a fractured leg and facing surgery the next day), and Maestro José Antonio Abreu traveled to the Commencement stage by wheelchair, and ascended around the back, avoiding the steps. Rev. Jonathan Walton navigated with a crutch (torn Achilles tendon). They all had a sympathetic helper in the indefatigable Grace Scheibner, Commencement director (recovering from a broken kneecap), who made some use of a golf cart.

joked, the selection committee discussed whether winning a Nobel was a positive factor or a negative one.

### Decanal Directive

At the end of the Graduate School of Education’s convocation on Wednesday, Dean Kathleen McCartney prepped her charges for Thursday’s big event. The provost would call her forward, she said, and she would introduce the degree candidates: “I have the honor of presenting to you these women and men who will be leaders in education policy, practice, and research.’ And then *your* job is to be very, very loud!” (“They were wonderful!” she reported after the ceremony.)

### Presidential First

Harvard’s 2013 ROTC cohort received copies of *The Yellow Birds*, a novel by Iraq veteran Kevin Powers, from President Drew Faust at their commissioning ceremony. When the students presented their gift to her, she exclaimed, “I’ve never been given an artillery shell before!” The engraved brass casing included the statement, “CONTINUING THE PROUD TRADITION OF HARVARD IN OUR NATION’S SERVICE.”

### Reunion Reflections

John Daley ’61, LL.B. ’64, of the Happy Committee, on duty in front of Sever Hall, recalled that Paul Freund, the late Loeb University Professor emeritus, used



Grace Scheibner

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to say he liked attending fifth reunions and fiftieth reunions, but skipped the others, because “Up to the fifth, they’re all just friends; after the fiftieth, nobody cares anymore; in between, everyone is on the make.” Proving at least part of Freund’s point: Éva Borsody Das ’63 said her reunion was way more fun and not nearly so much work as climbing Mount Kilimanjaro (accomplished prior to her forty-fifth). “The best thing is, everyone is getting more and more relaxed and fun-loving. Last night, people were doing the twist and rock-’n’-roll like a bunch of giddy teenagers—without the angst!”

### Timely Academic Publishing

Following a year during which the College has been roiled by the investigation of academic misconduct (see page 52), Harvard University Press will release *Cheating Lessons: Learning from Academic Dishonesty*, by James M. Lang, of Assumption College, late this summer. Nearly three-quarters of college students cheat, the jacket blurb observes—“because their learning environments give them ample incentives to try.” More effective course design and classroom practice can reduce cheating and improve learning, Lang finds.

**91.5, DEGREED.** Accompanied by several family members, and reversing the normal educational sequence, Thomas C. Hall, M.D. ’49, rose from his wheelchair and walked across the Lowell House courtyard to receive his bachelor’s degree—73 years after enrolling in the College class of 1944 (see page 68). His undergraduate studies were interrupted by World War II, when he served a 13-month prison sentence for refusing to register for military service. Paroled, he took more courses, then entered medical school. He completed his biochemistry concentration requirements in 1976, but was four courses shy of a degree. He finished that work by computer and through visits to registrar Michael Burke and Brett Flehinger, lecturer on history. “I don’t like to leave things dangling,” said Hall, giving new meaning to lifelong learning.



Thomas C. Hall '44 ('13)