



Cover artist Red Danielson at work





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EDITORIAL
EDITOR IN CHIEF
Shelbi Thomas (05BA)

ART DIRECTOR
Nick Beecher (03BA)

MANAGING EDITOR
Josh O'Leary (00BA)

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS/EDITORS
Emma Conway
Ben Frotscher
Leah Klevar (93BA, 95MA)
Tyler Strand

CREATIVE SERVICES MANAGER
Jared Salasberry

CONTRIBUTING DESIGNERS
Danette Angerer (85BFA)
Jodi Schmucker

EMAIL: uimagine@foriowa.org
WEBSITE: magazine.foriowa.org

DIGITAL
SENIOR WEB DESIGNER/DEVELOPER
Jimmy Losasso (09BFA)

WEB DEVELOPERS
Mike Miersen
Heidi Schmidt

MARKETING TECHNOLOGY STRATEGIST
Nicole Knoll (08BA, 22MS)

CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGIST
Megan Magee

MULTIMEDIA SPECIALISTS
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John Emigh (11BA, 13BFA)

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CREATIVE SERVICES
Caleb Saunders

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
MARKETING ANALYTICS AND WEB STRATEGY
Zack Schmidt (03BA)

OFFICE OF ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT
One West Park Road Iowa City, IA 52242

PHONE: 319-335-3305
EMAIL: uiowa@foriowa.org
WEBSITE: foriowa.org

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BIG PICTURE

Catch the Spirit

Savannah (age 8) and Camilla Jelinek (14) have a ball playing catch on Duke Slater Field at Kinnick Stadium this past summer, while their grandmother, Deb Sullivan, looks on. The family received a behind-the-scenes tour of Hawkeye sports facilities as part of Grandparents University®, a University of Iowa program that invites grandparents and grandchildren to spend a day of discovery together on campus.

More than 250 people took part in this year's activities, which ranged from meeting the birds at the Raptor Center at Macbride Nature Recreation Area to exploring the possibilities of artificial intelligence and virtual reality. For photos and more information on the annual program, visit foriowa.org/grandparentsu.

PHOTO: JOHN EMIGH

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CAMPUS MAIL



Basketball Icons in Iowa

Long before **Caitlin Clark** (24BBA) and the Indiana Fever played an exhibition game this past spring at Carver-Hawkeye Arena, Iowa alum **B.J. Armstrong** (89BA) and the Chicago Bulls thrilled fans in Iowa City ["Carver Goes Pro," summer 2025, p. 15].

Kevan Lindley (91BS), who now resides in Maple Grove, Minnesota, remembers the exhibition game on Oct. 16, 1990, like it was yesterday. He captured this photo of Michael Jordan airborne, tongue out, dunking on the Washington Bullets, from his seat behind the basket. Shot on his single-lens reflex camera without auto focus, Lindley prepared for the moment and hoped that the image would turn out sharp. "I can remember sitting through a chunk of the first half of that game with the camera already focused, just hoping that Jordan would dunk right in front of me. Thank goodness he did," says Lindley.

Some of his favorite aspects of the photo include the early Air Jordan logo on the bottom of Jordan's shoe and the ball boy looking around the pillar in awe. Later that season, the Bulls went on to win their first NBA title.

Food For Thought

I anxiously await your quarterly publication, and I was thrilled to see the summer issue in our mailbox. I have only flipped through it quickly, but I can confidently proclaim that this is your best work ever. The way you have weaved the content here with food is just brilliant. The pictures are beautiful, and the articles I have read so far are awesome. I mean, you have a full-page picture of a Carver Cone [p. 13]! The pre-game and post-game diet of **Gennings Dunker** (I can't imagine that many calories in a day) ["Fuel for Success," p. 16]! The restoration of the Iowa River Power Restaurant ["Restoring Power," p. 29]!

What is better than those things? Well, an article about Cobble Hill ["A Marriage of Taste," p. 30] might be. My wife, Andrea, and I live in Cedar Rapids, and we regularly enjoy a great dining experience. We try to find great local spots when we're traveling, but we haven't yet found many restaurants that beat Cobble Hill. However, the Webster ["Return of the Chef," p. 28] is a strong rival. We recently had our anniversary dinner at Walker Homestead ["A Feast for the Senses," p. 32], and we fell in love with it during our first visit there. And it's hard to beat an order of the Famous Conglomeration at Micky's ["Iowa City Eats," p. 20] on a Tuesday night. Keep up the great work, from two lifelong Hawkeyes who have sent three kids to our great university.

**Eric Martin (93BBA) and
Andrea Wells Martin (93BBA)**
Cedar Rapids

CONNECT WITH

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MAGAZINE**
magazine.foriowa.org

MAIL
One West Park Road
Iowa City, IA 52242

EMAIL
uimagazine@foriowa.org

PHONE
319-335-3305
800-648-6973

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PHOTO: KEVAN LINDLEY

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ON IOWA

8 WORDS THAT CROSS DIVIDES 10 CRADLED IN CARE 12 SKELETON CREW



Behind the Seams

Cathy Parrott (01BA) has been a professional costume designer for 19 years, working in New York City on movies like *The Greatest Showman* and Broadway productions like *Motown: The Musical*. Now, she's taking the lessons she learned as a professional and bringing them to University of Iowa students.

The assistant professor of costume design uses her Broadway connections to secure costume donations for the UI Department of Theatre Arts, including pieces she worked on from the musical *Days of Wine and Roses*.

Parrott says, "Being able to open doors for students who may not have otherwise had the opportunity has been the highlight of my career."

PHOTO: JOHN EMIGH



International Writing
Program Director
Christopher Merrill

INTERNATIONAL WRITING PROGRAM

An Unwritten Future

In the wake of funding cuts, Iowa’s prestigious global literary program welcomes a smaller class of residents.



This past summer, poet and professor **Christopher Merrill** traveled to New York, where the literary arts organization Words Without Borders presented him with the 2025 Ottaway Award for the Promotion of International Literature. The event was a celebration of Merrill and the 25 years he’s served as director of the University of Iowa’s International Writing Program, which has become a cornerstone of the global literary exchange. Yet even as the crowd applauded his achievements, recent events cast a shadow over the ceremony.

Support the International Writing Program

Make a donation to the IWP and help it continue its residency program at foriowa.info/im25-iwp.

Federal funding cuts this year have clouded the future of the acclaimed Iowa program. In February, the U.S. Department of State notified Merrill that three grants totaling more than \$950,000 through the department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs were being terminated. The grants no longer aligned with “agency priorities and national interest,” the State Department informed the IWP.

“It is difficult for me to believe that creating a forum for writers from different countries to exchange ideas, works, and impressions does not contribute to a dialogue central to democracy,” Merrill said at the event. “Indeed, from the IWP’s origin in 1967, we have prided ourselves on our ability to respond to changing political circumstances and global affairs.”

Later in June, Merrill was back in his office in the Shambaugh House, home to the IWP, where he and his staff sorted through the financial and logistical challenges of welcoming this year’s class of visiting residents. In addition to the funding cuts, U.S. travel bans and restrictions put the visas of some writers invited to Iowa City in limbo, Merrill said.

The IWP has invited 21 poets and writers to its scaled-back residency this semester, down from the typical 30 to 40 who spend 11 weeks writing and studying each fall in Iowa City. The residents—who receive lodging at the Graduate Hotel—participate in public readings, panel presentations, field trips, cultural events, and literature courses with UI students. Of the 1,625 writers who have participated since 1967, at least 70 percent were wholly or partially funded by the State Department and its various agencies, according to the IWP.

The loss of its federal grants amounts to about half of the IWP’s total annual operating budget, says Merrill. This fall’s residency was only made possible by the IWP endowment and a combination



The 2024 International Writing Program participants gather at the Shambaugh House.

of longtime funding partners, including donors, grants, foreign ministries of culture, and nongovernmental organizations. The program also received a \$250,000 gift this past spring from Hugh F. Culverhouse Jr., an investor and lawyer from Sarasota, Florida, who has donated extensively to under-resourced arts and community organizations around the nation.

Still, the program was forced to eliminate three staff positions and abruptly halt programming beyond its core residency. In past years, the IWP has hosted the two-week Between the Lines summer program for high school students from around the world; sent American writers abroad through its Lines & Spaces program; created resources like WhitmanWeb, which translated the poetry of Walt Whitman into dozens of languages; and developed programs like Book Wings, which brought together American and Russian playwrights.

“All those kinds of projects, they’ve been a part of my tenure here, and now they’re all gone,” says Merrill. “So my job is to figure out what this will look like going forward.”

One of Merrill’s proudest achievements at the IWP was leading Iowa City’s effort to earn its designation as a UNESCO City of Literature in 2008. At the time, Iowa City was just the third location in the world to hold the honor and first in North America. Today, there are 53 Cities of Literature worldwide, and Merrill is exploring

Telling a Global Story

The UI’s International Writing Program was founded in 1967 by the late Iowa Writers’ Workshop director **Paul Engle** (32MA) and his wife, novelist and translator **Hualing Nieh Engle** (66MFA), who died in 2024. Since its opening, the IWP has:

- Hosted more than 1,600 established writers from 160-plus countries.
- Organized 40-plus Lines & Spaces exchanges and summits in countries or regions with a relatively sparse history of literary relations with the U.S.
- Taken more than 170 American authors abroad.
- Produced three Nobel laureates, including 2024 winner **Han Kang**, a 1998 IWP participant from South Korea.
- Held programming in dozens of U.S. cities, including 124 events in more than 20 cities over the past three years alone.

how to strengthen those partnerships and create new opportunities for international communities to send writers to Iowa.

As it happened, June was supposed to be Merrill’s final month at the helm of the IWP. The original plan, he says, was to transition back into teaching and help hire a new director ahead of the coming academic year. But the current situation has meant that Merrill remains at Shambaugh House, for now, as he attempts to stabilize the program, identify new funding sources, and find a path forward.

“I’m getting a little long in the tooth, and I would love to hand this program to somebody young with the energy to go out and build anew in the way that I did when I came here,” says Merrill, who has significantly expanded the IWP by increasing the number of countries that send writers to Iowa.

Each August, as the latest group of residents arrives in Iowa, Merrill shares the same message: He hopes they will write many new pages, make many new friends, and gain many new impressions of the U.S. and its literary traditions. He’s hopeful that this City of Literature—and his country—can continue to create those opportunities for writers for the next 25 years.

■ BY JOSH O’LEARY

PHOTO: TIM SCHOON/UI OFFICE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

PHOTO COURTESY INTERNATIONAL WRITING PROGRAM



Due to Nash’s premature birth, his parents couldn’t hold him until he was 26 days old. Now they’re celebrating a happy, healthy, 1-year-old.

HEALTH CARE

Meet Iowa’s Record Preemie

UI Health Care Stead Family Children’s Hospital cares for a baby born 21 weeks premature, which is a Guinness World Record.

→ It’s an expectant parent’s worst nightmare: Waiting in a hospital room for days surrounded by doctors and nurses, hoping their baby won’t be born too early. For Randall and Mollie Keen, they needed their baby to be born after midnight on July 5, 2024. If the baby could hold off until then, the expert neonatal team at University of Iowa Health Care Stead Family Children’s Hospital would do everything they could to save their son, Nash.

“I never lost hope for Nash,” Mollie Keen says months later, holding a baby who is all giggles.

The Keen family celebrated Nash’s first birthday on July 5, something that seemed nearly impossible

a year ago. But for the Ankeny boy—now the Guinness World Records titleholder for most premature baby—beating “impossible” odds is what he’s good at.

Remembering McKinley

While Nash’s story is one of triumph and resilience, it started with loss. Less than a year before he was born, his parents lost a baby girl named McKinley at 18 weeks’ gestation.

Mollie was diagnosed with an incompetent cervix, a condition in which the lower part of the uterus weakens and opens too soon during pregnancy, which can lead to preterm birth. This

news made her question if her dream of children would come true. But six months after losing McKinley, the couple discovered Mollie was pregnant again.

At her local doctor’s office, Molly learned from a 20-week scan that she was already two centimeters dilated. The evening after that appointment, Keen felt some mild cramping and rushed to her local emergency room. She was sent home on bed rest, told to “keep in the baby in as long as possible.” She and Randall feared that history would repeat itself.

“We were devastated. We thought we were going through the exact same thing, and we thought we were going to lose this baby,” she says.

Stars Align

Keen learned through an online support group that Stead Family Children’s Hospital’s neonatal team had recently started performing lifesaving measures on babies born at 21 weeks gestation. The news couldn’t have come at a better time.

Keen began to contract heavily in the middle of the night and rushed to Iowa City. Soon after, her water broke.

The care team sprang into action, trying to delay labor to decrease the chance of complications. Luckily, Keen says her contractions subsided for two days. Then, on July 5, just hours after she surpassed the 21-week mark, Nash was born.

High-risk obstetrician **Malinda Schaefer** delivered Nash. She describes the moment as being part of a new frontier in maternal fetal medicine.

“We really try to convey that we do not know what the outcomes will be for these extremely premature births,” she says, adding that most



Mollie Keen with Nash at 4 weeks old

TOP PHOTO: LIZ MARTIN/UI HEALTH CARE; BOTTOM PHOTO COURTESY KEEN FAMILY

“I never lost hope for Nash.”

—Mollie Keen

survival rates are low and complication risks are high for babies born at 22 weeks. “It is really important to me to have honest and open conversations with parents, so they feel fully informed to make the best decision for them and their family. Patient autonomy is most important to me.”

The stars aligned for Nash as the team was able to quickly provide medicine to support organ development and lower the risk of certain complications. As Schaefer and others tended to Keen, the neonatal team cared for Nash.

The Iowa Difference

Although Nash weighed just 10 ounces—less than a can of soda—he was big enough for the neonatal intensive care unit’s tiniest breathing tube that helped stabilize his heart rate and oxygen levels. Still, his survival chances were technically nonexistent, because at the time no baby had ever been born so early and survived. Few NICUs in the world were equipped to potentially save Nash. Fortunately, Stead Family Children’s Hospital is one of them.

“Our NICU’s results for babies born at 22 weeks’ gestation are among the best in the world,” says neonatologist **Edward Bell**.

For this reason, Bell says that even though 21-week babies like Nash are considered too early to be offered intensive care in most hospitals, Stead Family Children’s Hospital has begun to treat some 21-week babies. Even with world-class outcomes and expertise, physicians make sure the parents understand the risks.

It starts with basic support and monitoring of the infant’s underdeveloped organs. Stead Family Children’s Hospital supports successful patient outcomes through hemodynamics, a technique that uses ultrasound to precisely assess blood flow and heart function, allowing for highly targeted treatment. For Nash, the technique allowed doctors to see that his heart was functioning well, even though his blood pressure was low at birth. Research shows that hemodynamic care cuts the risk of death or severe brain bleeding in half for very premature babies. Neonatologist **Amy Stanford** (14MD, 17R, 21MD)—who cared for

Nash—is the second physician to complete Iowa’s hemodynamics fellowship program, the first of its kind in the United States.

Nash’s NICU Rollercoaster

While Stanford and the team were able to stabilize Nash, he faced many health issues. At one point Mollie Keen wrote online, “He’s the sickest stable patient they have in the NICU right now.”

As he began to grow, Nash underwent blood draws, echocardiograms for his heart, neurological monitoring, and countless medications.

The Keen family say Nash’s care team helped them through the process.

“They were on top of it every step of the way,” says Randall Keen. “They really gave him a fighting chance.”

Nash’s journey wasn’t without challenges. For several nights his vital signs would drop due to his immature organs. He underwent surgery for a perforated bowel, a procedure that has a 30–40% mortality rate at most hospitals. Through all this, Nash continued to fight. After 189 days in the hospital, Nash finally went home in January 2025.

Next for Nash

Backed by a loving family and expert care team, Nash continues to defy the odds and is seen regularly at Stead Family Children’s Hospital.

Stanford continues to focus on Nash’s cardiopulmonary health. The care team recently helped Nash resolve his chronic pulmonary hypertension. He has a minor heart defect, which Stanford says should resolve as he gets older. They’re also seeing progress as they wean him from oxygen.

“My ultimate goal for Nash is by the time he’s 5 years old when he goes to kindergarten, no one will know that he was born so early,” Stanford says.

Nash is delayed in reaching the typical baby milestones. However, Nash didn’t experience any brain bleeds, so there’s hope that his cognitive function won’t be affected by his premature birth.

For Stanford and the NICU team, Nash’s success is made possible by all the babies who have come before him, like his sister, McKinley.

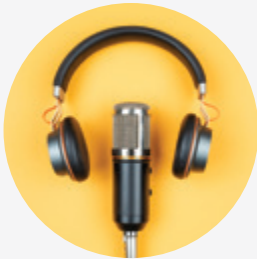
“Every patient teaches us something, and we use those lessons to improve care for the next,” says Stanford.

Now, his parents say Nash is growing every day, just like any other baby.

“I just hope that Nash realizes just how loved he is and how many people have cheered him on from the very beginning,” Mollie Keen says. “I want him to see his story as a source of strength.”

■ BY TAYLOR VESSEL

BRIEFS



Reflections on Vietnam

UI journalism students in a Nonfiction Narrative Podcasting class led by professor **Adam Kempenaar** (98BA, 05MA) recently released the four-part series “A Campus in Conflict” about student activism at Iowa during the Vietnam War. To listen, visit foriowa.info/im25-vietnam.

Business Boost

The family of the late **Henry B. Tippie** (49BSC, 09LHD) has committed \$20 million to renovate and expand the UI Tippie College of Business, which has more than doubled in students since the John Pappajohn Business Building opened in 1994. A two-year construction project, which begins in 2026, will add 65,000 square feet for the college.

Campus Growth

The new Health Sciences Academic Building opened its doors this fall as home to the communication sciences and disorders, health and human physiology, and physical therapy and rehabilitation sciences programs. Other upcoming campus projects include the expansion of the Iowa Advanced Technology Laboratory and making room for the new UI Health Care Inpatient Tower.



PALEONTOLOGY

Bare Bones

Iowa students help preserve a piece of prehistory.

➔ **Maya Monk** (25BS) and **Mary Haag** (25BS) spent hours last semester tucked into a back room at the Office of the State Archaeologist in Iowa City doing what Haag called “reverse painting.” The University of Iowa undergraduate students helped carefully clean and preserve the skull and other bones of a mastodon excavated from Wayne County, Iowa, in summer 2024. Mastodons—large mammals similar in appearance to elephants and mammoths—roamed North America from about 3.5 million years ago until 10,500 years ago. Radiocarbon dating determined that this skeleton is 13,600 years old. UI archaeologists and a group of community volunteers excavated the bones after the landowner discovered partially exposed bones in a creek bed in

2022. While mastodon bones are not rare in Iowa, it was unusual to find such a large collection in one place. This was also the first well-preserved skull to be scientifically excavated in the state. The students used small, soft paintbrushes and distilled water to slowly remove the dirt and clay that covered the mastodon skull, which sat within sandbags and a wooden frame to hold it in place. Along the way, Monk consolidated the bones, applying an archival adhesive that seeped into the porous material to harden it and prevent further deterioration. Once cleaning and preservation are complete, the mastodon bones will be displayed at the Prairie Trails Museum of Wayne County, not far from where they were discovered.

UI students are creating 3D models of the mastodon bones found in southern Iowa to make them accessible for researchers.

“It’s been such an incredible experience to get to work on this,” says Monk, who graduated this past spring with a degree in biology. “I’ve learned so much and had the chance to meet and work with so many amazing people.” **Tiffany Adrain** (03MS), collections manager for the UI Paleontology Repository and adjunct instructor in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, is committed to getting undergrads involved in hands-on research. “Working with students is one of the most rewarding parts of my job,” says Adrain. “I started volunteering and job shadowing when I was 15, so it’s important for me to provide that opportunity for other people because I really benefited from it.” Monk discovered the repository when reaching out to faculty about potential research opportunities at the beginning of her junior year. She started working on a digitization project of specimens in the Robert Wolf Collection, and shortly after received an Office of Undergraduate Research Fellowship to work on the mastodon project. **William Sprengelmeyer**, a second-year student, is now leading the charge to 3D scan each mastodon bone, including the skull. The 3D models are being uploaded to a public site for researchers and the public to use.

Says Adrain, “These students are getting to do something that most people probably never would.”

■ BY EMILY NELSON



At Iowa, Maya Monk gained experience in preserving prehistoric bones.

3D BONE RENDERINGS: WILLIAM SPRENGELMEYER; PHOTO: KIRK MURRAY/UI OFFICE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION



ASK AN EXPERT

What Can I Expect During Menopause?

➔ **Yamnia I. Cortés**, an associate professor at the University of Iowa College of Nursing, leads a team of researchers who study midlife women’s cardiovascular health, particularly during the menopause transition. As the principal investigator of the Cortés MenoLab, she has been featured on PBS and *Oprah Daily* and receives numerous questions from women navigating the challenges of menopause. Here are a few of the most common concerns.

When does menopause usually start, and how long does it last?
In the United States, menopause typically occurs around age 52 and is defined as 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period. Perimenopause, which can last 4–10 years, is the transition period when menstrual cycles become irregular, and women may experience symptoms commonly associated with menopause, like

hot flashes and night sweats. However, the age at menopause and duration of perimenopause can vary significantly based on factors such as race and ethnicity, education level, body weight, smoking status, and chronic health conditions.

I’ve noticed weight gain—does menopause have something to do with it?
Weight and body mass index increase gradually during the menopause transition, but menopause itself does not cause a sudden increase. Hormonal changes—especially declining estrogen—can slow metabolism, reduce muscle mass, and shift fat storage to the abdomen. Other factors such as aging, genetics, sleep issues, and lifestyle also play a role.

What are some common symptoms?
Common symptoms include hot flashes, night sweats, depressive symptoms, sleep problems, brain fog or

difficulty concentrating, vaginal dryness, recurring urinary tract infections, joint pain, and thinning hair and nails. However, women may experience numerous other symptoms, with the frequency and severity varying widely from person to person.

Is hormone therapy safe, and is it right for me?
Menopause hormone therapy (MHT) should be individualized—considering age, time since menopause, health history, and personal preferences. It is typically used at the lowest effective dose for the shortest duration needed to manage symptoms. MHT can be safe and effective for many people, especially when started near the onset of menopause (typically within 10 years of the final menstrual period). MHT recently has been FDA-approved for vasomotor symptoms (hot flashes and night sweats), genitourinary syndrome of menopause (a condition characterized by vaginal dryness, painful intercourse, and urinary symptoms), prevention of bone loss and osteoporosis, and premature ovarian insufficiency or early menopause (under age 40), where MHT is recommended until the average age of natural menopause.

Are there nonhormonal ways to manage menopause symptoms?
Yes, there are several nonhormonal options:

- **Nonhormonal medications.** Some antidepressants may help relieve hot flashes, but the only one currently approved is paroxetine. Fezolinetant, which works by targeting the part of the brain that regulates body temperature, was approved in 2023.
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy.** It may reduce the impact of vasomotor symptoms and improve sleep and mood.

- **Healthy lifestyle.** A balanced diet, regular exercise, and stress-reducing practices such as mindfulness, yoga, or tai chi may help improve mood, sleep, focus, and overall health. Cooling wearables (including light pajamas and cooling pillows), staying hydrated, and limiting caffeine may also improve vasomotor symptoms and sleep.

PHOTO: ILLUSTRATION: NICK BEECHER

GO HAWKS

14 NEXT IN LINE 16 HAWKS IN THE HALL 18 THE MCCOLLUM MINDSET



A.J., Eppy (98BA), Iose, Stephanie, and Eric (24BSE) have made the Epenesa name a fixture at Kinnick Stadium.

PHOTOS: HAWKEYESPORTS.COM



Thirty years after Eppy Epenesa joined the Iowa football team, his youngest son continues the family's Hawkeye legacy.

FOOTBALL

Hawkeye Dynasty

Freshman defensive end Iose Epenesa continues a family legacy with Iowa football.



What's it like for a high school student from Polynesia to move to Iowa sight unseen?

"I had never felt that kind of weather before; it was hot, then it was super cold," says **Eppy Epenesa** (98BA). "It was a super weather shock for me, especially for playing football, and I had no idea what I was in for."

Growing up nearly 7,000 miles away from Iowa in the American Samoa, Epenesa was lightly recruited in football. After playing two years at Iowa Wesleyan College in Mount Pleasant, Epenesa walked on at Iowa as a defensive lineman under legendary coach **Hayden Fry** in the 1990s.

His three sons—**A.J.**, **Eric** (24BSE), and now **Iose**—have all followed in their father's footsteps as Hawkeyes.

When Epenesa's oldest child, daughter Sam, became interested in junior high sports, Eppy

began holding workouts and training runs around the family home in the St. Louis suburb of Edwardsville, Illinois. As A.J. and Eric grew old enough to join in, Eppy opened the workouts to their friends and teammates. Boys and girls from basketball, track, wrestling, volleyball, and other sports participated. Epenesa based the workouts on Hawkeye practices that included long-distance runs, hill repeats, and field sprints.

"I always tell the kids there is no easy recipe for success," he says. "You just need to be willing to put in the work."

Eventually, Iose—the youngest of Eppy's four kids—joined his dad and older siblings in the workouts.

"I was maybe 8 or 9 trying to keep up with these kids who were 16, 17, 18—just doing my best," says Iose. "For my dad to be able to do that for the athletes and the town was just awesome."

Word of the workouts grew so much that the Big Ten Network aired a segment about it while A.J. was a Hawkeye football player.

Eppy's oldest son, A.J., was an All-American Hawkeye defensive end from 2017-19 and now plays for the Buffalo Bills. Middle son Eric just finished his time as a Hawkeye linebacker. Now, youngest son Iose is beginning his Iowa football career as a defensive end.

At first, Iose didn't feel destined to be a Hawkeye.

"In high school, I wanted to be different and maybe play somewhere else," he says. "But it just became apparent that Iowa was the place for me, because it felt like home, everything fell into place, and it was the perfect fit for me."

As Iose begins his Hawkeye career, his expectations are humble.

"I hope to maybe get some time on the field and get in on a couple of plays," he says. "I also want to work on getting stronger in the weight room."

With Iose now joining the Hawkeyes, father and son reflect on the significance of their Iowa family legacy.

"It means the world to me that my boys have gone to Iowa," says Eppy, "because it's the place where I really started, the place where I learned about life, and the place that gave me the opportunity to succeed."

Iose says, "It's a great honor, especially since I've grown up surrounded by Iowa Hawkeye culture and my dad and brothers playing football here. Now that I am the guy in those shoes, it's just so surreal to me."

And what will become of the legendary Epenesa backyard workouts now that Eppy and his wife, Stephanie, are empty nesters?

"I've been asked by local high school athletes to keep the workouts going," says Eppy. "I will, because I love helping these kids have the opportunity to play at the next level."

■ BY JD MENDENHALL



Brandon Scherff was one of eight Hawkeyes to join the UI Athletics Hall of Fame this fall.

HALL OF FAME

Positioned for Greatness

Newly retired All-Pro Brandon Scherff remembers the position change that put him on a path to college and NFL stardom.

➔ A quarterback that weighed 295 pounds wasn't going to work. **Brandon Scherff** (14BA, 14BS) was participating in the shot put at the Iowa high school state track and field meet when he was approached by Hawkeye football assistant coach **Reese Morgan**. Iowa still wanted Scherff, an all-state football player and shot put state champion at Denison High School, but it wasn't because of the 1,200 yards he threw as a quarterback in his sophomore year. "I got an offer from Iowa, and I said, 'For quarterback?' and Coach [**Kirk**] **Ferentz** said, 'Absolutely not,'" Scherff says. "They saw something in me that I never imagined."

What they saw in Scherff was that he could be an offensive lineman, and he turned out to be one of the best in program history. Scherff was among eight Hawkeye greats inducted into the UI

Athletics Hall of Fame last month in a ceremony at Carver-Hawkeye Arena. Scherff won the Outland Trophy in 2014 as the nation's best interior lineman while also earning consensus first-team All-American honors. The No. 5 overall draft pick by Washington in 2015, Scherff was an All-Pro selection in 2020 and played in five Pro Bowls. He played in Washington from 2015-21 and Jacksonville from 2022 through last season. He retired from professional football this past summer. "Sometimes I would tell my wife that she has to pinch me, because I'm playing a kid's game, and being able to do it as a job is amazing," Scherff says. "I will be forever grateful to have had that chance."

■ BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP

Meet the 2025 UI Athletics Hall of Fame Class

 **Justin Austin (12BA)**
Men's Track and Field
A five-time All-American sprinter, Austin was Big Ten Track Athlete of the Year in 2011 and 2013.

 **Lisa Birocci Banse (06BA)**
Softball
Banse was a two-time All-American and 2003 Big Ten Pitcher of the Year who won 90 career games.

 **Bob Bowlsby (78MA)**
Administration
As athletic director from 1991–2006, Bowlsby hired coaches such as **Kirk Ferentz** and **Tom Brands** (92BS) and oversaw more than \$100 million in facilities projects.

 **Elena Callas King (82BGS)**
Women's Golf
King was a three-time Big Ten Championship qualifier, three-time national championship individual qualifier, and the 1979 team MVP.

 **Lisa Cellucci (98BA)**
Field Hockey
Before becoming Iowa's current coach, the All-American goalie set a school record for saves with 592 and was a member of the U.S. National Team from 1999–2001.

 **Brandon Scherff (14BA, 14BS)**
Football
The 2014 Outland Trophy recipient earned five Pro Bowl selections in 10 NFL seasons.

 **Brad Smith (78BS)**
Men's Wrestling
Smith won a national title at 142 pounds in 1976 and was part of Iowa's first two NCAA team championships in 1975 and 1976; he later became the winningest coach in Iowa high school wrestling history.

 **Tom Williams (87BGS)**
Men's Swimming and Diving
A five-time All-American at Iowa, Williams won a gold medal for Team USA with a record time at the 1987 Pan American Games and set two world records with the U.S. 200-meter freestyle relay team.

PHOTOS: HAWKEYESPORTS.COM



Meike Ingles holds her daughter, Xiah, who has spent her early life around the Hawkeye soccer team.

PLAYMAKER MEIKE INGLES (24BS)

Soccer Mom

A Hawkeye soccer player perseveres through injuries, illness, and motherhood to lead the program as a grad student.

➔ **Meike Ingles** (24BS) could have easily given up on her academic and athletic dreams. After being named Iowa's offensive player of the year as a freshman in 2020, Ingles had high hopes for the future. Yet, over the next three seasons, Ingles started just six games and experienced a quad injury during practice, an illness that required hospitalization, the death of her father, and the birth of her daughter. "There were a lot of moments where I was scared," says Ingles, whose daughter, Xiah, was born in November 2022. "But everyone was so

supportive. They took me in with open arms. My dad passed away nine months before Xiah was born, so she was really my saving grace." **The Road Back to the Pitch** Approximately 1% of female college student-athletes experience pregnancy, according to the NCAA. For Ingles, she was back to running and performing workouts within two months of giving birth. Yet, she found out quickly that it would take time before she was back to peak performance. "I struggled with my strength training," says Ingles. "I'd look at other teammates in the weight

room, and they were lifting with bigger plates. I knew I used to be able to do that, so it was frustrating. It took two years to get back to where I was before having Xiah." While working to get back, she was also adjusting to motherhood. "It took time to get comfortable bringing Xiah around my coaches and teammates, but she's now another girl on the team," says Ingles. "She brings so much light to the room. She definitely is part of the team now."

A Sweet Season Last season, Ingles was back to full strength and started 18 games for the Hawkeyes—netting seven goals, including a game winner against Georgetown to send Iowa to the program's first Sweet 16. She was named the team's co-offensive player of the year and received a University of Iowa Athletics' Golden Herky award as Comeback Athlete of the Year at Iowa. Now, as she enters her final year as a Hawkeye, the graduate student continues to redefine what it means to persevere.

"Everything I have gone through has built me into the person I am today," says Ingles, who wants to continue her playing career with the National Women's Soccer League or the USL Super League. "I've certainly grown as a woman, but I've also changed as a soccer player. I now get worried when someone goes in for a tackle—I wasn't like that before. I'm certainly the mom on the team now."

■ BY BEN FROTSCHER



Ingles, Iowa's Comeback Athlete of the Year

PHOTOS: HAWKEYESPORTS.COM



MEN'S BASKETBALL

The Power of Process

New Iowa coach Ben McCollum details his approach for building a winning program.

➔ **Ben McCollum** returned from his first family vacation in nearly two years with an eager look in his eyes. The getaway followed a frenetic spring where he led Drake to the NCAA Tournament's round of 32, became the Iowa men's basketball coach, and rebuilt a roster. Just days before his inaugural Hawkeye team assembled this past summer, McCollum sat down with *Iowa Magazine* to discuss his mindset in preparing his student-athletes for success. Here's the conversation, edited for length and clarity.

What influence did your experience as a basketball player have on your coaching style?

I always had an extreme work ethic because I wanted to pursue Division I basketball. Throughout my career, our team didn't finish first as much as I would have liked. I always thought I was close to being able to break that, and then I went to Northwest [Missouri State] and realized there's a different level of intensity and culture associated with it.

It seems you prioritize strength and conditioning more than many other coaches. Why is that important to you?

I try to stay in shape and challenge myself. I enjoy that suffering component of it. I think that's what makes you that much better—working hard and going through some pain. The best way to do that sometimes is through conditioning because you can choose that rather than some type of adverse situation happening in your life.

Some of your former players have talked about the intense workouts in your program. Beyond building fitness, is there an ulterior motive with those?

A lot of people can run a long way and kick the door down, but can you do that and support your teammate? What we say when our guys get tired is making sure that they think about their teammate and getting them through it. And naturally, that unselfish heart comes out, and you get through

Ben McCollum, front center, huddles with his team during summer workouts.

it because you're not so worried about how tired you are. It trains you to get a little less emotional.

How do you instill a process-over-results mindset into your players?

I've got to be an example. I get excited about wins but not a ton. I don't get upset with losses that much. I just stay process focused. I get more upset with a bad workout than anything else. I just want the guys to give elite effort every single time and pay attention to that.

If you do that consistently, it takes a lot of pressure off those results that you don't have control over anyway.

You've described the university as an opportune place to build a program and culture. Why do you believe that's possible here?

Iowa has a true campus feel to it. I think the community will embrace it and make [our student-athletes] want to stay. I think it does attract some Iowa guys and those from outside the state who have Midwest personalities, who want to be about something bigger than themselves, and who want to win championships. I think we can do that here.

■ BY TYLER STRAND



PHOTOS: HAWKEYESPORTS.COM

➔ To read our full Q&A with McCollum, visit foriowa.info/im25-mccollum.



COLLEGE ATHLETICS

Flight for Iowa

As revenue-sharing ushers in a new era for college sports, Iowa introduces Flight Funds to support student-athletes.

➔ Following a landmark NCAA court settlement that allows universities to share athletics revenue with student-athletes for the first time, the University of Iowa is working to leverage this new business model to benefit Hawkeyes.

On June 6, a federal judge approved a deal that resolves three antitrust lawsuits—known collectively as House vs. NCAA—that will reshape the financial framework of college athletics. As part of the \$2.8 billion settlement, athletic departments can now directly distribute a portion of their revenue to student-athletes. In the 2025-26 academic year, each university may share up to \$20.5 million with its student-athletes, with that cap expected to rise annually.

In response, the UI is working to increase its annual athletics revenue to distribute the maximum amount permitted to Hawkeye student-athletes. These payments will be provided in addition to scholarships and other existing benefits. To help reach this goal, Iowa Athletics—partnering with the UI Center for Advancement—has launched a new charitable giving program called the Flight Funds. By donating to the Flight Funds, fans can directly support student-athletes through revenue sharing.

“We are eager to embrace the new era of opportunity for Iowa Athletics and are committed

to participating at the maximum revenue-sharing level,” says **Beth Goetz**, the Henry B. and Patricia B. Tippie Director of Athletics Chair. “Hawkeye fans have always shown their commitment to our young men and women, and that continued loyal and generous support is critical as we move forward.”

Fans can contribute to Flight Funds for four specific Hawkeye programs—football, men's basketball, women's basketball, and men's wrestling—or make a gift to a general Flight Fund that supports all Hawkeye sports. Contributions to the Flight Funds are tax deductible and count toward athletic ticket priority points but not toward I-Club seating or parking requirements.

Says Goetz: “Our focus remains on creating an environment where our student-athletes can thrive academically and athletically. We are confident in our ability to position our programs for success as we compete for championships in this new era.”

■ BY JOSH O'LEARY

LEARN MORE

For details on the Flight Funds and how you can directly support Hawkeye student-athletes, visit hawkeyesports.com/flight-funds.

BRIEFS



STARS AND STRIPES AND STUELKE

Over the summer, UI senior **Hannah Stuelke** earned a gold medal with the 2025 USA Women's AmeriCup Team in Santiago, Chile. Iowa alumna and Oklahoma women's basketball coach **Jennie Baranczyk** (04BA) supported the team as assistant coach.

WRESTLERS ON THE RISE

After claiming titles at Final X earlier this year, Hawkeye women wrestlers **Kennedy Blades**, **Macey Kilty**, **Felicity Taylor** (24MA), and **Kylie Welker** will represent the U.S. this fall at the Senior World Championships in Zagreb, Croatia.

OUT OF THE PARK

Duane Banks Field, the home of Hawkeye baseball, will undergo \$5.8 million in donor-funded renovations. Upgrades to the 50-year-old stadium include additional seating, netting, and an improved press box and bathroom. Construction begins after the 2026 Iowa baseball season.

SOFTBALL STAR RETURNS

After nearly 20 years of coaching experience, **Stacy May-Johnson** (07BBA, 07BS) returns to Iowa as head coach of the softball program. A former player from 2003–06, May-Johnson was part of the 2003 Big Ten championship team.

PLAYING

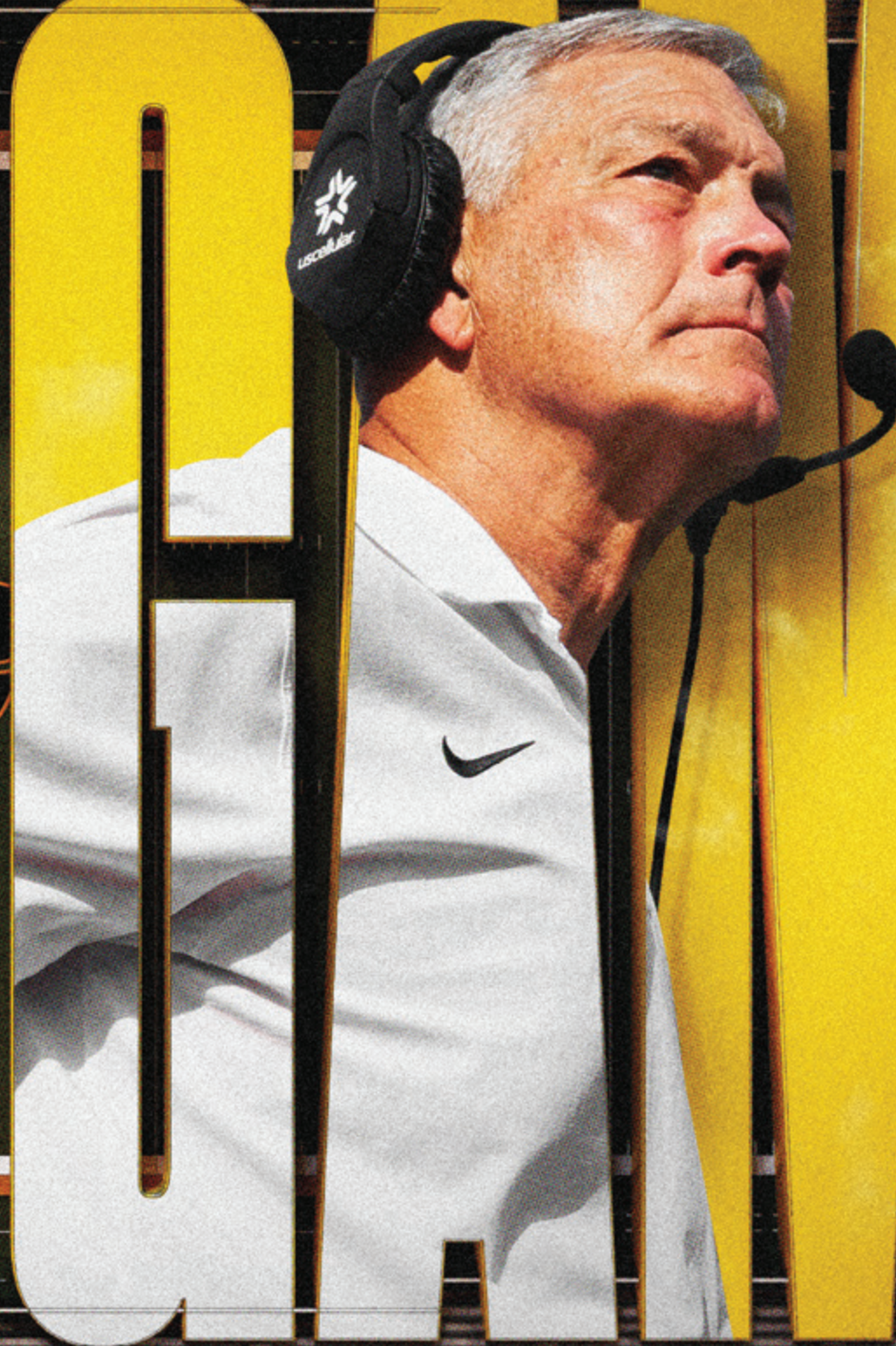
THE

LONG

GAME

PLAYING ON THE LONG

AS KIRK FERENTZ ECLIPSES THE
BIG TEN CAREER WINS RECORD,
PAST HAWKEYES REFLECT ON HOW THE
COACH TRANSFORMS LIVES.



STORY BY WAYNE DREHS
PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY JUSTIN ELSNER

“
YOU COULD SENSE THE
INTEGRITY.
THE WORK ETHIC.
YOU COULD FEEL HOW MUCH
HE CARES.”

— Bob Bowlsby

ON an unseasonably warm December night in 1998, on the cement tarmac of the Eastern Iowa Airport, the white door of a private jet unfolded to unveil a 43-year-old man carrying a brown leather briefcase and the weight of a Big Ten university on his shoulders. He wore black slacks, a white button-up dress shirt, and a black and gold tie.

He wasn't expected to be there. Eleven days earlier, 69-year-old **Hayden Fry**, Iowa's all-time winningest coach, retired amid a quiet battle with prostate cancer. While Iowa fans fixated on other candidates—including former Hawkeye **Bob Stoops** (83BBA), who was quickly snatched up by Oklahoma—a steady leader emerged.

Kirk Ferentz was the assistant head coach of the Baltimore Ravens and a Fry pupil during an eight-year stint in Iowa City coaching the offensive line. His preparation, professionalism, and thoughtfulness wowed the search

committee during an interview at a hotel near Cleveland's Hopkins International Airport.

A day later, with his wife and young children by his side, Ferentz deboarded the plane prepared to write the next chapter of Iowa football. No one could have imagined what would happen next.

“Did I know at the time we hit a home run?” asks former Iowa athletic director **Bob Bowlsby** today. “That he would be at Iowa for 27 years? Hell no. And anybody who tells you otherwise is an abject liar.”

But even in Ferentz's first hours on the job, Bowlsby found a coach who truly cared. Less than an hour after his plane landed, Ferentz addressed the Iowa team for the first time. His eyes filled with tears as he spoke.

“I remember standing there thinking, ‘I don't know what's going to happen, but we're going to get every last ounce of effort out of this man,’” says Bowlsby. “You could sense the integrity. The work ethic. You could feel how much he cares. And that's the way he has been all these years.”

Twenty-seven years, to be exact. Seven more than Fry—and counting. At age 70, Ferentz is the longest-tenured head coach in the country, and it's been that way for nearly a decade. Sixty-nine coaches have been hired in the Big Ten during his Iowa tenure. He even outlasted the Sheraton Hotel in Cleveland where he impressed in his interview. That structure was torn down last fall.

Early this season, Ferentz is expected to surpass Ohio State's Woody Hayes as the winningest coach in Big Ten history. His teams have qualified for a bowl game for 12 straight seasons, the seventh-longest streak in FBS. Iowa's eight wins or more the last 10 seasons is a mark shared only with Alabama, Clemson, Georgia, and Ohio State.

But beyond the record-setting wins and gridiron legacy is the impact Ferentz has had on the young men he's coached. Speak to enough of them, and you'll see a common thread. Talk of family. Character. Toughness. And accountability.

These Hawkeyes can close their eyes and picture Ferentz on the elliptical or stationary bike in the Iowa football complex, an iPad in front of him scrolling through game film for the one advantage that might push Iowa on top. They can feel him at practice—stoic, silent, an eye on everything—until he sees something he doesn't like, tosses his chewing gum to the side, and starts to teach. “Like some sort of mythical creature,” says former Hawkeye **Dallas Clark** (07BA).

There aren't many secrets after 27 years. We've learned that Ferentz can get choked up after victories. He requires three packs of gum in his locker on game days. Ferentz almost always indulges

in an ice cream cone the night before a game. And if he's ever looking for something stronger, it's probably a St. Pauli Girl lager. And if he can't find that, a Heineken.

But none of those details account for the impact he's had on the young men he's helped raise. Details like never forgetting the name of a player's mom or dad. (Or now, as many of his former players grow older, their children.) Ferentz has shown up unannounced at family funerals. He's checked in on former players through their bosses or his NFL connections. And he's done it all with a football family that only grows larger with each passing year.

“If you only look at the wins and losses, you're missing the forest for the trees,” says former Iowa linebacker and Minnesota Vikings captain **Chad Greenway** (05BA). “The point of all this is to become a great human, citizen, husband, and dad. And I'll tell you what—he has raised a hell of a lot of those over the years.”

“With the whole world spinning around him, he hasn't changed,” adds former Iowa and NFL kicker **Nate Kaeding** (04BA, 15MBA). “It's about character, developing young men as people, and this lifelong pursuit of continuous improvement. It's such a special Iowa story that is uniquely ours, and we should continue to write and enjoy it as long as we can.”

These are just a few of those stories that mean more than wins and losses, touchdowns and tackles, boosters and bowl games, from players who represent every year Ferentz has coached at Iowa. From **Matt Bowen** (99BA) and **LeVar Woods** (00BA) on Ferentz's first team to recently graduated All-American linebacker **Jay Higgins** (24BA), here's what Hawkeyes have learned from Ferentz, what he gave them in life, and what they try to give back to him, long after their Iowa City days are behind them.

Matt Bowen (99BA)

1996–2000

Hometown: Glen Ellyn, Illinois

Record Under Ferentz: 1-10

Today: ESPN NFL analyst, father of four

Shortly after Bowen's NFL retirement in 2007, his wife, Shawn, gave birth to their first child, a boy named Matthew. He was born with Down syndrome. Bowen struggled with the reality of his new life.

“I did not do very well with it,” says Bowen. “I'm not proud of that, but I'm honest about it. It was hard for me to come to acceptance. There was so much fear and uncertainty as a first-time father with a child that has special needs.”

“Having Coach invite me ... it was everything. It changed my life.”

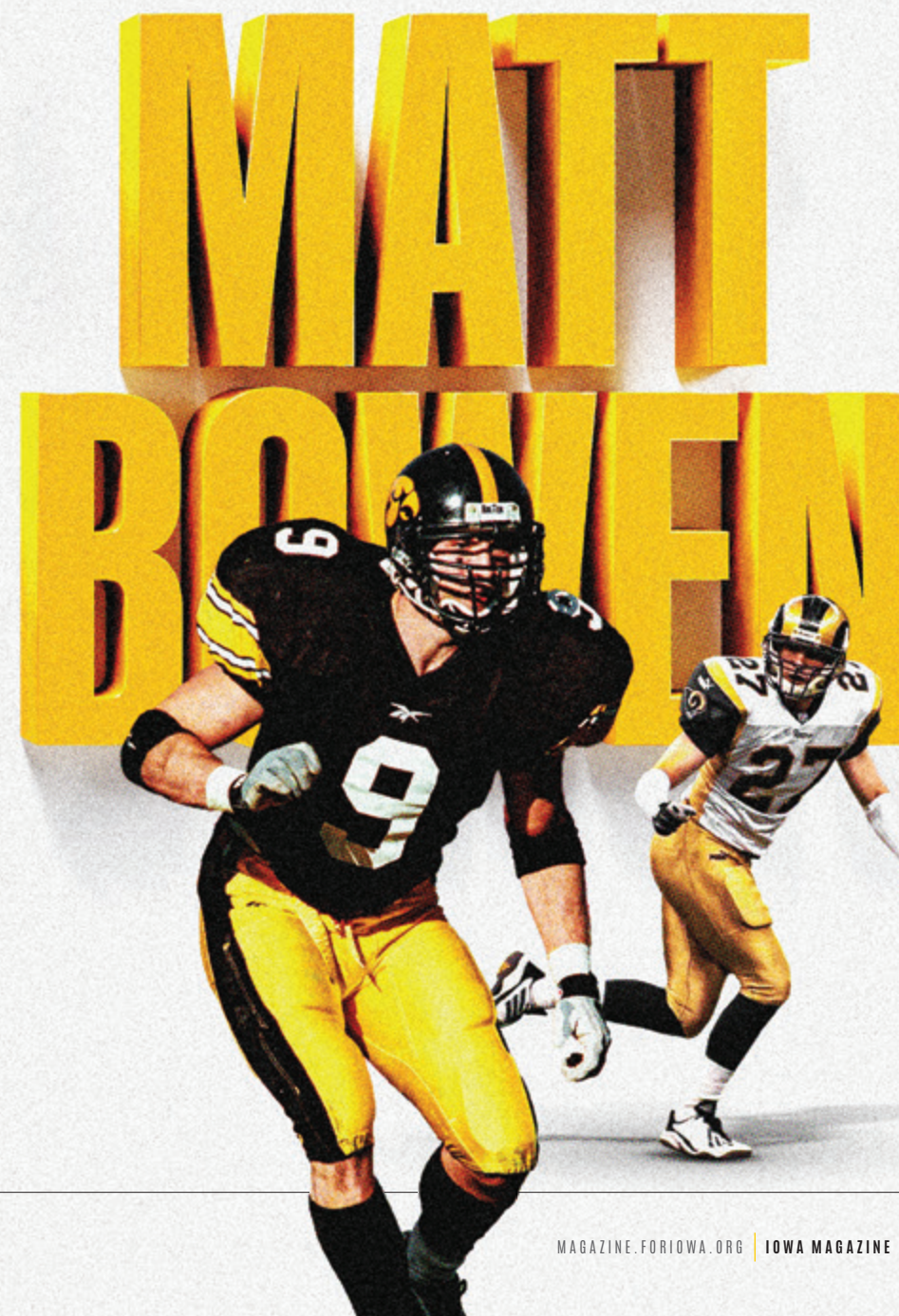
—Matt Bowen

Bowen, who grew up in the Chicago area and returned there after his playing days, leaned on former Iowa defensive coordinator **Norm Parker**, whose son Jeffrey also had Down syndrome. That fall, as Iowa prepared to play at Northwestern, Ferentz invited Bowen, his wife, and 10-month-old Matthew to join the team dinner the night before the game.

“Come to dinner, sit with the coaches, and I want to meet Matthew,” Bowen recalls Ferentz telling him.

That night at dinner, Bowen watched as Ferentz and the rest of the coaching staff—including Norm Parker, **Phil Parker**, and **Ken O'Keefe**—all took turns holding and showing love for his little boy. Everything changed. On the drive home, Bowen's wife told him he looked completely different—like a weight had been lifted. They still talk about that dinner today.

“I don't know if I was looking for acceptance, but I needed that,” says Bowen. “And somehow, [Coach Ferentz] knew it. I needed to understand that I had been given a gift. Having Coach invite me, sit with us, and seeing him and everyone hold and play with Matthew, it was everything. It changed my life.”



TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS

CRISP OF HISTORY

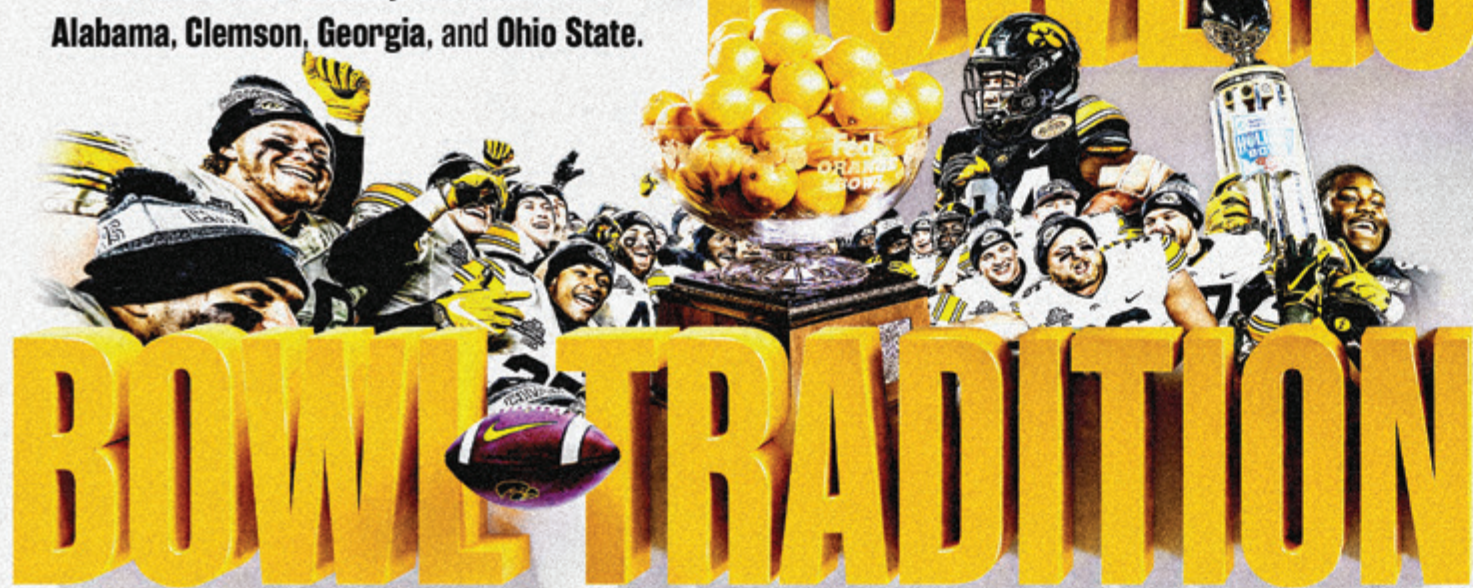
Ferentz entered the 2025 season two wins away from surpassing Ohio State's Woody Hayes as the Big Ten's all-time winningest coach. Here are the top 10 coaches for wins while at a Big Ten school, as of the start of this season.

205	Woody Hayes	Ohio State	1951-78
204	Kirk Ferentz	Iowa	1999-
199	Amos Alonzo Stagg	Chicago	1896-1932
194	Bo Schembechler	Michigan	1969-89
162	Joe Paterno	Penn State	1993-2011
143	Hayden Fry	Iowa	1979-98
136	Henry Williams	Minnesota	1900-21
131	Robert Zuppke	Illinois	1913-41
122	Lloyd Carr	Michigan	1995-2007
118	Barry Alvarez	Wisconsin	1990-2005, 2012, 2014

PERENNIAL

Ferentz's Hawkeyes are one of five FBS programs that have won eight or more games in each season since 2015 (excluding the shortened 2020 season). The others are Alabama, Clemson, Georgia, and Ohio State.

POWERS



Iowa has earned 22 bowl invitations under Ferentz, who is tied for first in all-time bowl wins among Big Ten coaches with former Penn State coach Joe Paterno.

AND COUNTING

THE DEAN OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL,
BY THE NUMBERS

PRO PIPELINE

Ferentz has coached 94 players who went on to be selected in the NFL Draft—first among active college coaches—and 31 of 32 NFL teams have drafted a Hawkeye. Fourteen of Ferentz's players have gone on to earn NFL All-Pro honors.

Tristan Wirfs	OL	Tampa Bay
T.J. Hockenson	TE	Detroit
George Kittle	TE	San Francisco
Deshaun King	DB	LA Chargers
Mike Daniels	DL	Green Bay
Micah Hyde	DB	Buffalo
Brandon Scherff	OL	Washington
Dallas Clark	TE	Indianapolis
Chad Greenway	LB	Minnesota
Aaron Kampman	DL	Green Bay
Nate Keeding	PK	San Diego
Sam LaPorta	TE	Detroit
Bob Sanders	DB	Indianapolis
Marshal Yanda	OL	Baltimore



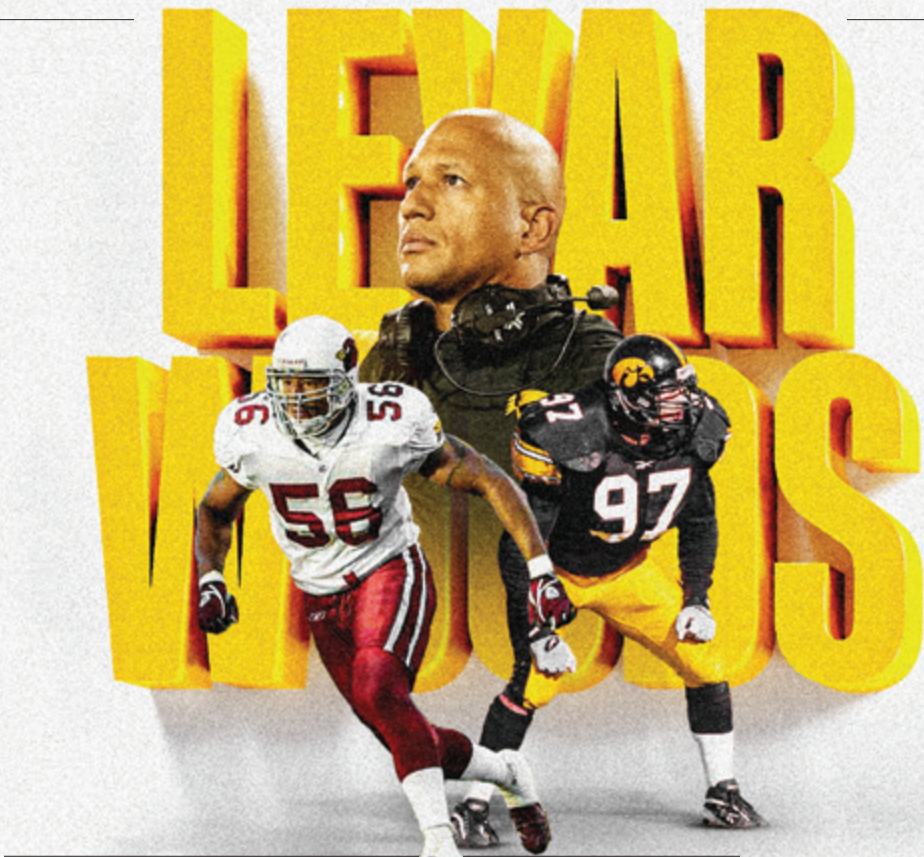
The Hawkeyes have kept their trophy cases well-stocked under Ferentz, who is 54-37 in rivalry games.

TROPHY COLLECTOR

LEGEND AMONG LEGENDS

Ferentz has set a new standard for sustained success at Iowa, which has a proud coaching history.

Kirk Ferentz	1999-	204-124
Hayden Fry	1979-98	143-89-6
Forest Evashevski	1952-60	52-27-4
Howard Jones	1916-23	42-17-1
Eddie Anderson	1939-49	35-33-32



LeVar Woods (00BA)
1997–2000
Hometown: Alvord, Iowa
Record Under Ferentz: 4-19
Today: Iowa special teams coordinator, father of three

Woods played on Ferentz’s first Iowa team, then played seven NFL seasons before returning to Iowa City as an administrative assistant, interim assistant coach, and permanent assistant on Ferentz’s staff. Today he is the Hawkeyes’ special teams coordinator, one of the most respected assistant coaches in the country.

“These things are unheard of in this industry,” says Woods. “I never thought I’d be here for 18 years. Just like [Ferentz] never imagined he’d be here for 27.” Woods was there in summer 2020, when a group of former players accused the program of racial insensitivity during the height of Black Lives Matter protests. To address the issue head-on, Ferentz sought the input of current and former players and made changes to the staff. “We all had a chance to leave at the time,” says Woods. “I had questions. But he answered all of them. I felt more than comfortable staying. Then the work began looking within to fix things. We just talked it out, aired it out for months. Big groups, small groups. But that was really how we grew as a program.”

Dallas Clark (07BA)
1999–2002
Hometown: Livermore, Iowa
Record Under Ferentz: 21-16
Today: Organic farmer in Livermore, father of three

Even now, more than 20 years after playing at Iowa, Clark says thank you every time he sees Ferentz.

“There’s nothing better than taking my kids to an Iowa football game and introducing them to Coach. I tell them, ‘I owe this man everything.’”
—Dallas Clark



“There are people in your life that you just know God put there for a reason,” says Clark. “He’s one of them.” Four days before Clark graduated high school, his mom died. In Iowa City, the walk-on linebacker leaned on his new coaches and teammates for support, with the goal of being a better linebacker than his older brother, Derrik, a third-team All-Big 12 performer at Iowa State.

“But I sucked at linebacker,” says Clark. “Coach Ferentz and [assistant coach **Bret**] **Bielema** (93BBA) had to be thinking, ‘What the hell is wrong with this kid?’” After Clark’s freshman year, Ferentz proposed a move to tight end. He spoke to Clark’s dad and asked quarterback **Kyle McCann** (01BBA), one of Clark’s closest friends on the team, to help put the pressure on Clark to switch.

“I didn’t really want to do it, but I went to his office, sat on the couch and was just like, ‘OK, you win,’” says Clark. “Let’s do this.” Clark worked with McCann the entire summer, thriving on the challenge of learning a new position. The payoff was becoming one of the greatest tight ends in Big Ten history, an 11-year NFL veteran, and a Super Bowl champion.

“I was a walk-on,” says Clark. “He could have just written me off, gone to bed, and focused on the 88 scholarship kids he had. But he didn’t. And I am forever indebted to him and so grateful.” “There’s nothing better than taking my kids to an Iowa football game and introducing them to Coach. I tell them, ‘I owe this man everything.’” he says. “They need to learn it takes great people to keep your life on track. And Coach is one of those people.”

Nate Kaeding (04BA, 15MBA)
2000–03
Hometown: Coralville
Record Under Ferentz: 31-19
Today: Iowa City entrepreneur, father of four

Kaeding was a member of Ferentz’s first recruiting class at Iowa, a scrawny kicker from Iowa City West High with big dreams but plenty to learn. Thrust into a starting role his freshman year, he missed eight out of 22 field goal attempts. “It was a rocky ride,” says Kaeding. “Coach was always stern, but yet you always knew he had your back. At his core, he’s a teacher. He had a way of sprinkling in those compliments and the ability to give you confidence at the time when you needed someone to believe in you.”

That carried over to the NFL, where Kaeding experienced many highs and lows. During the

regular season he was nearly automatic, twice earning Pro Bowl honors. He is still the 12th-most accurate kicker in NFL history. But Kaeding struggled in the postseason. After a critical miss, he’d return to his locker with a text from his former head coach.

“It wasn’t anything earth-shattering, but just the general sense of ‘Hey, we’re thinking about you. You’ve got a group of people here that love you as a person, whether you’re making 20 field goals in a row or missing five in a row,’” says Kaeding. “In this day and age with social media, it can get really nasty and negative,” he says. “I can’t explain how important it is to know people like that always have your back. It just gives you that kind of armor. You’re sent out into the world knowing that you’re part of this tribe and that you have a leader in Kirk that, through thick and thin, no matter what, they’re always going to have your back.”

Chad Greenway (05BA)
2002–05
Hometown: Mount Vernon, South Dakota
Record Under Ferentz: 38-12
Today: Partner with Gray Duck Spirits, father of four

After a two-year battle with leukemia, Greenway’s father, Alan, died in December 2014, two days before Greenway’s Vikings lost to the Miami Dolphins in south Florida. Following the game, Greenway boarded a plane for South Dakota, where he attended his father’s funeral in his hometown of Mount Vernon, a map dot 85 miles northwest of Sioux Falls.

As Greenway walked into the tiny Salem Lutheran Church, one of two churches in the town of 449, he was stunned to find Ferentz and the entire Iowa staff waiting for him. “Legitimately the first people in line at the wake,” says Greenway. “For him to care enough to take the time out of bowl preparation to fly up, you can’t fake that. He truly cares about us. He cares about your family. It’s genuine.”

Even now, after a decorated NFL career and having a family of his own, Greenway admits he is still nervous when he sees his former coach. “It’s not like scared-of-him nervous, but I just respect him so much,” he says. “You stand up a little bit straighter. You don’t want to let him down. “Not a day goes by that I don’t want to make him proud, in the same way that I wanted to make my dad proud.”

Ed Miles (06BA)
2003–06
Hometown: Tallahassee, Florida
Record Under Ferentz: 33-17
Today: Coach at Cedar Rapids Jefferson High School, father of three

Even now, 20 years later, Miles can still hear Ferentz tearing into him after a series of blown plays during a 28-27 loss at Northwestern in 2005.

“His overall message was clear: ‘I’m sick and tired of seeing you play below your ability,’” recalls Miles. “‘You’re better than this.’” At the time, Miles didn’t care for Ferentz’s delivery. Nor was he thrilled earlier in his career when Ferentz called him to his office for not putting in the required eight hours a week with his teammates at study table. Miles said he preferred studying by himself at the library.

“NOT A DAY GOES BY THAT I DON’T WANT TO MAKE HIM PROUD, IN THE SAME WAY THAT I WANTED TO MAKE MY DAD PROUD.”

— Chad Greenway

“He asked me, ‘What are the expectations?’” says Miles. “I said, ‘Eight hours at study table, but ...’ Then he stopped me. ‘Then you need to get eight hours at study table.’ “We had our run-ins. He would rip me. At that age, no one wants to be disciplined. No one wants to be held accountable. But as you grow older, you understand what it does for you. Now it all makes sense.” Last fall, Miles returned to Kinnick Stadium as an honorary captain. And when he wondered about the possibility of coaching in college instead of high school, Ferentz warned him to prepare to miss a lot of family time. “He’s a mentor you can always call on,” says Miles. “He helped me realize I’m not there yet. I enjoy spending time with my daughters, going to their dances. I enjoy spending time with my family. And then you start to think about all the things he’s missed to help all of us.”

Pat Angerer (09BA)
2006–09
Hometown: Bettendorf, Iowa
Record Under Ferentz: 32-19
Today: Hawkeye football radio analyst, business development officer, father of three

During summer 2008, when flooding along the Cedar River damaged an area greater than 10 square miles in Cedar Rapids, Angerer and other members of the football team’s leadership group pitched in to help clean some of the 5,000-plus damaged homes.

At one point, a news crew showed up and asked to do a story on the football program helping those in need. Angerer watched as Ferentz politely asked the camera crew to focus its attention elsewhere.

“It would have been a great story—Iowa football here to help,” says Angerer. “But we weren’t there for that. And that’s him. There are so many things he does behind closed doors that nobody sees. People he helps get a raise. Donations he makes. He doesn’t care about publicity or attention. He does things for the right reasons.”

Julian Vandervelde (10BA, 22MBA)
2006–10
Hometown: Davenport
Record Under Ferentz: 40-24
Today: Executive director of Silvercrest Senior Living in Davenport, assistant high school football coach

Growing up less than an hour from Iowa City down I-80 in Davenport, Vandervelde admits he put Ferentz on a pedestal. So, on the day he and his parents sat in Ferentz’s office, he was so awestruck he didn’t even realize he had received an offer.

“He kept speaking, and the only conscious thing running through my head was, ‘Holy s---, it’s Kirk Ferentz. I’m in Kirk Ferentz’s office,’” says Vandervelde.

Vandervelde had a scholarship offer from Stanford at the time, but Iowa was his dream school. On the way home, Vandervelde’s mother turned to ask her son, “Is this really what you want?” He had no idea what she was talking about. His mom explained Ferentz had offered him a scholarship, and Vandervelde told the coach he needed to think about it. Vandervelde freaked. As soon as he returned home, he picked up the phone, called Ferentz, apologized for not understanding, and committed to the Hawkeyes.

“He’s so calm and measured with everything,” says Vandervelde. “I didn’t even pick up on the fact that this was the most exciting moment of my life.”

“IF HE SCREWS SOMETHING UP, HE TAKES ACCOUNTABILITY FOR IT. WHEN THINGS ARE GOING WELL, HE GIVES CREDIT TO EVERYONE ELSE. WHEN THINGS ARE AT THEIR WORST, HE IS THE MOST CALM.”

— Mark Weisman

Now, nearly 20 years since that fateful day, with a brief stint in the NFL, plus time in the Scottish Highland Games and acting in local plays, he still admires his old coach.

“I know some people get older, and your coach becomes your buddy,” says Vandervelde. “I’m still intimidated walking into Iowa. There’s just this level of recognition there. He’s somebody I see as this font of wisdom, a mentor, and man of prestige.”

Mark Weisman (14BA)
2011–14
Hometown: Buffalo Grove, Illinois
Record Under Ferentz: 26-25
Today: Strength and conditioning coordinator for the Chicago Cubs

The first time Weisman met Ferentz, he wanted to shake his hand, but he was holding two plastic bottles of protein shakes. Weisman immediately

dropped the bottles to the floor. Thankfully, they didn’t explode.

“That was my first interaction with Coach,” says Weisman, an Air Force transfer. “Great start, huh?”

By the time he graduated, the Iowa walk-on would rank among the school’s career leaders in touchdowns and rushing yards. But more important were the lessons he learned off the field. Weisman purposefully took notes in every team meeting, not only with details on what he needed to know on the field, but his observations of Ferentz’s leadership style.

“Based on actions aligning with words, he’s the closest person there is to someone I want to be like,” says Weisman. “If he screws something up, he takes accountability for it. When things are going well, he gives credit to everyone else. When things are at their worst, he is the most calm.

“I want to be a father like him, a coach like him. I want to be able to handle difficult situations like him.”

After a brief attempt to make the NFL, Weisman, a health and human physiology major at Iowa, worked in medical equipment sales before reaching out to Ferentz about returning to Iowa City as a strength and conditioning intern. That turned into a job as a strength and conditioning assistant, which eventually led to working in the minor leagues of the Chicago Cubs organization.

After three years working with the Cubs, this past year he was promoted to head strength and conditioning coach for the major league team in Chicago.

“I’d be lying if I didn’t say he impacted my life in a major way where I was able to get that job,” says Weisman. “I can’t even pinpoint exactly what it is. It’s one of those things that’s ingrained in who I am now.”

Desmond King (16BA)
2013–16
Hometown: Detroit
Record Under Ferentz: 35-18
Today: NFL defensive back

His first year at Iowa, King started 12 of the team’s 13 games at cornerback, something no Iowa freshman had done in more than a decade. He earned third-team freshman All-American honors and seemed to have the brightest of football futures in front of him. But behind the scenes, things were not as great.

King struggled in the classroom. And as the team prepared for a New Year’s Day Outback Bowl clash with LSU, the university was close to

putting King on academic probation. That’s when Ferentz called the Detroit native into his office.

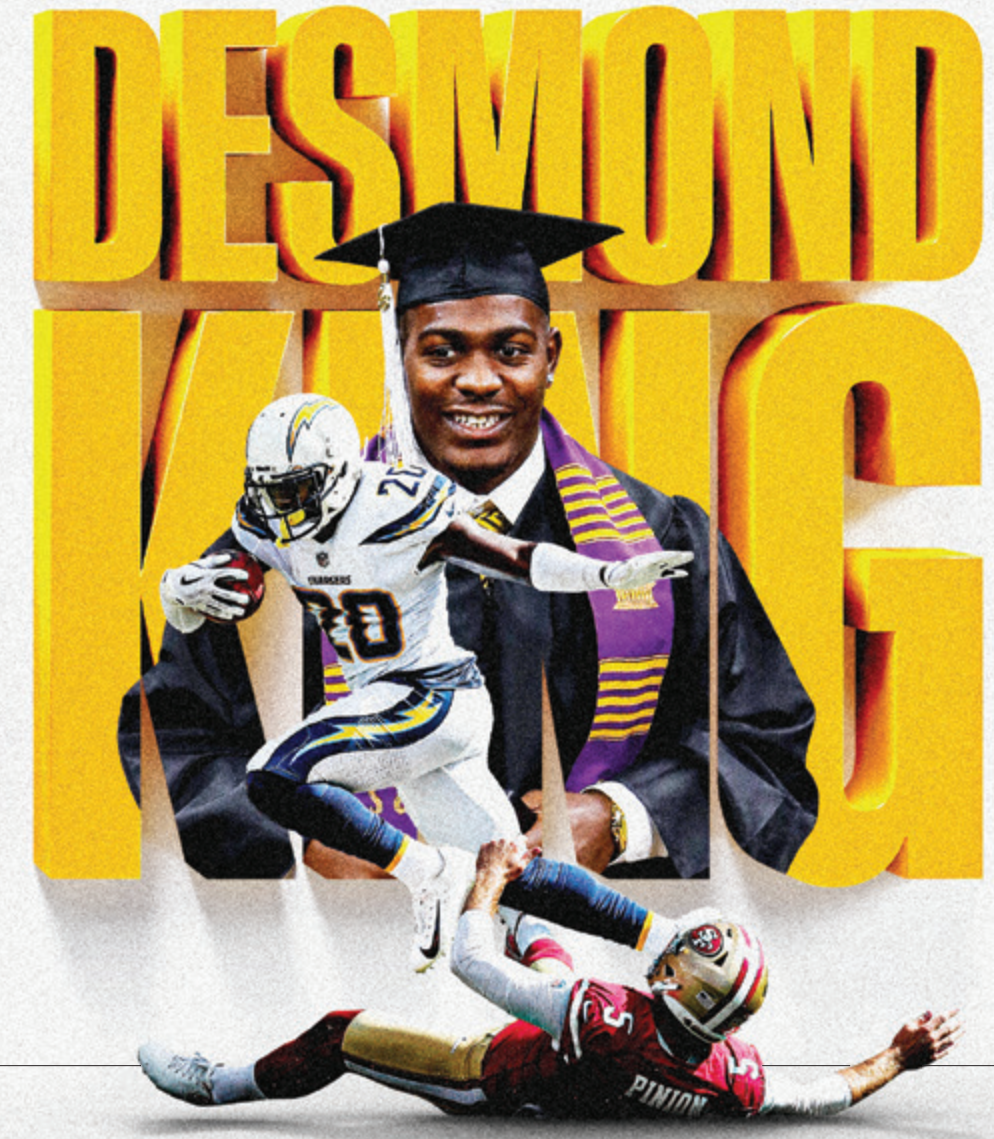
“He was concerned,” says King. “Not about football, but about me. It was like disappointing your parents. He asked me why I was at the University of Iowa. What were my goals? And I had never really thought about any of that.

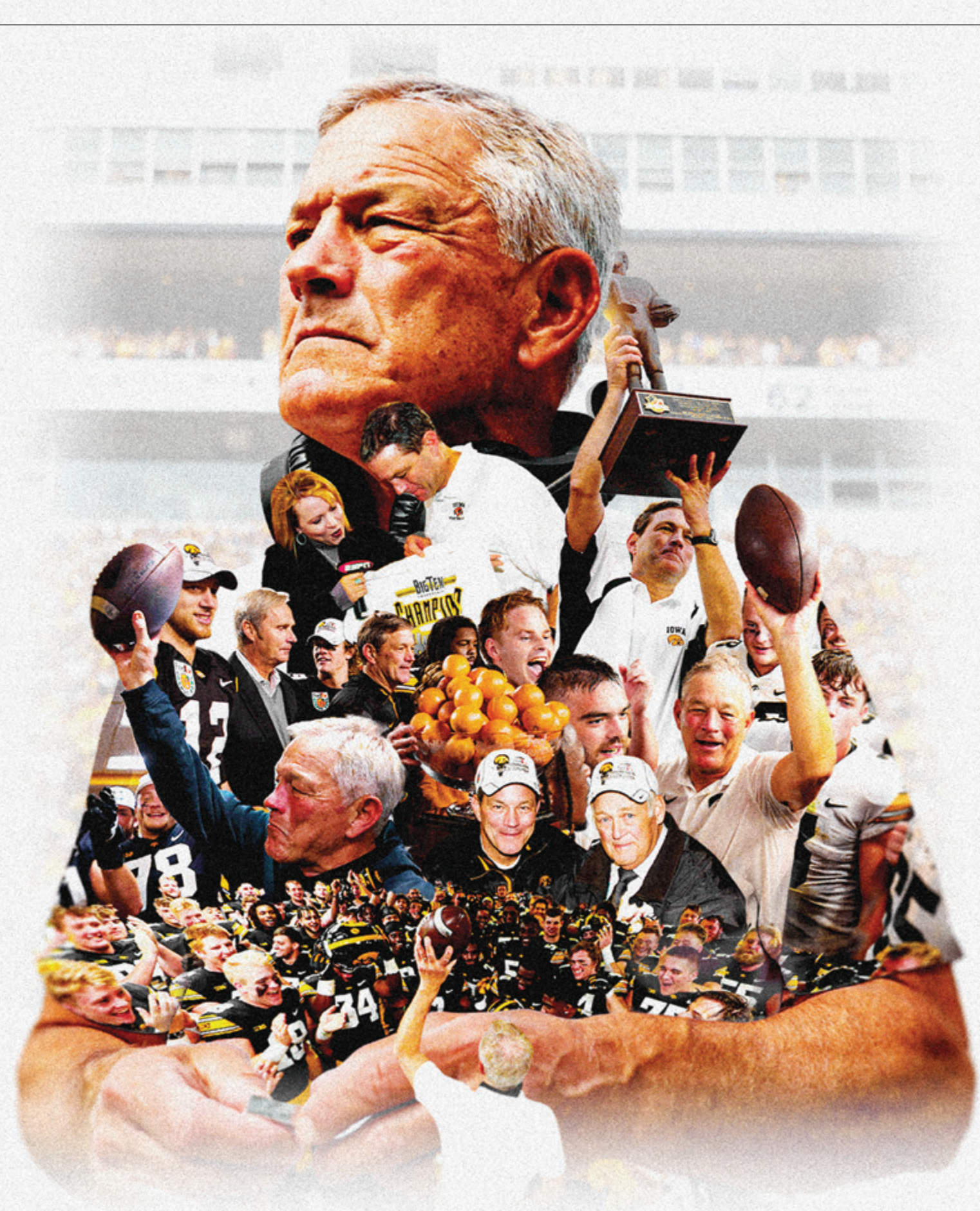
“I was on the verge of being released from the school. I had worked so hard to be there. And I was just giving it away. I wanted to be a captain. I wanted to play in the league. He helped me understand my purpose and how to become a man.”

That’s one of the reasons King postponed his NFL dreams for one more season and returned to Iowa his senior year to earn a degree. He’s since played eight years in the NFL as a defensive back and punt returner.

“That meeting changed the path that I was on, and I never looked back,” says King. “When I’m done playing, I want to continue his legacy and somehow give to others what he gave me, because that’s what it’s about.”

Jake Gervase (18BBA, 19MA)
2014–18
Hometown: Davenport
Record Under Ferentz: 37-22
Today: Realtor in Austin, Texas





Long before Gervase stepped on the field for the Hawkeyes, he learned about Ferentz's character. Gervase was in high school when his grandfather, a longtime Hawkeye supporter, died. Ferentz showed up at the funeral.

A few years after the funeral, Gervase, a preferred walk-on, found himself at Iowa State's Jack Trice Stadium, biting on a double move that resulted in a 74-yard go-ahead Cyclone touchdown with less than five minutes remaining. Iowa ended up winning the game in overtime, but the miscue sent Gervase, then a junior, to the bench.

During practice the next week, Gervase stood on the sidelines, waiting to get some reps with the second-string defense when Ferentz walked by.

"Keep going," the coach told him. "You'll be all right. Keep pushing. Keep fighting. Keep working."

"That's always stuck with me," says Gervase. "He didn't have to do that. He's game-planning. He's got 120 guys to worry about. But he could sense I was down and just took a little time to encourage me and give me some motivation. That's Coach."

Gervase eventually regained his starting role and three years later won a Super Bowl with the Los Angeles Rams. Afterward, Ferentz texted him congratulations.

"Hard work pays off. That's what he wrote," says Gervase. "It was so meaningful."

Spencer Petras (21BA)

2018-23

Hometown: San Rafael, California

Record Under Ferentz: 43-18

Today: Undrafted free agent quarterback

There are perhaps few players who understand the extent to which Ferentz backs his student-athletes better than Petras. Ferentz was there on the Kinnick sidelines when some fans booed and jeered the quarterback during a tumultuous time for the Iowa offense. But Ferentz never wavered in his support, even after Petras' Hawkeye playing days were behind him.

"In every single situation, that man always does what's best for his players, and, in a larger sense, his program," says Petras. "He doesn't care about anything except the people in the building. And he shows that to his players, maybe sometimes when people on the outside might think they don't even deserve it."

During his Senior Day start against Nebraska in 2022, Petras blew his shoulder out, a major factor in Iowa's 24-17 loss. Petras had one year of eligibility left, but with an injured shoulder couldn't enter the portal or the NFL draft. Ferentz proposed Petras work on the staff in a minimum-wage paid position

“IN EVERY SINGLE SITUATION, THAT MAN ALWAYS DOES WHAT’S BEST FOR HIS PLAYERS, AND, IN A LARGER SENSE, HIS PROGRAM.”

— Spencer Petras

that would allow him time to recover without losing his eligibility.

"It was his idea," says Petras. "And I just don't know many coaches that would have done that. Most programs would be, 'You can't help us on the field? Hit the road, Jack.' He realized I needed more from him. And he didn't hesitate."

Petras transferred for his final year of eligibility to Utah State, where he threw for a career-high 2,315 yards and 17 touchdowns. His Senior Day with the Aggies, he tore a ligament in the elbow of his throwing arm. He couldn't attend the Hula Bowl or any other postseason scouting opportunities. Despite Petras spending a year away from the Hawkeye program, Iowa coaches invited him to throw at Iowa's pro day, where NFL scouts gather to evaluate draft-eligible Iowa athletes.

When the quarterback elected to have **Brian Wolf** (02R, 06MS), director of UI Sports Medicine, repair his elbow, Petras asked if he could train in the Iowa football facility during his recovery leading up to the pro day. The answer was "of course."

"I thought I might get some looks, like 'Why the hell is this kid back here?' But nothing about it was weird or awkward or anything," says Petras. "Everyone was awesome. And I believe that comes from Coach Ferentz. If you've done right by him, he'll do right by you tenfold. There's a reason anybody you talk to will die for that dude."

Jay Higgins (24BA)

2020-24

Hometown: Indianapolis

Record Under Ferentz: 42-20

Today: Signed as linebacker for the Baltimore Ravens

As a team captain for the Hawkeyes, Higgins grew to know Ferentz more deeply and become part of his trusted inner circle.

"He can't talk the way he wants in front of everybody, but in that small group, you get to

see the other side of him," says the All-American linebacker. "How the only thing that matters to him are the people inside our building."

Higgins realized this in person after Iowa's 26-0 loss to Michigan in the 2023 Big Ten championship game. The linebacker sat next to Ferentz in stunned silence as the media peppered his mentor with questions about what they saw as a disappointing season without fully understanding all that had taken place behind the scenes.

"He took all the bullets for everyone else, like he's John Wick," says Higgins, referring to the Keanu Reeves movie character. "That's a leader."

Higgins believes that, in some ways, Ferentz has become a victim of his own success. The coach might not care, but some of his players do.

"He's gotten so good at what he does that winning 10 games isn't cool anymore," says Higgins.

Earlier this year, Higgins signed a rookie free agent contract with the Baltimore Ravens. He is the latest in a long line of overlooked Iowa prospects who will look to prove themselves at the next level. Lessons far beyond what they've learned on the field will push them the entire way.

"[Ferentz is] an example of what a person with power should act like," says Higgins. "If you've played for him, you've seen what it's like to have influence and eyes on you and how to behave and have true character in those situations." **I**



Wayne Drehs (00BA) is a freelance writer and visiting associate professor of practice at the UI School of Journalism and Mass

Communication. He previously spent 23 years as an Emmy-winning sports reporter for ESPN.

Any comments?

Email uimagazine@foriowa.org.

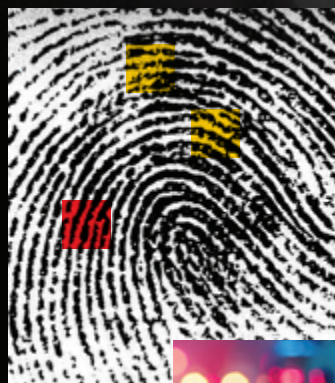
Nature of Offense
False Statement to a National Credit Union
Administration Insured Institution



THE *Alias* BUSTER



How a University of Iowa detective unraveled a stranger-than-fiction identity theft case that spanned decades.



STORY BY **EMILY NELSON**
PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY **KENDRA WILSON**

“I’m sure he thought that I was just a flashlight-carrying, keychain-jingling security guard.”

— Detective Ian Mallory

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA POLICE DETECTIVE IAN MALLORY JUST WANTED THE TRUTH.

In February 2023, Mallory conducted a phone interview with a UI employee calling himself William Woods, who said a California man had stolen his identity. For years, the California man had insisted he was the real William Woods, but multiple law enforcement agencies had dismissed those claims, and a state court ruled against him.

It would have been easy for Mallory to follow their lead when the California man lodged a new complaint with the university stating that its employee had stolen his name. As Mallory spoke to the employee during that phone call, however, an offhand remark made him want to dig deeper.

The employee calling himself William Woods told Mallory he didn’t think the detective would be able to help. “I’m sure he thought I was just a flashlight-carrying, keychain-jingling security guard,” says Mallory. “I think a lot of people assume that about campus police. But that comment really made me want to find the truth once and for all.”

Discovering the truth was not the outcome that man on the phone—whose real name turned out to be Matthew David Keirans—ever wanted. But thanks to Mallory’s investigation, one that involved untangling hundreds of police and government documents and obtaining a DNA test, Keirans’ three-decades-long identity theft scheme came crashing down. A scheme that fooled numerous employers, police officers, and courts—even a wife and son. And, tragically, a scheme that had led to the false imprisonment and involuntary hospitalization of the California man—the real William Woods—for insisting he was who he said he was.

► **THE BIZARRE CASE BEGAN** when Matthew David Keirans and William Donald Woods worked together at a hot dog cart in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1988.

After meeting Woods, Keirans began using the other man’s name in every aspect of his life. In 1990, Keirans obtained a Colorado driver’s license using Woods’ name. The next year, the imposter committed multiple crimes, such as theft of a motor vehicle, in other states—including Idaho, California, and Oregon.

Keirans later used Woods’ moniker when he married in 1994, named his newborn son, and interviewed for a systems analyst job at Iowa in 2013. A background check revealed no anomalies, so the pretender settled into his new life, eventually becoming a fully remote UI employee working from his home in Hartland, Wisconsin.

Meanwhile, the real Woods checked his credit report in 2019 and discovered several open credit cards in his name. He walked into a California bank in hopes of closing the cards and clearing his credit. However, after presenting his social security and identification cards, he couldn’t answer a series of security questions. The teller then contacted Keirans, whose phone number was on file. Keirans correctly answered the questions and provided phony documents

connecting him to the accounts.

Consequently, Woods was arrested, charged with two felonies, and held without bail at the Los Angeles County Jail. Though Woods continued to insist on his true identity, a California judge ordered him to a state hospital for a mental competency evaluation before trial. During his hospital stay, Woods received psychotropic medication and later pleaded “no



UIPD Detective Ian Mallory

Mallory worked through hundreds of documents from several states as he investigated the background and criminal history of “William Woods.”

contest” to two felony charges in exchange for a “time-served” sentence and eventual release. He spent 428 days in jail and 147 days in the hospital.

Despite these setbacks, Woods continued in his attempts to reclaim his name. He contacted Hartland police about the crime, but Keirans convinced the investigating officers Woods was the fraudster.

“[William Woods] has been victimized and revictimized,” says Mallory, who first got involved in the case after the true Woods contacted the university about Keirans in January 2023. “It’s no secret that [Woods] has lived on the wrong side of the law; he’s not a saint. But man, he was really taken for a ride.”

► **MALLORY’S COLLEAGUES SAY** he was the perfect campus investigator to tackle the case. “He’s very smart, and he listens to his instincts,” says **Lucy Wiederholt**, chief of the UI Police Department. “When something doesn’t feel right, Ian follows through.”

Mallory always wanted to go into law enforcement. He says he came from a family who had public service “ingrained in our DNA.” But after graduating from Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo, Iowa, with a degree in police science, Mallory failed the physical agility test for police officers and went into communications engineering instead.

After his father died of cancer in 2015, Mallory decided to pursue his dream again. He passed the fitness test, became an officer, and chose the UI position from among several offers. “I want to be the voice for people who don’t have a voice,” he says.

This desire is what prompted him to start digging deeper into Keirans’ and Woods’ claims. He began researching any records he could find—and there were hundreds from all over the country. He combed through police and government documents from Wisconsin, California, Idaho, Colorado, Oregon, Kentucky,

and Iowa. But it was a 1995 North Carolina forgery case that provided the first data point differentiating the two men’s life events. “The fingerprints, photo, and identity all matched [the real Woods],” Mallory says.

He then examined the pair’s birth certificates. The Kentucky Bureau of Vital Statistics had validated both men’s, but Keirans’ copy was a reprint from June 13, 2012. Soon after receiving his false birth certificate in 2012, Keirans obtained a driver’s license using the name William David Woods. “David” was Keirans’ real middle name, while “Donald” was Woods’, and the discrepancy between the two documents made Mallory suspicious.

The UI detective’s next move yielded his first big break. Mallory researched the parents listed on the birth certificates and found Woods’ father in Kentucky. That man and Woods consented to DNA swabs. On June 19, 2023, the Iowa Department of Public Safety’s Division of Criminal Investigation sent Mallory the results, which verified the father and son’s relationship and revealed Woods was telling the truth. Mallory says, “Then the big question was, ‘Who is the William Woods working for the University of Iowa?’”

Mallory got his answer a couple days later, thanks to Tina Salisbury, a keen-eyed analyst in the Iowa Department of Public Safety’s Division of Intelligence. Every criminal history has an FBI number attached to it, and hidden among Woods’ many documents was a note with an additional number. When Salisbury looked up this record, she found a 1987 forgery case in Louisville, Kentucky, and a 1988 criminal trespass case in Albuquerque, both of which traced back to Keirans and had birth dates and social security numbers different than Woods’. Mallory finally knew the culprit’s true name.

Matthew David Keirans was born in 1966 and raised in California by adoptive parents who both are dead now. He left



PHOTOS: TIM SCHOON/UI OFFICE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

“I was sent to jail for nothing—for being myself. The truth is important, and now the truth is known.”

— William Woods

home as a teen without finishing high school and picked up arrests in California, Kentucky, and New Mexico. There are no records of Keirans using his own name, birth date, or social security number after 1988, when he met Woods at the hot dog cart.

► **THOUGH MALLORY HAD SOLVED THE CASE**, its complications were far from over. First, Mallory and his colleagues had to decide which charges to file against Keirans. Because he didn’t steal Woods’ identity in Iowa, the state couldn’t charge him—and several officials at the federal level and in multiple states told Mallory they didn’t have jurisdiction to arrest Keirans either.

The team finally settled on charges related to providing false information during a 2023 traffic stop in North Liberty and presenting a fake birth certificate to Mallory. On July 15, 2023, they learned Keirans would soon be on Iowa’s campus for a meeting and began obtaining search warrants. They swooped in to arrest him on July 17, 2023.

After his fingerprinting and mug shot, Keirans sat down with Mallory for what would be a six-hour interview. “We danced around for hours,” says Mallory. “He knows that I know. I know that he knows that I know. I just wanted him to say it, to confess.”

Keirans told Mallory his father was dead, but Mallory brought up the Kentucky man listed as the father on Woods’ birth certificate. Finally, Mallory confronted Keirans with the conclusive DNA paternity evidence, and Keirans realized the jig was up, saying, “My life is over, isn’t it? My name is Matthew Keirans.”

The university fired Keirans the day after his arrest, and an investigation by outside cybersecurity consultants found no

evidence that any systems or data were compromised. In August 2023, he pleaded guilty in Johnson County to unlawful use of a birth certificate. He then was transferred to Bremer County, Iowa, on state charges related to obtaining insurance policies under Woods’ name.

In addition, a grand jury federally indicted Keirans on two felony charges, one count of making a false statement to a national credit union administration-insured institution and another of aggravated identity theft. These related to Keirans using Woods’ name to obtain eight loans, totaling more than \$200,000, from two credit unions in Iowa.

Keirans pleaded guilty to these charges on April 1, 2024, and, on Jan. 31, 2025, he received 12 years in federal prison, with a five-year term of supervised release after serving his sentence. The court also ordered him to pay a fine of \$10,000 and \$10,000 in attorney’s fees to his federal public defender.

Woods, who now lives in New Mexico and works as a landscaper, traveled to Iowa for the sentencing. He told reporters, “I was sent to jail for nothing—for being myself. The truth is important, and now the truth is known.”

On April 11, 2024, a Los Angeles Superior Court judge vacated Woods’ conviction related to identity theft, and then-Los Angeles County District Attorney George Gascón offered a public apology. Mallory says he doesn’t know if anyone will ever know why Keirans stole Woods’ identity, but suspects he knows why Keirans used it as long as he did. “He met a woman, fell in love, and had a baby. And then he was stuck with this identity,” says Mallory. “I think his motivation after that was family.”



William Woods points at Ian Mallory outside the courthouse after Matthew Keirans’ sentencing Jan. 31 in Cedar Rapids.



UIPD Detective Ian Mallory poses with Dawn Blahnik (center), a special investigator with the Iowa Insurance Fraud Bureau, and Tina Salisbury, an analyst in the Iowa Division of Intelligence.

Keirans’ conviction may not be the story’s final chapter. His DNA still is waiting to be processed, and it’s possible it could turn up in other crimes. There are practical questions, too: Keirans paid taxes under Woods’ name for decades. Who can collect on the associated social security? Is Keirans’ marriage license null and void? What does his son do about his last name?

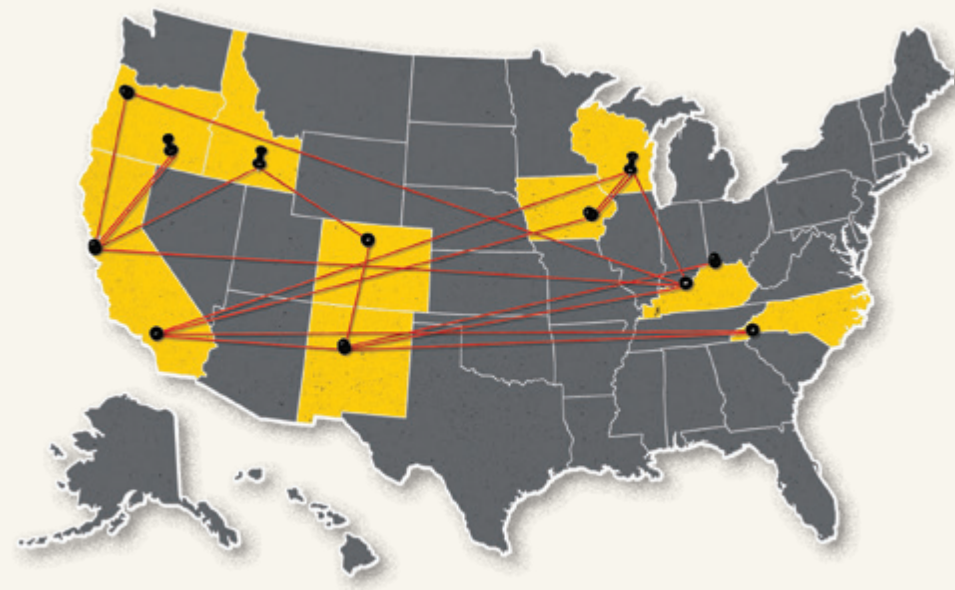
These questions aren’t for Mallory to solve because he’s no longer actively working the case. However, in 2024, the U.S. Attorney’s Office, which prosecuted the case, presented Mallory with its Law Enforcement Victim Service Award. In his nomination letter, Assistant U.S. Attorney Tim Vavricek wrote of Mallory: “Through his open-mindedness, patience, and diligence, Detective Mallory was able to successfully unravel a sophisticated, three-decades-old fraud that had successfully fooled other police officers, courts, banks, and government officials.”

Mallory is just grateful he was able to help Woods reclaim his true identity. “Whether you have \$6,000 or \$6 to your name, you still have your name,” he says. “William Woods didn’t even have that because Matthew Keirans took it.”

This feature originally appeared on the Iowa Stories site (stories.uiowa.edu) and has been adapted for print by Leah Klevar.

► Any comments?
Email uimagazine@foriowa.org.

Timeline of Events



JANUARY 1966

Matthew David Keirans is born in California.

MAY 1968

William Donald Woods is born in Kentucky.

1985-88

Keirans is arrested under his own name in California, Kentucky, and New Mexico.

1988

Keirans and Woods work together at a hot dog cart in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

1990

Keirans obtains a Colorado driver’s license under William D. Woods.

1991-93

Keirans is arrested under Woods’ name in Idaho, California, and Oregon.

1994

Keirans gets married and has a child under the name Woods.

1997-2012

Keirans holds multiple jobs under the name Woods.

2012

Keirans acquires a Kentucky birth certificate for William Donald Woods and gets a Wisconsin driver’s license under the name William David Woods.

2013

Keirans is hired as William David Woods by the University of Iowa.

2019

Woods alerts a bank in California that someone was using his identity, but because he couldn’t answer the security questions, the bank called the Los Angeles

Police Department, which arrested Woods.

2019-21

Woods spends 428 days in county jail and 147 days in a mental hospital as a result of his arrest and sentencing.

JAN. 13, 2023

Woods calls human resources at the UI to report an employee using his identity.

JAN. 31, 2023

UI police officer Ian Mallory begins his investigation on the case.

JUNE 19, 2023

DNA verifies that Woods is who he says he is.

JUNE 22, 2023

The Iowa Department of Public Safety’s Division of Intelligence identifies an FBI record that shows that the UI employee is Matthew David Keirans.

JULY 17, 2023

Keirans is arrested in Iowa.

AUG. 14, 2023

Keirans pleads guilty in Johnson County, Iowa, to unlawful use of a birth certificate.

NOVEMBER 2023

Keirans is indicted on federal charges.

APRIL 1, 2024

Keirans pleads guilty to federal charges.

APRIL 11, 2024

Woods’ criminal convictions related to Keirans are vacated.

JAN. 31, 2025

Keirans is sentenced to 12 years in federal prison.



Painting

KURT VONNEGUT

On the 60th anniversary of the revered author's arrival in Iowa City, artist and Iowa Writers' Workshop graduate Red Danielson takes a colorful voyage to discover the face of the literary icon.

ESSAY & PAINTING BY **RED DANIELSON**
PHOTOS BY **JOHN EMIGH**

"If I should ever die, God forbid, let this be my epitaph: The only proof he needed for the existence of God was music." —KV



When **Paul Engle** (32MA) invited **Kurt Vonnegut** to teach at the Iowa Writers' Workshop in 1965, Kurt was a former car salesman who had no college degree and held no prestige in the publishing world. I suppose he felt a bit out of place.

I was released from the Johnson County jail the evening of my 19th birthday and decided I should be a writer. By 19 I was neither an accomplished criminal nor a law-abiding citizen. Wherever I fell between the two equated to spending time in jail every so often. Upon my release I walked down to the Iowa River to figure out what direction I wanted to take my life. By sunrise I figured the only thing I'd loved in life was writing, and so that's what I would do.

I walked back to my apartment and researched how to become a professional writer. Though I read constantly, I'd never taken academia seriously. In fact, I failed my senior year English class and hardly graduated high school. But while researching paths to making a living as a writer, I saw one route was to attend a graduate writing program. I read about the Iowa Writers' Workshop, how it was the first and most prestigious writing program in the world. I saw that it was located along the Iowa River, on a hill directly above where I'd spent the night trying to figure out my life.

I spent the next 10 years writing furiously. I worked as a concrete finisher, a carpenter, a heavy equipment operator, a grave digger—most weeks I worked 50-60 hours. I wrote every evening. I wrote on lunch breaks. I kept notebooks with me always and set tools down every time an idea or a line of poetry came to me.

The winter of 2019, I was hanging drywall with a remodeling crew. I was 29. We were refinishing an apartment complex across the street from the Johnson County jail. I got a call from **Elizabeth Willis**, who told me I'd been accepted into the Iowa Writers' Workshop. I'd been accepted into the program with no associate degree or bachelor's degree.

I enjoy telling people this because they often think I'm lying. It's the truth. I entered into the Iowa Writers' Workshop graduate program with a high school diploma.

I am scraping carmine red paint over the entirety of this 30-by-30 canvas. The hope is that some sort of sense will come through before long. When *Iowa Magazine* asked if I would paint Kurt Vonnegut's portrait, I said yes in a heartbeat. Kurt has been a hero of mine ever since I first read *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Sometimes creative writing students will ask my advice about writing a war story. I always tell them to stay steadfastly in realism, not to give the reader a reprieve in a surreal moment. I then tell them to read *All Quiet on the Western Front*, as it is the second-greatest war novel of all time. Then I tell them to read *Slaughterhouse-Five*, as it is the greatest war novel of all time and proves my rule for writing about war meaningless.

One thousand frogs are singing as they see fit beneath the stars at midnight. I stare at the canvas, lit by a spotlight I once used for eyeing imperfections when mudding drywall. The river is black behind the forest just to the north of the house. I can almost hear the water move east beneath the thousand frogs. We moved to this house last June. I'm below a crabapple out back I'm trying to bring back from near death, tending closely to its arborly needs for nearly a year now.

This place is nearly the middle of nowhere. There's not much light pollution out here. I cut the spotlight. The canvas disappears. Further and further my eyes silt off into the night sky until constellations fall where the crabapple's wilted spring petals may die in the weeks to come.

I turn the spotlight back on and stare into the carmine blotch before me. I grab a cigarette near my brushes on a wicker table. I've been quitting; instead of a baker's dozen a day, I smoke one at any odd hour desire strikes most astonishingly.

I cut the spotlight again and let the stars overtake me and my cigarette.

It is midnight in April. This tree may bloom.



EXTRA

Watch artist Red Danielson paint the late Kurt Vonnegut at magazine.foriowa.org.

I paint you hoping to know you, as we've never said a word, not one, to one another.



I've ripped a page of Vonnegut's novel *Breakfast of Champions* from the book and taped it near this portrait as I bring it to a sort of life. It is the page in which Kurt brilliantly offers:

To give an idea of the maturity of my illustrations for this book, here is my picture of an a--hole:

And what follows is a doodle of just that.

I paint a deep dacite red across Kurt's head and neck. It will show through in the darkest portions of his features, where wisdom and time have creased his forehead, eyes, chin, and throat.

How's about a bit of blue over your eye here, Kurt? You don't know it yet, but I can't help any of it. I am trying to contain a piece of you in this moment, pinned to this canvas. I throw the entire rainbow at you, and through all of these bends of light, I see you coming through. It is April, and the skies are darkened with rain. I paint you hoping to know you, as we've never said a word, not one, to one another.



The ditches all along this county road have filled with blue chicory, mimicking best they can, a morning sky.

It's rained so much this spring the morels are coming up everywhere. I've found five pounds in my woods, my lawn, along the foundation of my house, even in my driveway. My friends Moore and Stonehouse are camping along the Iowa River. I am driving to join them.

The skies are grey as we whip downriver in Stonehouse's jonboat.



You can't hear a thing but the motor and the wind. Then all the world goes still, and we climb up the bank at a good flat bit of land with elms and maples. The forest is wet and filled with the song of wrens. Then it's back in the jonboat and the roar of the motor downriver. On one bank I find an oriole's nest hanging above a marsh. Red-winged blackbirds trill back and forth from the cattails. A beech tree has died and fallen in on itself. Most of the tree lies rotted over the marsh. Seven feet of the beech's trunk still stands. At the very crest of the trunk is a small hole where a woodpecker has made its home.

Stonehouse takes us to a bluff downriver. The forest is silent here. As we walk through the woods I see a single columbine, ghostly indigo beneath an oak tree. It sways gently in the wind. From the top of the bluff, you can see for miles. We've loaded our mesh bags with yellow and grey morels. I find a shed dropped by a 2-year-old buck. The forest has aged the antler the color of yellow morels. Back at the jonboat, Moore sees the antler in my belt. He says it's been in the forest a very long time.

Come night I will carve designs across the entirety of the antler. I will drill a hole where it once connected to the skull of the buck, just above the right hemisphere of the brain, and I will place an iron rod I've bent and shaped as a palette knife. Kurt, I will scrape paint over many of your features with this very tool.



It is a Wednesday night. I've started a fire from the limbs of an old hickory tree I cut down last spring. Barred owls fight in the oak grove over the pond. Frogs sing in hopes of making love under the waning moon.

I bring the painting of Kurt out by the fire because I want the night to show me something inside of him I've yet to see.



I look into your shadows, Kurt. I am blessed by everything I see.

The fire crackles, and the world passes through its prism. I'm hoping to realize the index of life purged within every single thing I come in contact with. Sometimes only the shape of desire can be seen, or a gesture which has left a color upon a thing enduring without hunger, prayer, or sleep. In these moments, I witness the truest color of all being.

I only want to explain *how*. For the artist to explain *why* is like standing under the stars at night and turning the porch light on.

I walk to the backyard and stand beneath the dark canopy of the ailing crabapple tree. Thousands of pale pink flowers hang over my head like an explosion stuck in time. A tree blooms, or it does not. Most everything just sort of happens.



The sun's rays are, on occasion, a harmonic array of pinks and greens. These colors seem to be the bridges every flower petal and bird feather travel in the heart of their daydreams. It is late afternoon, and I am blazing across the county on a spare tire, driving east to pick up my son Vincent from daycare. The trees rip like lightning bolts across the reflection of a tanker truck driving just ahead of me. I see the entire world reflected in this aluminum tank. There it is right in front of me, all the world bound for 100 million miles of itself: rain, bones, blazing mornings, and weary deaths. I see everything but my own reflection.

On the south side of the road, I pass a few little Amish boys, all wearing cotton shirts and suspenders. They must be 5 or 6 years old. One holds his black jacket over his shoulder. He turns when he sees my truck. He throws his right hand in the air and flips me off. My god, what man, woman, or child can say they've been flipped the bird by an Amish child? I feel the incredible fire of luck burn through my veins.



It's June, and most of the wildflowers have bloomed. Bullfrogs skrim deep vibratos beneath the stars. Fruit trees have felled every flower petal and begun

to push their harvest into the world. I feel so far away from my life.

Kurt, I am painting the shadows over your forehead tonight, painting the shadows around your eyes, beneath your nose and jaw.

What is a shadow, Kurt? My shadow holds no human names or allegiance. It is simply the inheritance of what I refuse to see. It's not patriotic, and it doesn't give a damn about slogans. It's feral. It's old. And it's mine whether I want it or not.

The shadow is a midnight, a time of transformation—the hour when the hero descends into the underworld. So it is with each of us: We must descend into the darkness trailing our figures where we have exiled our own returns; our solstice, our longest night. We must watch the suns go down, one by one, through the doorway of the shadow where the soul speaks in symbols, and the night sings of a deeper dawn.

We find meaning in life from an incorruptible place—the wholeness that dwells at the center of the psyche. It calls to us from dreams, the still voice beneath the noise of personality. To hear it is to risk silence. If you ever hear it clearly, you'll know.

I look into your shadows, Kurt. I am blessed by everything I see.



It's the summer solstice, and I mowed part of the yard today. I like to leave parts of it unmowed and wild. My neighbor mows his lawn according to a pristine, cultivated doctrine. An unkempt lawn disturbs a very ancient thing in him he's chalked up to virtue.

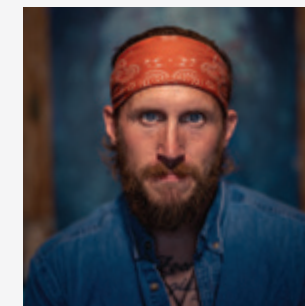
I enjoy seeing him stare in contempt at bees coming and going from patches of dandelions as I lie in the depravity of my heathen daydreams.

Solstice, from the Latin *solstitium*: when the sun seems to stand still. I sowed sunflower seeds around the northernmost perimeter of the garden in April. The sunflowers have grown tall under the heavy rains of spring. Two have just bloomed today. From the corner of my eye, I see them swaying in a gentle breeze. They seem to stand still when I stare directly into them. I walk around the house to the painting studio and squeeze some yellow ochre onto my palette. I ask Kurt if he loved sunflowers. I paint the yellow over Kurt's forehead, his nose, eyes, and hair. The entirety of life is so pleasantly connected.

Kurt, the gods forbid many things, sometimes they even forbid life. A part of you is gone just now, but it's rained so damn much these last few months, I've seen rainbow after rainbow. Maybe each time we die, the black space between double rainbows envelops us in infinite colors our living eyes will never know. Who knows.

I drove west today. The ash trees are bare all across the state. The emerald ash borer that thieved the emerald leaves from each of the trees must be evil in some way, but my god is it beautiful. I pulled the small notebook from the breast pocket of my shirt and made a note to put a bit of emerald in your hair, Kurt.

But now I paint beneath the black walnut in the southern acre of the house. It's just me and the birds. Goddammit, Kurt Vonnegut, I wish you could hear them sing. ■



Ryan "Red" Danielson (22MFA) is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, where he was the recipient of the Hamode Samuel Hamod Poetry Fellowship, Iowa Writers' Room Screenwriting Fellowship, and Fairall Fellowship. Danielson has worked as a concrete mason, framer, heavy equipment operator, and grave digger. A 2024 Pushcart Prize nominee in poetry, Danielson lives in the English River Valley of Iowa and is currently working on a collection of essays focused on creativity and process. He is no salesman but would like to state his portrait commissions are open at reddanielson.com. He believes *Slaughterhouse-Five* is only banned by the fearful and the ignorant.



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HANCHER

In Conversation

National Book Award finalist and University of Iowa faculty member **Kaveh Akbar** (pictured) is slated to speak at Hancher's Infinite Dream Festival this month. The *Martyr!* author will join renowned writer Eve L. Ewing in a discussion on the transformative power of language. Akbar serves as professor and director of the undergraduate English and creative writing major at Iowa, while Ewing

is a University of Chicago associate professor who is also author of *The New York Times* bestseller *Original Sins* and several Marvel comic book series such as *Black Panther*.

The event—free and open to the public—will be at 5:30 p.m. on Sept. 19 at the UI Voxman Music Building's Concert Hall. For more details on this and other Infinite Dream Festival programming, visit hancher.uiowa.edu/infinitedream.

PHOTO: BEOWULF SHEEHAN



PERSONAL ESSAY

Compass in the Wilderness

An Iowa Writers’ Workshop grad remembers
Connie Brothers, a beloved administrator
who died earlier this year.

BY PETE NELSON



Five percent.
Arriving in Iowa City in the summer of 1977, I have 5% stuck in my head. Somewhere I heard that only 5% of the people who graduate from the Iowa Writers’ Workshop go on to become writers. I want to be one of them, but I have no reason to assume I have what it takes. I don’t know if geniuses know they are geniuses, but I can say with certainty that those of us who aren’t know we’re not.
What I don’t know is—I have a guardian angel. Her name is **Connie Brothers**, and she is the workshop’s administrative assistant. At the welcoming barbecue, she smiles at me benevolently and says, “Let me know if you have any questions.”
“What shall I do with my life?” I want to ask.

I get on Connie’s radar when I’m invited by a fellow student, a woman from India named Priyanka whom I don’t know well, to a dinner party. “I will be cooking chicken tikka masala and rogan josh and ...” She details the whole menu. “I know sometimes you play the guitar at parties, and people have fun singing songs, and I was hoping you could bring your guitar. My apartment is too small, so it will be at [Iowa Writers’ Workshop director] **Jack Leggett**’s house, and everyone in the department will be there. Saturday night. Can you come?”
“Sure,” I say. “What time?”
“I was hoping you could come about 10:30.”
Wait.
What?
10:30?
Oh. Not for dinner. But I will lose too much face to say “no” now.
When I arrive, it’s worse than I think. The entire faculty and their spouses are here, as is Connie, who smiles apologetically, as if to warn me. When I pick up my guitar, nobody wants to sing, and worse still, **Vance Bourjaily** wants to play his trumpet. Vance is a dear sweet man, but he is, to the trumpet, what Florence Foster Jenkins was to opera, and somehow, it’s the sour notes, the ones that are flat or sharp or just wrong, that he savors, wah-wah-ing the bell of his horn with his hand. I end up at a spinet piano, fumbling my way through the pages of a *Real Book*, and I am a lousy piano player, barely a step beyond “Chopsticks.” To play a song, I have to look at the chord on the page, look down and laboriously move my left hand, then my right, then look up at the next chord. It’s horrible. It’s embarrassing. After we finish “Bye Bye Blackbird,” I try to leave, only to hear Vance insist, “Let’s try ‘Georgia.’ ... Let’s do ‘My Funny Valentine.’” Every song is worse than the one before. Over my shoulder I see the pain on the faces of Jack Leggett and **Donald Justice** (54PhD) and **Marvin Bell** (63MFA), but Vance won’t quit.

Finally, it ends. I grab a beer and sit in the corner, thinking, “Maybe this is good—I have touched bottom. I will never be more publicly humiliated. It can’t get worse.”
But Priyanka makes an announcement.
“That was lovely. Now I have a special treat for you all, because my best friend is visiting from India, and she is the concert pianist with the Calcutta Symphony, and she will now play some Chopin!”
As I leave, Connie rubs my arm reassuringly and offers a weak smile.

My second year, I fall in love, and Connie is worried about me, probably because I am so conspicuously smitten. My obsession is Margaret (not her real name). I have a dozen rivals vying for her attention (she is *that* girl in the new cohort), but my advantage is, I propose that Margaret and I quit smoking together, a habit I’ve had since middle school. We do, and it works—we become a couple, and I am quickly an emotional goner. Every second away from her, every moment apart, I crave to see her again. I feel an impossible urgent yearning-longing-keening-pining-aching-need to be with her.
I think this is what true love feels like.
Actually, this is what nicotine withdrawal feels like. It’s love too, but the nicotine withdrawal isn’t helping.
A year later, when I sit with Connie in the River Room at lunch, she checks in with me, asking, “How are you guys doing?” Connie has seen so many workshop couples come and go, optimistic young people hoping to form one of those legendary literary partnerships, like F. Scott Fitzgerald and Zelda or ... okay, not that one, but there has to be somebody.
Connie knows something I don’t. She knows I’m doomed.
I’m out of the program, while Margaret is still going to workshop parties and events. Connie sees Margaret talking to (and flirting with?) men who are not me. Connie sees everything.
“Are you and Margaret living together?” Connie asks. “How’s that going?”
We sleep in the same bed and pay rent on the same space, but we don’t eat meals together or talk or have sex. Most nights, I am out drinking with my friends. I have blown this.
“It’s going great,” I tell Connie.
“Are you getting married?” Connie says, calling my bluff.
“Um ...”

When I make a poster for a friend’s reading, Connie hires me to make posters for the workshop readings. I was a studio art major as an undergraduate. It works like this: She gives me a photograph, and I make a caricature on acetate. When I have four drawings, I take my materials and 100 sheets of 40-by-60-inch cardstock across the river to the Art Building, around midnight, after hours, and I let myself into the silk screen room via a basement window I unlocked earlier in the day, because I’m not an art student and I’m not supposed to be in the building. I squeegee through the night, and when the prints are dry, I cut the sheets into quarters, until

BROTHERS ILLUSTRATION: PETE NELSON

I have 400 posters, for which Connie pays me \$160. It doesn’t sound like a lot of money now, but it was then. Over the years, I do about 80 posters total.
One day I get a call from the editor at the *Press-Citizen*, recently bought by Gannett Media. He offers me a job as an editorial cartoonist, but the catch is, I have to sign a two-year contract, and I have to move to El Paso, Texas. I’ve been to El Paso. It’s really hot there.
The problem is, I can’t stay in Iowa City, because Margaret has left me for another man, a new guy in the workshop. To avoid running into each other, we divide the town up, but the situation is untenable. I cry all the time, heartbroken and lost. I’m living in a windowless basement studio on Gilbert where I can hear the spiders at night.
But El Paso?
Then the hand of Connie intervenes.
A new award has become available, a Michener Grant, but you can’t apply for one, and nobody knows how to get one. I discuss this at the bar one night with **Don Hendrie Jr.** (67MFA), a new teacher in the workshop. I ask him if he’s involved in the Michener awarding process, and he says he is. I ask him if he’d be willing to read the novel I’m working on, about a young writer whose girlfriend leaves him. He says he will, but he doesn’t know me from Adam. I am not his student. I’m a local bartender.
It must have worked like this. He knew I did the posters. He would have asked Connie, “What do you know about this Pete Nelson kid—is he any good?” And she would have spoken on my behalf. I can’t see any other way it could have worked.
A few weeks later, Connie tells me I’ve received a Michener, intended to give recipients the time they need to establish themselves as writers. It’s \$625 a month for 12 months, and it will mean eating Hamburger Helper four days in a row, and living without health or car insurance, but I will start publishing in *Esquire* and *Outside* and *Harpers* and *Playboy* and *Rolling Stone* magazines.
Before I leave town, I stop by Connie’s office to say goodbye, and she says what might be the most meaningful thing anybody has ever said to me.
“I’ve seen a lot of people come through this program,” she says, “and I know you’re going to be one of the ones who make it.”
I will be one of the 5%.
Her words are still with me.

Connie Brothers passed away in February 2025 after spending 45 years administering the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, teaching TAs how to run the ditto

machine, making travel arrangements for visiting writers, ordering wine and cheese for post-reading receptions, finding housing for students, putting out fires (smelling the smoke before anybody else does), weathering tantrums, fielding angry phone calls from people whose applications were rejected, drying tears, breaking bad news, bouncing on her heels with good news, and assuaging fragile egos in a high-stakes graduate writing program where egos are often overinflated and easily bruised, without ever exhibiting an ego of her own.
At Connie’s retirement celebration in 2019, former workshop faculty member **Francine Prose** called her “a model human.” Poet **James Galvin** (77MFA) called her “the emperor of empathy.” Current workshop director **Lan Samantha Chang** (93MFA) called Connie “the workshop’s secret superpower.” Connie Brothers was a compass in the wilderness, a one-woman HR department, a Buddhist yenta, the soul of discretion and a keeper of secrets, but for every dark secret she took to her grave, she took 100 light ones, favors she did for people who never knew she’d done them. She protected us, even when we didn’t know we needed protecting, or perhaps especially then.

The last time I see Connie is 2010. I am in town on a book tour. Connie comes to my reading at Prairie Lights, and her smile is as bright and as warm as ever. We go out after and catch up, and I tell her of my wife and son, my career as a freelancer. I talk a lot more about me than she does about herself. She talks of her daughter Cammy, but mostly, she deflects. She wants to know about me.
I realize something meaningful.
I have made her proud of me.
The truth is, I don’t know who I would have been without her.
Possibly a cartoonist in El Paso.



Pete Nelson (79MFA) earned an MFA in poetry from the Iowa Writers’ Workshop. Since graduating, he has published one poem, 30 books of fiction and nonfiction, and about 200 short stories or articles in national magazines. He lives in Northampton, Massachusetts.

What are your memories of Connie Brothers? Email uimagazine@foriowa.org.



AUTHOR PROFILE

Writing Home

Peek inside the library of UI professor Melissa Febos, whose new book, *The Dry Season*, is out now.

➔ “Books are at the center of my life,” says **Melissa Febos**, the bestselling memoirist, Guggenheim Fellow, and University of Iowa writing professor. A few minutes spent in the upstairs library and writing room of her Iowa City home make that clear. The sunlit space contains a wall of floor-to-ceiling shelves lined with nonfiction (biographies, essays, memoirs, self-help) and, on another wall, a built-in cabinet full of the notebook diaries she’s filled by hand since she was a child. “On these bookshelves are the books that are dearest to me and the books that I am currently using in my work,” says Febos. For her latest book, *The Dry Season*, which chronicles a year she spent celibate before meeting her wife (the acclaimed poet **Donika Kelly**, who is now a UI associate professor of English), that meant gathering stories of artists throughout history for clues to how they balanced passion and their art.

Iowa professor and writer Melissa Febos, pictured at home with a few of her favorite books, will be at Storyhouse Bookpub in Des Moines at 7 p.m. Oct. 10 with Donika Kelly to promote Febos’ new memoir, *The Dry Season*.

Febos notes a few from the shelves: *Savage Beauty*, Nancy Milford’s biography of Edna St. Vincent Millay (“really just brimming with historical gossip, which is my favorite kind of biography”); Hermione Lee’s biography, *Virginia Woolf* (“there’s so much beautiful writing about writing in there”); and *Secrets of the Flesh: A Life of Collette*, by Judith Thurman (“one of the best biographies I’ve ever read”). Because her library is also a workspace—Febos revised *The Dry Season* while walking on her treadmill desk—she says she keeps books that help “wind my artistic engine.” They include James Baldwin’s *Notes of a Native Son*, and a dog-eared, underlined copy of *Written on the Body* by Jeanette Winterson. “This book was kind of an awakening for me,” says Febos. Both books are well-worn, with Febos’ mother’s old landline phone number scrawled inside the front cover of the latter. “I am a book annihilator,” says Febos. “The books I love best are destroyed. I don’t live lightly in any way.” Books are a part of all of Febos’ relationships. Her wife’s hand can be seen in what alphabetical order there is on Febos’ shelves, like placing Tara Westover’s memoir *Educated* next to Elissa Washuta’s memoir, *White Magic* (“one of the writers I love the most”).

A small stack of books piled atop others on a shelf includes recent work from her Iowa colleagues—*Space Struck* by **Paige Lewis**, *Martyr!* by **Kaveh Akbar**, and *Reproduction* by **Louisa Hall**. All three are also her neighbors in this quiet Iowa City neighborhood. On a low, white, U-shaped table in the center of the room are six stacks of about 30 books. “This is the on-deck pile,” says Febos. These include her former student Suleika Jaouad’s recently published *The Book of Alchemy* (“a great anthology of essays about journaling”) and *Immodest Acts* by Judith C. Brown (“an extremely sexy book about this nun in Renaissance Italy”). Being surrounded by books and making a living as a writer has been a lifelong dream for Febos. “Books were my first, great love,” she says. “I aspire to be more of a minimalist person, but with books it’s never happening.”

■ BY STEVE SCHMADEKE

PHOTO: TIM SCHOON/UI OFFICE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Bookshelf Picks

From a memoir and true-crime story to children’s literature and novels, here are a few new book releases this fall from University of Iowa writers.

The Perils of Girlhood: A Memoir in Essays

by Melissa Fraterri
(95BA)
University of Nebraska Press

A writing professor at Purdue University who once studied under **Jo Ann Beard** (87BFA, 94MA) at Iowa, Fraterri has released her memoir. *The Perils of Girlhood* entwines memories from childhood through motherhood that have shaped her worldview on being a woman, raising daughters, and moving forward with confidence, regardless of age.

Pancake’s Passport
by Megan Gustafson
(19BBA)

The Inspired Bookshelf
Hawkeye fans may know Gustafson for her career on the basketball court, but she’s also developed a passion for writing. Under her new publishing company, The Inspired Bookshelf, Gustafson released a 120-page children’s book that follows her adventures abroad with her beloved corgi, Pancake, who has become a WNBA fan favorite.

Queen Esther
by John Irving (67MFA)
Simon & Schuster, available Nov. 4

For his 16th book, Irving returns to the world of *Cider House Rules*, where orphanage director Wilbur Larch takes in Esther Nacht, a young Viennese Jew facing antisemitism and seeking a place of belonging.

Life Without: The Wrongful Conviction of Sandy Shaw

by Sandy Shaw and Dan Gleason (67BA, 70MFA)
Bloomsbury, available Oct. 2

This true crime book tells the story of the youngest female ever incarcerated in Nevada. At just 15, Shaw was sentenced to life without parole for murder. The high-profile case shows how a miscarriage of justice can alter a person’s life—and how the public can hold the justice system accountable.

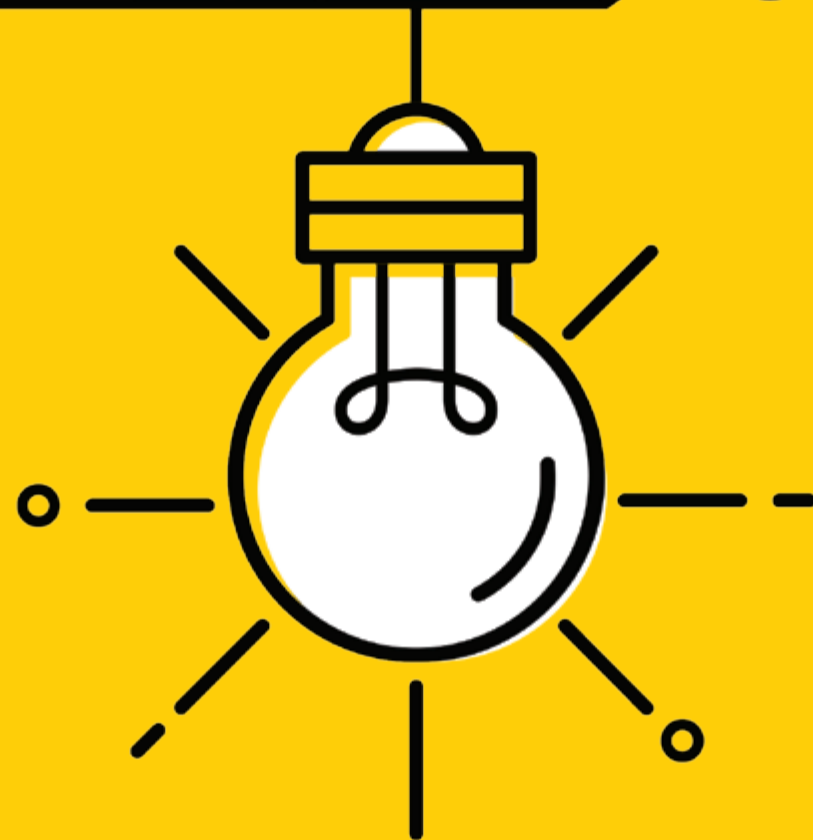
Minor Black Figures

by Brandon Taylor (19MFA)
Riverhead Books, available Oct. 14

The Booker Prize finalist for *Real Life*, Taylor returns with a new novel. *Minor Black Figures* features a gay Black painter trying to find his place in Manhattan, all while navigating his own art, creativity, and desire.



■ BY EMMA CONWAY



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HOMECOMING

On Parade

More than a year after retiring as the winningest women's basketball coach in Big Ten history, **Lisa Bluder** returns to campus to serve as grand marshal for the University of Iowa homecoming parade. The parade kicks off at 5:45 p.m. on Sept. 26 in downtown Iowa City and precedes the Iowa homecoming football game Sept. 27 against Indiana.

Since ending her 24-year tenure as a Hawkeye head coach and leading Iowa to two NCAA national championship games, Bluder has been spending time with family, traveling, and broadcasting. She also attended the Iowa City book launch for *USA Today* columnist Christine Brennan's *On Her Game: Caitlin Clark and the Revolution in Women's Sports*.

For the complete homecoming schedule, visit homecoming.uiowa.edu.

PHOTO: OWEN AANESTAD/HAWKEYESPORTS.COM



Opera singer and humanitarian Simon Estes is one of four Hawkeyes who will be honored at homecoming this fall with Distinguished Alumni Awards.

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Iowa Innovators

Meet the enterprising Hawkeyes set to receive the UI’s top honor for alumni and friends.



This fall, the University of Iowa will present its highest alumni honor to four exceptional Hawkeyes. From musicians and humanitarians to policy advocates and clinicians, the recipients of this year’s Distinguished Alumni Awards have made enduring contributions to their professions, while giving back to their communities and alma mater.



ACHIEVEMENT

Simon Estes (86BM)

Estes is a renowned bass-baritone opera singer who has touched lives with his talent, mentorship, and humanitarianism. Over the last 60 years, he has lived his dream of “peace through music” as a champion of education, health care, and artistic integrity.

Born in Centerville, Iowa, Estes is the grandson of a former enslaved man and the son of a coal miner who valued faith and education. Estes intended to study medicine at the University of Iowa but was drawn to singing. After being denied entry into one choir, he became the first Black student accepted into the Old Gold Singers.

Estes’ fascination with opera took him to the Juilliard School before he made his professional debut in 1965 in Berlin. His achievements include breaking barriers in the Soviet Union, Europe, and the U.S., and singing for seven U.S. presidents. Estes’ Metropolitan Opera debut in 1982 launched an era of historic performances, and he has appeared at major opera houses and events, including the 1972 Olympic Games, the 2010 FIFA World Cup, and United Nations anniversaries.

In the late 1980s, Estes returned to Iowa to begin teaching college-level vocal performance. He coordinated benefit concerts for charitable causes, from

local flood relief to malaria prevention. Through his foundations, Estes has raised millions for preventive health and scholarships.

Estes’ dozens of medals and honors include the 1996 Iowa Award—the state’s highest civilian honor—and the 2017 United Nations Foundation Lifetime Impact Award.



RECENT GRADUATE

Andrea (Jansa) Woodard (07BA)

As a leader in government relations and community organizations and an advocate of the University of Iowa, Woodard has been an influential community builder for the state of Iowa.

A former UI cheerleader, Woodard witnessed firsthand one of the most exciting plays in Iowa football history when the Hawkeyes won the 2005 Capital One Bowl on a last-second play that became known as “The Catch.”

Since earning UI degrees in communication studies and political science, she has become a catalyst for Iowa’s economic growth. In the Iowa legislature, Woodard advanced from campaign manager to research analyst to lobbyist, building strong relationships while gaining experience with policy and process.

In 2014, she joined the Greater Des Moines Partnership, where she directed public policy and lobbied for chamber members. She was promoted in 2019 to senior vice president of government relations and public policy. Woodard has worked to improve access to child care, apprenticeships, rural broadband, and other economic drivers.

In 2024, she was chosen to lead the Iowa State Association of Counties, where Woodard continues fostering collaboration and drawing on her in-depth knowledge of state and federal legislative policy.

Both the *Des Moines Business Record* and the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives have recognized Woodard as a Forty Under 40 honoree. Her volunteer work includes co-founding Relevé, a Des Moines women’s leadership group, and serving on the boards of Des Moines Parks and Recreation and the Orchard Place Foundation that provides mental health services to Iowa children. She is vice president of the On With Life Foundation, which supports brain injury rehabilitation services.

Since 2020, Woodard has served as an adjunct assistant professor, alumni advisory board member, and mentor for the UI Department of Political Science.



Iowa policy advocate Andrea Woodard once served as a member of the Iowa Spirit Squad. She’s pictured here, third from left, at Virginia Tech during the 2004 NCAA women’s basketball tournament.



SERVICE

Keith Krell (81DDS, 83EndoS, 83MS)

Throughout his 43-year career and beyond, Krell has improved endodontic dentistry and his community as a clinician, consultant, mentor, and teacher. The Army National Guard veteran has volunteered for numerous educational, mental health, and community dental care initiatives.

A longtime adjunct faculty member in the University of Iowa Department of Endodontics, Krell is a leading expert on cracked teeth. He’s dedicated his work to endodontic excellence, with hundreds of publications, presentations, and abstracts to his credit.

Krell has received wide recognition for his endodontics research and service. The International College of Dentists and American College of Dentists named him as a fellow, and in 2002, he received the Iowa Dental Association President’s Award. The *Journal of Endodontics* recognized him in 2018 with its Clinical Research Award.

Krell is one of only a few individuals to serve as president of the American Board of Endodontics, the American Association of Endodontists Foundation, and the American Association of Endodontists. His colleagues credit him with leading the augmentation of endodontic board certification exams, policies, and procedures.

Giving of his time, Krell volunteers with the American Association of Endodontists and is a trustee with the Des Moines Area Community College Foundation. Until recently, he provided clinical care to patients at a Des Moines hospital. He also lends his musical talents and financial support to fundraisers for the National Alliance on Mental Illness Iowa and DMACC’s Iowa Culinary Institute.



HICKERSON RECOGNITION

John Gilbert (82BA)

Few individuals have had a more profound influence on the University of Iowa marching bands than Gilbert. Over the course of 35 years, he volunteered extensively with the Hawkeye Marching Band and UI Alumni Band, promoting and leading both groups and fostering fellowship among members.

As an undergraduate, Gilbert marched in the trombone ranks of the Hawkeye Marching Band and in 1984 became the drum major. He transitioned to a public relations role upon graduation, taking striking photos of the Hawkeye Marching Band for band members and the media.

Gilbert’s aptitude for remembering names and faces enabled him to quickly find specific photos upon request. Band members remarked on how his buoyant yet patient personality improved their experiences.

During this time, Gilbert saw an opportunity for young Hawkeye Marching Band members to join in promoting the band. His mentorship and encouragement resulted in the band creating a public relations team. Gilbert advised the group as it developed the band’s first website and media guide.

Throughout the ’90s, Gilbert helped Alumni Band founder **Tom Davis** organize many of the band’s activities for each UI Homecoming.

In 2002, Gilbert made history by becoming the first band member who was not a former Hawkeye Marching Band director to lead the Alumni Band. He directed the Alumni Band in the UI Homecoming Parade and at Kinnick Stadium each fall for 16 years.

■ BY RUTH PAARMANN

Know a Hawkeye deserving of the university’s highest alumni honor? Submit your 2026 nomination at foriowa.org/daa.

PHOTO: CODY SCANLAN/DES MOINES REGISTER

WOODARD HEADSHOT: JASON THOMAS CROCKER PHOTOGRAPHY; HAWKEYE PHOTO COURTESY WOODARD



■ HOMECOMING

Relentless Spirit

Hawkeye homecomings connect former cheerleaders year after year.

➔ On a cold day this past January in Carver-Hawkeye Arena, the crowd erupted as four cheerleaders threw a stunt called the Diamond Head—a formation that leaves two cheerleaders floating in the air. The surprising part? All four cheerleaders were alumni, filling in for students who were competing at a national cheer competition in Florida.

Trisha Brosius (97BA), **Joe Froehlich** (97BS, 03MBA), and **Paul Wolf** (97BSE, 02MBA)—who were part of that formation—first joined the Iowa Spirit Squad nearly 30 years ago. In the years that followed, they have made it a priority to reunite at homecoming football games, basketball games, and other cheerleading performances.

The friends have attended almost every homecoming game in Kinnick Stadium for the past 30 years. “I don’t know why you wouldn’t come back,” says Brosius, whose daughter **Libby Brosius** (24MS) was also on the squad. “The thrill of being in front of the crowd at Carver and Kinnick; it takes you back.”

Back in the late ’90s, the trio were full-time students with part-time jobs who also put 40-50 hours into cheerleading per week. During those long hours, the team created some lasting Iowa traditions, including the I-O-W-A cheer in which flags fly in each corner of Kinnick Stadium before the Hawks kick off or after a touchdown.

Whether it was practice, strength training, or game day, the three would show up to events an hour early and stay an hour late. “I never saw myself as a cheerleader,” says Froehlich. “I always thought I was a fan on the field.”

Their fan-first attitude didn’t go unnoticed. Alongside their squad, Brosius, Froehlich, and Wolf were crowned all-around national champions by United Performing Arts in 1996. The title catapulted the trio into their senior season, which was current coach **Gregg Niemiec**’s first year as head coach.

◀ No practice; no problem. When reuniting at Carver this past January, Joe Froehlich (pictured at top), Paul Wolf (bottom), and Trisha Brosius (left) met up an hour before taking center court. They practiced the Diamond Head formation once with Marissa Young Wieting (19BA), at right, and were ready to go. “We did it every day for two or three years straight, so it’s like riding a bike,” says Wolf.



Since the three graduated, a lot has changed for the UI’s Spirit Squad. Instead of competing for practice space, the current team has its headquarters at the Nagle-Duda Gymnastics & Spirit Squads Training Center. The team also has its own locker room at Kinnick and catered food before games. Improvements like these fill Brosius, Froehlich, and Wolf with pride, as they continue spending time together.

Over the past 30 years, they have watched their children grow up, supported each other through a cancer diagnosis, and performed at cheer events for high schools in Dubuque, Humboldt, Cedar Rapids, and Algona, Iowa. While the number of cheerleaders who reunite for UI Homecoming has ebbed and flowed, the trio continues to return for the long-loved tradition.

As they coordinate their trip back to Iowa City for this year’s homecoming game against Indiana on Sept. 27, they anxiously await the sound of AC/DC’s “Back in Black” blaring through Kinnick Stadium’s speakers. “I’ve been doing this for 30 years, and I still get goose bumps every single time,” says Brosius.

Froehlich and Wolf feel the same—and share a message for the current Spirit Squad. As the team prepares to run out of the tunnel onto Duke Slater Field this fall, the three former cheerleaders offer one piece of advice: soak it all in.

■ BY EMMA CONWAY

Extra
Visit homecoming.uiowa.edu for more on UI Homecoming, and join the Iowa Spirit Squad Affinity Group at foriowa.info/im25-spiritsquad.

PHOTOS COURTESY JOE FROELICH



Iowa grad Dee Silver

■ GIVING

Arts and Minds

A Carver College of Medicine alumnus supports his two passions: theater and neuroscience.

➔ This past spring, **Dee Silver** (67MD, 70R) returned to Iowa City, where almost six decades earlier he embarked on a long and successful career in neurology. Although his University of Iowa years were spent on the medical campus, what Silver looked forward to most on this visit was an event at the UI Theatre Building.

There, Silver sat in on a reading of a new project by playwright and composer **Christopher Lysik** (24MFA), the recipient of this year’s Dee Silver, MD, Iowa Playwright Fellowship. Silver established the award in 2023 to support a new work annually by a UI postgraduate, and Lysik—a recent alumnus of the Iowa Playwrights Workshop—was fine-tuning his new musical play, *Songs for the Anthropocene*.

“Theater is a window in which you can look at life, history, culture, and the human condition,” says Silver. “You can see yourself in it and learn.”

Lysik, the second recipient of the annual Silver fellowship, spent the year writing songs and a narrative centered around the theme of “climate grief”—coming to terms with the environmental losses associated with climate change. “To get one more year where I can really just focus on this has been profound,” says Lysik, a Rhode Island native who studied acting at Rutgers University before earning an MFA at Iowa.

After workshoping *Songs for the Anthropocene* at the UI, Lysik will lead a reading of the work in the coming year at San Diego’s

PHOTO: JOSH O’LEARY

Cygnets Theatre, which is made possible through Silver’s fellowship. Lysik plans to continue to develop the project with the goal of bringing it to full production.

Lysik says he’s grateful to Silver for the partnership with a professional theater. “Having the support necessary to work on and grow the play, and then be able to introduce audiences and other theater professionals to it, is a really unique opportunity,” says Lysik.

A Belle Plaine, Iowa, native, Silver discovered his love for theater as an undergraduate studying music education at the University of Northern Iowa, where he played in the orchestra for several musicals. Silver ultimately chose a career in medicine, and he worked for almost 50 years as a neurologist in private practice at Scripps Health in San Diego specializing in Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases. Silver became deeply involved in the San Diego theater community as a patron and donor, including at the Cygnets Theatre. In recent years, he’s taken acting classes and performed in several of his church’s stage productions.

In addition to the playwriting fellowship, Silver also has funded a junior faculty research award in the UI-based Iowa Neuroscience Institute. The most recent recipient is assistant professor **Serena Banu Gumusoglu** (20PhD), director of the Molecular Investigation of Neuroscience, Development, and Obstetrics Lab at the UI Carver College of Medicine.

Gumusoglu’s lab investigates how complications of pregnancy such as infection, stress, and hypertensive disease influence child and maternal brain health. The work funded by Silver’s award builds on the lab’s previous findings that pregnancy may protect against some aspects of cognitive decline and brain aging. Her aim is to uncover how pregnancy shields the brain and explore potential dementia treatments.

“High-impact, high-reward research is often hard to fund via traditional grant mechanisms,” says Gumusoglu. “We are so grateful for this philanthropic support that will open doors and expand our research program in really promising new ways.”

Theater and neuroscience each offer insights into what makes us human, says Silver. And Iowa is among the rare places where his two passions converge by drawing top minds like Lysik and Gumusoglu.

“They’re great people, and that’s the foundation,” says Silver. “It’s great to see Iowa growing.”

■ BY JOSH O’LEARY

BRIEFS

Back to School Special

Hawkeyes at Home, the University of Iowa’s web video series, returns this fall with four new back-to-school-themed episodes. Learn how the Hawkeye Marching Band, campus dining, facilities management, and the Iowa Memorial Union tune up for the new school year at foriowa.info/im25-hah.

Retirement Announcement

Lynette Marshall, president and CEO of the UI Center for Advancement, has announced her plans to retire in summer 2026. For more on Marshall’s impact on Iowa, visit foriowa.info/im25-lynette.

Game Changers

On Oct. 4, video gamers will have the opportunity to play the new *EA Sports College Football 26* in Kinnick Stadium, all while fundraising for UI Health Care Stead Family Children’s Hospital. To register for the Extra Life Charity Challenge: College Football 26, visit foriowa.info/im25-extralife.

Hawkeye Family

The Swisher-McGinnis family will be recognized as the UI’s Family Spirit Award recipients during the Oct. 25 Family Weekend Iowa football game against Minnesota. To learn more about the family, visit foriowa.org/family-spirit.

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ALWAYS A HAWKEYE

58 LATE SHOW LEADER 60 CULTURAL CRITIC 64 IMU TURNS 100



FIERY FANDOM

Known for his infectious enthusiasm for the Hawkeyes, **Oz Agbese** (14BA) has returned to Iowa City with a new uniform. The UI Spirit Squad alum from Waterloo, Iowa, has been a first responder for the Iowa City Fire Department and the Johnson County Ambulance Service for almost two years—and plans to continue serving the community while also attending Hawkeye sporting events.

PHOTO: JOHN EMIGH



Producer Eric Leiderman on the set of *Late Night with Seth Meyers*

PROFILE ERIC LEIDERMAN (99BA)

Late Shift

A producer and drummer carves out a career on *Late Night with Seth Meyers*.



Eric Leiderman (99BA) had everyone in the room—including comedian Kathy Griffin—roaring with laughter during an animated speech in November 2011 for his sister’s 40th birthday party in New York. Griffin was so entertained that she soon offered Leiderman a job to lead the writers room on her late-night talk show.

“That’s the gig that kicked it off for me at the showrunner level,” says Leiderman, who worked in various freelance TV production roles for 12 years before that breakthrough. “That’s exactly how this business works. Someone believes in you and decides that you’re ready.”

A couple years later, in December 2013, Leiderman earned the belief of comedian Seth Meyers. Soon after that meeting, *Saturday Night*

Live creator Lorne Michaels was interviewing Leiderman for a job on *Late Night with Seth Meyers* when Meyers entered the room unannounced and endorsed Leiderman for the role. Leiderman got a job as producer for the soon-to-premiere late-night talk show, which begins its 13th season this month.

Leiderman credits his time at Iowa for helping him learn how to juggle the many responsibilities of a television producer. Beyond his classwork, the former communication studies major worked for two record stores in the ped mall, as a DJ for the student-run radio station KRUI, and as a drummer for several Iowa City bands that he also promoted to help them land gigs.

Leiderman says former UI professors **Barbara Welch Breder** (84PhD) and **Jay Holstein** acted as

role models. “I was so inspired by these professors who had real conviction about what they were teaching and their place in the world,” he says. “That gave me the confidence to look inward and realize I had a lot of the tools ready to go and just needed to guide them.”

Drawn to television and music after graduation, Leiderman pursued opportunities in both, which prepared him to co-run *Late Night with Seth Meyers*. Leiderman manages creative decisions for the show’s social media platforms and ensures the show and its sponsors are properly represented when ads are integrated into sketches. The Chicago native also oversees aspects of post-production, network promotions, and timing each episode to determine where edits are needed to meet a 42-minute run time.

For the first 10 years of the show, Leiderman managed the house band and created its rotating drummer program, where he chose more than 250 drummers from all musical genres—ranging from Pearl Jam’s Matt Cameron to Paul McCartney’s Abe Laboriel Jr.—for the weeklong gig. Across his responsibilities, Leiderman strives to match the show’s tone to the “straight-shooting, classy” nature of Meyers and find a balance that keeps all stakeholders happy.

This fall, Leiderman will return to the UI campus for a public talk (see details below) to share how embracing multiple pathways has led him to long-term success in an unpredictable field.

“[The entertainment industry] is a very uncertain place, and there is no path forward where there’s any guarantee of anything,” says Leiderman. “There’s luck, timing, and talent, and the university really prepped me to lean into those.”



See Leiderman on Campus

Eric Leiderman, producer for *Late Night with Seth Meyers*, shares his unconventional career path in a public talk.

When: Tuesday, Oct. 14, at 5 p.m.

Where: Iowa Theater, Iowa Memorial Union

■ BY TYLER STRAND

PHOTO: LLOYD BISHOP



PROFILE VALERIE JENSEN (90BSPh)

Mission-Driven Medicine

A College of Pharmacy Distinguished Alumni Award recipient reflects on a career preventing prescription drug shortages.



As associate director of the Drug Shortage Staff at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, **Valerie Jensen** (90BSPh) spends her days focused on a single mission: getting medicine to Americans who need it. Jensen, who received a University of Iowa College of Pharmacy Distinguished Alumni Award in 2024, has built a lifelong career from her determination to help others.

“At the FDA, we are passionate about what we do,” says Jensen. “Everyone really does have patients at the forefront of their minds.”

Jensen first learned about the possibilities of a career in pharmacy as a UI undergrad and *Daily Iowan* volunteer reporter. While working for the newspaper, she interviewed College of Pharmacy professor **Charles Barfknecht**, whose enthusiasm inspired her to apply to pharmacy school.

After graduation, Jensen became a commissioned officer for the U.S. Public Health Service, where she worked with Native American populations in Arizona and New Mexico. After completing a residency in ambulatory care, she was a clinical pharmacist for nearly a decade.

In 1999, she shifted course, joining the FDA as a product manager. The same year, she noticed rising concerns about technology failures and medical



Valerie Jensen

“

Having Iowa students has been a great experience. I learn so much from them, probably more than they learn from me.”

— Valerie Jensen

supply chain issues among her coworkers. They soon developed the Drug Shortage Staff to ensure that patients wouldn’t lose access to the medicine they needed. Jensen has served as associate director of the program since 2012.

Day to day, Jensen’s team works with companies to address manufacturing and supply issues and investigate the causes of supply chain breakdowns. Jensen emphasizes that each case requires not just medical knowledge, but also plenty of teamwork and creative problem-solving.

“It’s really communication,” says Jensen. “It’s all about talking to the companies, following up with them, and making sure that supplies are meeting patient needs.”

Beyond logistics, Jensen believes educating the next generation of pharmacists and medical professionals will make a lasting impact. As a preceptor for UI pharmacy students, she runs regular internships at the FDA, teaching them what it takes to work in drug shortage prevention.

“Having Iowa students has been a great experience,” says Jensen. “I learn so much from them, probably more than they learn from me.”

One thing Jensen hasn’t had to learn is dedication. Just days after retiring as a commissioned officer in 2020, she returned to her position as a civilian to handle the COVID-19 crisis.

Five years later, she’s still going strong in the fight to make medicine accessible and affordable for all. For Jensen, the challenge of the work means she’s exactly where she needs to be.

“It’s been a very long and rewarding career,” she says. “I feel like I’m making a difference, and as long as I can say that, I wouldn’t change a thing.”

■ BY ELLEN YANDEL

PHOTO: COURTESY VALERIE JENSEN



Communication studies grad Todd Boyd pioneered the study of hip-hop culture and its connections across film, music, art, sports, fashion, and politics.

PROFILE TODD BOYD (91PhD)

The Notorious Ph.D.

How a communication studies and *Daily Iowan* alumnus became a leading voice in sports and hip-hop culture.

➔ Years before he became a nationally known cultural commentator and scholar, a column **Todd Boyd** (91PhD) wrote for the *Daily Iowan* helped him discover the power of his voice. Boyd was finishing up his doctorate in communication studies at the University of Iowa in 1991 when he wrote about watching the NCAA men’s basketball national semifinal between Duke and UNLV. Duke had beaten Iowa in the second round of the tournament, but on this Saturday night at a crowded downtown bar, Boyd watched as fans cheered for Duke to beat UNLV.

“It was kind of surprising to me when people were so vocally in favor of Duke,” Boyd says. “I thought, this is strange; maybe it’s about a bit more than basketball and has to do with the image of both teams, which were diametrically opposed.”

It prompted Boyd to write a column for the UI’s independent student newspaper about how Duke, which had several star players who were

white, and UNLV, which was largely led by Black players, were viewed through a racial and cultural perspective. Strong reactions from readers on both sides of the issue prompted the realization that Boyd could use his voice as a writer to spark important conversations. “And that felt like a superpower,” he says.

It’s a power that has propelled Boyd throughout his career. Known as the “Notorious Ph.D,” Boyd is the chair for the study of race and popular culture and professor of cinema and media studies at the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts. He has become a well-known media commentator, author, and scholar, having developed a field of study at USC centered on hip-hop culture.

Boyd has appeared in many award-winning documentaries, including the Emmy-winning *The Last Dance* in 2020 and *20 Feet From Stardom*, which in 2014 won the Academy Award for Best Documentary feature and the Grammy Award

for Best Music Film. He has written eight books, including his most recent, *Rapper’s Deluxe: How Hip Hop Made the World* (Phaidon Press, 2024), which he’s currently adapting into a documentary series.

Boyd returned to Iowa City this past April, when he was awarded the Ida Cordelia Beam Distinguished Visiting Professorship. He spoke as part of the university’s lecture series at the Old Capitol, talking about a variety of subjects involving race and sports.

“Professor **Kembrew McLeod**, who arranged the whole thing, said at one point he thought this was a victory lap, considering my success, and I thought that was an appropriate metaphor,” says Boyd. “I’ve had the good fortune of having a very successful career, I’ve become very visible, I’ve done a lot of different things, and it’s nice to be recognized and honored, period.”

Boyd is currently researching and writing two new book projects. The first will revisit the Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier boxing match dubbed “The Fight of the Century” and the culture war of 1971. The second will highlight the cultural history and influence of jazz icon Miles Davis.

Boyd credits Iowa, which is known as the Writing University, for putting him on a path to success. “It has this vibe of a place you go in, focus on your writing, and focus on your work,” he says. “I felt like this would be a good place for me to focus and accomplish what I was trying to accomplish.”

■ BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP

PHOTO COURTESY TODD BOYD

Class Notes

2020s

Samantha Cary Angel (23BA), the first Hawkeye soccer player to be drafted into the National Women’s Soccer League, recently joined Chicago Stars FC. **Emily Bronswick** (21BA) received the Mildred Throne & Charles Aldrich Award from the State Historical Society of Iowa for her thesis, “I Felt If Things Didn’t Change, the World Would Come to an End”: Black Iowa Women’s Activism During the Civil Rights Era, 1945-1965.” **Nyaradzai Chisaka** (25PhD) is a visiting assistant professor in the UI Department of History this fall. **Kathleen Doyle** (20BA), a former Hawkeye and WNBA player, is an assistant women’s basketball coach and recruiting coordinator at DePaul University in Chicago. **Cassandra Jensen** (20MFA), an associate editor at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, received the George Mills & Louise Noun Popular History Award from the State Historical Society of Iowa for her article “Diane Oliver’s Unfinished Story” in the spring 2024 issue of *Iowa Magazine*. **Adeline Kenlin** (23BS, 24MA), a former two-time All-American Hawkeye gymnast, is an assistant gymnastics coach for Illinois State University.

2010s

Amber Riesselman Douglass (10PharmD), a mental health clinical pharmacist practitioner for Veterans Affairs in Bluffton, South Carolina, has been inducted into the American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists’ inaugural fellows class. **Samsun Knight** (18MFA), an assistant professor for the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, is author of *Likeness*, recently published by the University of Iowa Press. **Sam Logic** (15BA), a former Hawkeye and WNBA player, is an assistant women’s basketball coach at Marquette University in Milwaukee. **Candice Long** (10BBA, 11MAc) is an attorney with Winthrop & Weinstine, a law firm based

PHOTOS COURTESY GRACE SMITH

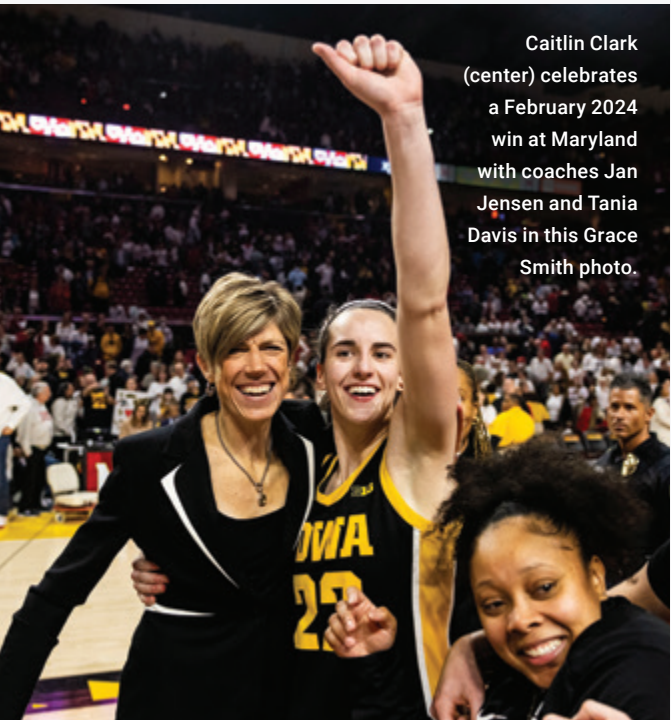
in Minneapolis. **Lisa Neher** (16DMA), a singer, composer, and educator, has received the Oregon Music Teacher Association Composer of the Year Award. **Tony Tulathimutte** (12MFA) is author of *Rejection*, which was named to the L.D. and LaVerne Harrell Clark Fiction Prize’s longlist. **Eric Zimmer** (12MA, 16PhD), a vice president of philanthropy and special projects for the Black Hills Area Community Foundation in Rapid City, South Dakota, received the Benjamin F. Shambaugh Award from the State Historical Society of Iowa for his book *Red Earth Nation: A History of the Meskwaki Settlement*.

2000s

Mike Abbott (05MBA, 05JD), a partner with the Faegre Drinker law firm in Des Moines, has been elected for a four-year term to the firm’s leadership board. **Erica Daehn-McHard** (01JD) is a litigator for the Jones Walter law firm based in Houston. **Lisa Deimerly Didion** (00BS, 05MD, 08R, 09F), chief medical officer at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi, earned a UI Carver College of Medicine 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award for Early Career Achievement. **Sarah Harrison** (00BA), founder of the technology and data solutions company Order of Operations, competed on the entrepreneurship game show *The Blox*. **Leslie Jamison** (06MFA), a bestselling author and associate professor of writing at Columbia University School of the Arts in New York, received the 2025 Weston International Award for Literary Nonfiction from the Writers’ Trust of Canada. **Katherine Massoth** (09MA, 16PhD) is an associate professor in the history department at the University of New Mexico. **Daniel Runde** (09MD, 16MME), the UI Department of Emergency Medicine’s vice chair of education and a course director for first-year medical and physician assistant students, received a UI Carver College of Medicine 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award for Early Career Achievement. **James Shea** (01MFA) is author of the 2025 Iowa Poetry Prize-winning collection, *Last Day of My Face*, published by the UI



Sports photographer Grace Smith



Caitlin Clark (center) celebrates a February 2024 win at Maryland with coaches Jan Jensen and Tania Davis in this Grace Smith photo.

From All Angles

When **Caitlin Clark** (24BBA) was snagged by the Indiana Fever as the first pick in the 2024 WNBA draft, she wasn’t the only University of Iowa graduate bound for Indianapolis. **Grace Smith** (24BA) was hired as a staff photojournalist at *The Indianapolis Star* shortly after her 2024 commencement. One of her beats? The Fever.

The territory was familiar for Smith: Not only had she been a photo editor at *The Daily Iowan*, but she also had exclusive access to the Iowa women’s basketball program during the team’s 2023–24 season and championship bid. Smith and her peers from *The Daily Iowan* and the UI School of Journalism and Mass Communication spent months covering the team on and off the court, culminating in *More Than a Moment: Elevating the Game with Iowa Women’s Basketball*, a book published in May 2024.

From Indianola, Iowa, Smith says basketball is one of her favorite things to photograph, so following Clark to “the basketball state” has been pure joy. “When I got to Indianapolis, I was used to loud arenas and people going crazy,” says Smith. “It was special to be able to continue documenting history.”



Community Caretaker

Retired physician **George Dawson** (84MD) recalls the eerie transformation of Harlem’s typically bustling streets during the COVID-19 pandemic. As stay-at-home orders took effect in March 2020, an unsettling silence blanketed the neighborhood. It was broken only by the wail of ambulance sirens—a grim reminder of the crisis gripping one of the nation’s hardest-hit communities.

Moved to action, Dawson volunteered with the New York Medical Reserve Corps to vaccinate New Yorkers during the first deadly wave of the pandemic. The University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine grad received a community service award from the Black Nurses Association and a legacy award from Harlem Pride earlier this year. Each honor recognizes his lifelong commitment to addressing public health crises such as COVID-19, mpox, and homelessness—both in and beyond his Harlem neighborhood.

Gossip Columnist’s Daughter. **Tim Vos** (95MA), director of the Michigan State University School of Journalism, has been inducted into the UI School of Journalism and Mass Communication Hall of Fame. **Karen L. Wellner** (95PhD, 99MA), an adjunct faculty member at Arizona State University in Tempe, received a certificate of recognition from the State Historical Society of Iowa for her research essay, “Thomas H. Macbride (28LLD), Bohumil Shimek (1883CE, 1902MS), and the Formation of American Science.”

1980s

JP Clancy (86BA, 90MD), senior vice president for clinical research for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, received the UI Carver College of Medicine’s 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award for Achievement. **Fred J. Crawford** (87MBA), the recently retired president and chief operating officer of AFLAC, is an independent member of the board of directors for the Webster Financial Corporation in Stamford, Connecticut. **Chuck Current** (88BBA) is executive director of Meals from the Heartland, a West Des Moines-based nonprofit fighting food insecurity. **Jay Currie** (80BSPh, 84PharmD) recently retired from the UI College of Pharmacy after 40 years as a professor. **Randy McDonough** (87BSPh, 97MS, 00PharmD), a professor at the UI College of Pharmacy, is president of the American Pharmacists Association. **Dana Roberson** (87BA) is general manager of PBS station THIRTEEN.

Alejandro M. Sanchez (84JD), CEO of Salva Financial Group in Florida and executive advisor of Nasdaq, has been appointed to the board of directors at Business First Bancshares. **David Wolf** (82BA), professor emeritus of English at Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa, published his seventh collection of poems, *Seven*, through In Case of Emergency Press.

1970s

Bill Douglas (77MA), a political organizer, delivery worker, and freelance historian in Clutier, Iowa, received a certificate of merit from the State

Historical Society of Iowa for his book *The People are Kind: A Religious History of Iowa*. **Francis Hamit** (72BGS, 76MFA), a member of the U.S. Army Security Agency during the Vietnam War, is author of *Out of Step: A Memoir of the Vietnam War, Part One*. **Joy Harjo** (78MFA), a three-term U.S. poet laureate, is author of the upcoming book *Girl Warrior: On Coming of Age*. **Jonathan Heaslet** (70BA) published his latest novel, *East of Apple Glen*. **Jane Wertzberger Rutledge** (75BSN), a retired colonel in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps, directs Region V of the Army Nurse Corps Association in planning a gala to commemorate the 125th anniversary of army nursing in February 2026.

1960s

Earl Fitz (68BA, 70MA), a professor of Portuguese, Spanish, and comparative literature at Vanderbilt University, published his latest book, *The Evolution of Literature in the Americas: A Timeline and Commentary*. **Bruce Gantz** (68BS, 74MD, 80MS), who implanted the first cochlear implant in 1980, received the 2025 American Cochlear Implant Alliance lifetime achievement award. **J. Michael Gillette** (63BA), professor emeritus of media arts at the University of Arizona in Tucson, is author of the historical fiction thriller *Perdido, Arizona: A Novel*.

1950s

David Paulsrud (59MD), a former Green Beret and orthopedic surgeon from Sioux City, Iowa, who has dedicated his life to serving patients with substance abuse disorder, earned a UI Carver College of Medicine 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award for Service.

faculty & friends

Paul Federici retired this past summer as UI director of football operations after working with the program for 21 years.

Have news to share?

Submit to uimagazine@foriowa.org.

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In Memory

1940s

Aris Platt Montgomery (48BSPE) of Greeley, Colorado, on March 14, 2025.

1950s

Nadine Bright Bell (51BA) of Onalaska, Wisconsin, on June 9, 2025. **Glenn J. Drahn** (51BSPE, 58MA) of Belle Plaine, Iowa, on May 6, 2025. **Raymond J. “Buzz” Finn Jr.** (56BA, 60DDS) of Edwards, Colorado, on April 28, 2025. **Thomas D. Haye** (58BSPh, 69DDS) of Deerfield Beach, Florida, on March 18, 2025. **John Hazen** (56BA, 59MD) of Dana Point, California, on May 15, 2025. **Betty Jeanne Humphry** (51MA, 54PhD) of Jacksonville, Florida, on March 8, 2025. **Chuck Johnson** (55MD, 60R) of Sioux City, Iowa, on March 6, 2025. **Margaret Bathke Johnson** (55DH, 56BA) of Greene, Iowa, on May 3, 2025. **Allyn L. Mark** (57BA, 61MD, 67R, 69F) of Iowa City on April 3, 2025. **Janet E. Mignerey Neitzke** (59BA) of Yukon, Oklahoma, on Jan. 17, 2025. **Nancy Simmons Shumansky** (58BA) of Burnsville, Minnesota, on April 17, 2025. **Donald E. Stamy** (54BA) of Cedar Rapids on June 8, 2025. **Maurice Sutton** (55BA, 60JD) of Audubon, Iowa, on June 8, 2025. **Peter D. Van Oosterhout** (53BA, 55JD) of Sagamore Hills, Ohio, on Dec. 17, 2024.

1960s

Frank R. Brownell III (61BA) of Grinnell, Iowa, on June 18, 2025. **Rosemary Burken** (66MA) of Davenport on May 5, 2025. **Byron Burlingham** (61BA, 65MS, 66MD) of Manhattan, Kansas, on May 18, 2025. **Walter M. Burnett** (64MA, 65PhD) of Cockeysville, Maryland, on June 8, 2025. **Raymond W. Davis** (68BBA) of Urbandale, Iowa, on June 10, 2025. **Gary L. Graff** (67BA, 68JD) of Alameda, California, on March 7, 2023. **John E. Hewett** (62MS, 65PhD) of Storm Lake, Iowa, on April 15, 2025. **Mary Lou Haskett Johns** (65BA, 68MA) of Winfield, Illinois, on June 16, 2025. **Dale W. Langbehn** (61BA) of Schofield, Wisconsin, on March 6, 2025. **Diane S.**

Artus Miller (60DH, 61BA) of Dallas on May 14, 2025. **Jung Hong Bay Ra** (60PhD) of Medina, Ohio, on March 28, 2025. **Margery J. Schwiebert Reid** (68BA, 71MAT) of Overland Park, Kansas, on June 16, 2025. **David L. Turpin** (62DDS) of Seattle on May 29, 2025. **Thomas B. Young** (67MFA) of Columbus, Ohio, on April 23, 2025.

1970s

Randy E. Brown (74BA, 77MA) of Iowa City on March 8, 2025. **Wen-tao C. Cheng** (72MFA) of North Haven, Connecticut, on June 13, 2025. **Gerald E. Denehy** (70MS) of Iowa City on June 1, 2025. **Ken Grabinski** (72BBA) of Iowa City on June 4, 2025. **Barbara A. Gulick Holden** (73BM) of Cedar Rapids on July



Wally Chappell

As the longtime director of Hancher Auditorium, **Wally Chappell** cultivated a love of the arts in Iowa City and across the nation.

Chappell served as the executive director of Hancher Auditorium from 1986–2001. During that time, he commissioned more than 50 new works, organized a diverse array of performances, and built lasting relationships with arts companies, including the Joffrey Ballet and the Kronos Quartet. He also taught theater and arts administration at the University of Iowa and mentored students such as current Hancher director **André Perry** (08MFA).

After his time at Hancher, Chappell directed the American Ballet Theatre and the Paul Taylor American Dance Company in New York. As an actor, director, and producer, he led productions at theaters across the country, including the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. Throughout his life, he remained a strong supporter of local Iowa City arts, serving on the boards of the Englert Theatre and Riverside Theatre for many years.

Chappell died April 14 in Iowa City. He was 83.

7, 2025. **Gloria N. Larson Jacobson** (74BBA) of Iowa City on June 16, 2025. **Allan S. Janus** (74BGS) of Washington Grove, Maryland, on Jan. 6, 2025. **Ellen L. Reihle Kuennen** (79BA, 88MSW) of Iowa City on March 21, 2024. **Joseph R. La Pointe** (73BA, 79JD) of Mason City, Iowa, on April 20, 2025. **Alice E. Notley** (70MFA) of Paris on May 19, 2025. **Mark W. Towers** (72BA, 77MA) of Marion, Iowa, on June 17, 2025. **Thomas G. Yetter** (74BBA) of Norman, Oklahoma, on April 26, 2025.

1980s

Gregg Bentler (88BBA) of Iowa City on July 23, 2025. **Charles L. Henkle** (89BA) of Iowa City on June 16, 2025. **Nancy L. Wadsworth Schreiber** (89BBA, 90MA) of Muscatine, Iowa, on April 12, 2025. **Patricia C. Schupfer** (86MD, 98F) of Coralville on March 25, 2025. **Glen Schwickerath** (84BS) of Danbury, Wisconsin, on June 1, 2025.

1990s

Myra S. Emerson (92MA, 99JD) of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, on June 7, 2025. **Bryce A. Miller** (91BS) of San Diego on March 22, 2025. **Jason M. Smith** (97BA) of Council Bluffs, Iowa, on May 29, 2025.

2000s

Christoph Trappe (01BA) of Marion, Iowa, on Feb. 28, 2025.

2010s

Brandon S. Farnum (17BBA) of Omaha, Nebraska, on May 19, 2025. **Alex J. Hasson** (18BA) of Columbus, Indiana, on March 14, 2025.

faculty & friends

Bernard A. Sorofman of Iowa City on July 27, 2025.

To honor a recently deceased loved one in the In Memory section of *Iowa Magazine*, please send their name, University of Iowa degree year, city and state of last residence, and date of death to uimagazine@foriowa.org.



REFLECT

A Toast to 100 Years

Over the past century, the Iowa Memorial Union has been a cornerstone of campus life—a place for learning, growth, and connection. It has hosted countless celebrations, served as the backdrop to many university traditions, and evolved through significant changes and challenges—from building additions to catastrophic flooding.

Over the next two years, an \$81.4 million renovation will modernize the facility and centralize support for student well-being at the IMU. As the university prepares to celebrate the IMU’s centennial throughout this academic year, alumni and friends are also invited to participate in the milestone.

Celebrations open to the public include an IMU open house Sept. 26 from 1:30–4:30 p.m., Lunch with the Chefs Jan. 15, and the Centennial Gala Feb. 14 to pay tribute to the past and toast the next chapter. Alumni and friends may also share their favorite IMU memories or donate historic IMU memorabilia for a display by emailing imu-centennial@uiowa.edu.

For the latest updates and opportunities to participate in the IMU centennial, visit imu.uiowa.edu/centennial.

PHOTO: FREDERICK W. KENT COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS, UI LIBRARIES



In this photo from February 1947, the University of Iowa community celebrates the institution’s 100th anniversary with a centennial dinner at the Iowa Memorial Union. In the 2025-26 academic year, the UI celebrates another centennial—this time for the IMU.