

the CHALLENGER

A Publication of the Harper College Honors Program

Issue I ♦ February 2002

If I had known college would be so much fun . . . I would have started sooner!

by Charles Kostomiris

In high school I was your typical devil-may-care-school-sucks kind of guy who was more interested in hanging out and listening to Ozzy Osbourne than learning about exponents, prepositional phrases, or other boring educational crap. I slacked off, ditched school, got Saturday detentions for ditching school, then ditched those and got suspended where I slept until noon, ate Cheetos, and watched countless hours of "The Simpsons." I barely graduated from high school. I quickly entered the "full-time clown game," where I worked long hours to help others make money. It took me four long years of punching a time clock week after week to realize that I needed to go back to school to make good on any hopes of doing better.



Getting into college on your own can be difficult. It meant doing things I didn't really understand just to pay to take classes where I was going to have to invest a lot of time and hard work. I chose Harper because I heard it was the best junior college in the country (take that C.O.D.!) and I love challenges.

Unfortunately, the word "school" had developed negative connotations for me: social cliques, popularity contests, and learning stuff that bored the living daylights out of me. While choosing courses, I was delighted to find a wide variety of classes that really interested me: philosophy, poetry, psychology, creative writing, and music. Wow, I thought, I do this stuff anyway, so why not earn credit for my efforts? The social climate was great, too; since no one had to be there, all those childish high school games didn't exist. I was in a total learning atmosphere.

Instead of adopting the "glorified babysitter" mindset, Harper teachers seemed more understanding than high school teachers and gave each student the chance to succeed. Having an experienced scholar right there with me, explaining everything to me every step along the way, breathed new life into school. I was in awe and very inspired. When a professor pours his or her heart into a lesson day after day, how could I give less than 100% on every assignment? Is there a greater example of excellence than that set every day by a truly motivated teacher? I quickly discovered that college was for me, and that for the first time in my life—I actually began to enjoy school.

I'm living proof that anyone can succeed in school if they are willing to invest the time and effort into it. Harper has been an amazing opportunity for me to prove to myself that a "smart-ass punk with an attitude problem" can be a good student. And I'm confident that through hard work and wise decisions, I'll never have to work endless factory hours again. I just take it day by day, and try to do quality work for myself. You only get out of life what you put into it, and nothing could be closer to the truth. ♦

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From the Editor

Finally! the revival of the illustrious *Challenger* Honors newsletter. Last year flew by without a single issue, but it's spring 2002 and we have much to write about.

This first issue explores Harper, Paul Sipiera and his wild adventure to Antarctica, and retiring professor Karen Keres. We also salute the many Harper students who are excelling in sports or clubs. And we top off this issue with some fun and interesting facts you may or may not know about Harper. Plus, you can find out about upcoming events for Honor students.

This much information may seem like a large undertaking for four highly motivated students (Deborah, Charles, Stephanie, and me), and this first issue was definitely a learning experience, but, we think you'll like it. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions about the *Challenger*.

Read, enjoy, and celebrate all the wonderful things at Harper.

Patrick Chartrand
Senior Editor

E-mail the Challenger staff
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meet the challenger staff



Patrick Chartrand

Aspirations: To finish my education with a Masters degree in Marketing/Finance so I can prosper in the business sector.

Leisure time: My free time is devoted to school related activities and sports teams.



Deborah Abbott

Aspirations: To finish with my education and find an occupation in the computer and communications industry.

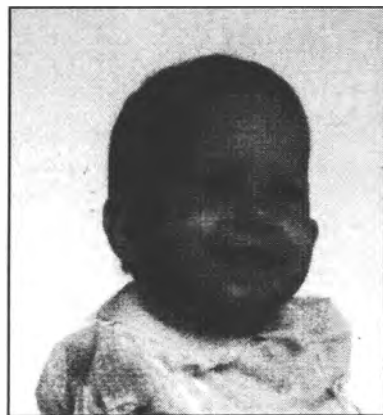
Leisure time: I enjoy spending my free time with my significant other, and working as an assistant to Paul Sipiera.



Charles Kostomiris

Aspirations: My future plans include transferring to a four-year university in the southern part of the United States where I can receive my Bachelors degree.

Leisure time: I spend my time out of school at work. I also enjoy writing; in fact, one of my stories was recently selected for "The Harper Anthology."



Stephanie Pierucci

Aspirations: To finish up with my education so I can teach French/English at the high school level.

Leisure time: I spend my so-called "free" time as a part time waitress, I also work for Sears' Hardware. I'm also active with student clubs and organizations.



*Fifth in the Nation.
Division Champs.
Trip to Nashville.
Trip to Paris, France.*

By Deborah Abbott

“To excel” is not what most people think of when they consider attending a two-year college. Nonetheless, this is the reality of William Rainey Harper College. Rather than spend time working through four years of hangovers, Harper students seem inordinately driven to excel in fields they are passionate about.

Speech Team

Students on Speech Team make an appointment with Jeff Przybylo, sign a contract, and are registered for Applied Forensics. The team meets Mondays at 2:25 p.m. Early on, it's to assist each other to find topics and then later in the season, to act as critical audience and judge with input for a better performance. Members compete in Prose, Poetry, Informative and Persuasive Speaking, Duet Acting, Dramatic and Oral Interpretation and Speech to Entertain, Extemporaneous and Impromptu, and more. This is not necessarily the group to belong to if you get tongue-tied easily—it requires determination and poise under pressure. For the last four years, our Speech Team (averaging 15 members and led by Jeff Przybylo and Marcia Litrenta) has worked furiously and ramped up to capture 5th in the nation in 2000 and 2001. This year, Speech Team surpassed itself and now looks to be in place for an even better showing. In January, the team placed first in Community College Division; in February, Harper placed second nationally, as the only community college among 17 schools.

Hawks Sports

Every year, there are flyers around campus announcing tryouts for 14 intercollegiate sports at Harper College and for Pom Poms and Cheerleading. Sue Overland, of Harper's sports office notes, “Although the teams range in talent from year to year, we

have consistently won our way to the National Junior College Tournaments in many sports.” Women's Soccer won the regional title and had several players named to All-American status, including the nation's leading scorer, Kristina Bratt.

During December 2001, Hawks Football was invited to play in the Empire State Bowl Game in New York. Both the Men's and Women's Cross Country teams won their way to Nationals this year. Women's Basketball won our first Region IV title and was fourth nationally at Division III in 2001. The team is currently 6th in the nation. Men's Wrestling won National Division III in 2001 and just took second place in the Regional tournament. Nine wrestlers (the most of any school) have qualified to compete in the National Tournament in Rochester, MN.

Program Board

Harper's Program Board, the student organization that determines and hosts concerts, lectures and other programs on campus, regularly wins awards at National Association for Campus Activities (NACA) for the diversity of programs offered. Executive members (students) meet every Tuesday at 4:30 p.m. to plan, prepare, and carry out each step necessary for a successful event. During a typical season (Fall and Spring semesters), this student organization presents 14-16 programs. Each year, seven to ten students join the advisor, Michael Nejman, at the regional NACA event in downstate Illinois to learn more about available performers and the best way to program. During Spring semester, one student is selected by the Board to join Michael at NACA Nationals; two years ago in Boston, MA and last year in Nashville, TN.

Fashion Classes

If you've been on the first floor of H building, you may be familiar with the rooms that are abuzz with fashion sense. Each year, the Fashion Department hosts a fashion show with a runway of models wearing the designs of Harper students. What you may not know is that several of our own have gone on to present their fashions in Paris! One recent traveler was Reveca Torres, a 2001 second year student with disabilities who appeared on ABC-TV last year, for winning a Super Achiever award for overcoming barriers and maintaining excellent grades. In 2002, the Fashion Department will host the first annual Harper College Fashion Career Conference and Competition, Fashion Futures 2002.

Sign Language

Do you have a friend who is deaf? Learn to communicate with them through Harper's American Sign Language (ASL) classes, many lead by Deaf adults who use ASL daily and are also knowledgeable of Deaf culture. The ASL and ITP (interpreting) programs at Harper are among the best in the United States. This was demonstrated by a graduate who is now a certified interpreter and worked at the 1996 Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

Other Notables

WHCM, Harper's radio station, is in the process of going FM. Yes, DJs in the third floor studio of A building will broadcast to you in your car!

Harper's Math Team placed first in the Midwest in the first round of competition in 2002.

This is just a sampling of what's available. What can you find? ♦

Honors Astronomy and Geology Professor Goes to Antarctica for Sixth Time



By Deborah Abbott

During January 2002, ten people left their homes from around the United States and met in Chile. This team made up the Antarctica 2002 Expedition and four of them were from Illinois, including Harper Professor Paul Sipiera. The three main goals of the team were to collect meteorites, obtain ice core samples, and to communicate with students in two elementary classrooms in Illinois. There was also a side goal: obtain penguin guano samples to check for extremophiles. Extremophiles are organisms that live quite happily in extreme temperatures; apparently there is not enough research done on these life forms and penguin poop is a very rich resource to find the subject.

The January 3rd start of this trip was a portend of difficulties to come, as the team found they would be delayed in Chile, awaiting transport to the Antarctic. Once in Antarctica, the team learned quickly to work together for survival. Even though tents kept these explorers warm to nearly 50 degrees, the outside temperature would reach minus 40. Due to a late start, the team's date to return from the South Pole was pushed back from January 17 to January 28.

When I met with Professor Sipiera to ask about his trip, it was in his home kitchen with his wife, Diane. A few interruptions from two of his three children, Paula and Caroline Antarctic (yes, that is her middle name), kept things lively. During the expedition, Diane not only took care of the children, but also responded to daily telephone calls about his expedition from the press and friends and handled other tasks for the organization Paul founded: Planetary Studies Foundation. (In between all that, she redecorated the house, a task that she prefers to do while he is in the Antarctic.)

Deborah Abbott (DA): You collected 33 meteorites on this trip. How can you tell you are looking at a meteorite when you zip past it on a snowmobile?

Paul Sipieri (PA): Actually, we don't zip past it; the snowmobile is only going five miles an hour. But it's pretty easy to see it. With all the vast white of the snow and ice, the meteorite is the only dark object you see, so you stop at every dark dot sitting on top of the ice. Once you get out of the snowmobile and get close to the object, it is basically eyesight and years of experience that target the black item as a meteorite. Back in the States, tests are run and conclusive determinations found as to the origin of the meteorite and its age.

DA: What was the purpose of the ice core samples?

PS: Samples of the ice provides data on the history of the place where the sample was taken. The sample is drilled and then carefully packed, sealed and labeled. Unlike the meteorites, the ice cores also require temperature control. A couple of the samples we took have a green hue to them, which may represent chlorophyll. When tests are done, it is possible to determine what has gone on by what level the microorganism is living in...near the surface, further down, etc.

DA: You visited two grade schools prior to your trip. One of the schools had asked you to keep a log of what you ate, and what a woman on the trip ate, as well as what you did to expend the calories. How did that work?

PS: We were not able to keep an exact record. I don't know that it will do the class any good to hand over the data we did record.

DA: Another class asked you about the speed of freezing water. Were you able to conduct that experiment?

PS: Yes. In the classroom experiment in the States, 2.5 inches of water in the freezer took 2 to 3 hours to freeze. In Antarctica, it only took 42 minutes to freeze the same quantity.

About Antarctica

Antarctica offers one of the best opportunities on the planet for meteorite discovery. Meteorites fall on to the snowfields where they are preserved by the cold, dry environment for thousands of years. Since first discovering high concentrations of meteorites in Antarctica in 1969, research teams from Japan, Europe, and the United States have recovered more than 16,000 specimens. That find more than tripled the worldwide number of meteorites available for scientific study. Among samples found, some meteorites were shown to hail from Mars and the Moon.

no stats needed – Harper Prevails

by Stephanie Pierucci

I have recovered from an epidemic disease ravaging northwest suburban high schools: “Harperitus.” The actual announcement of my being a student at Harper was something I wanted to kick and scream about, and the day I registered I sulked teary-eyed through the parking lot.

Where has this school received the reputation of “Harper High,” as we “Honor” students so fondly labeled it not long ago? Why is it that so many people who eventually attend classes at Harper develop such an ardent love for their school?

Kate Hoyer (Speech Team, Honors Society, Phi Theta Kappa, transfer to DePaul in '02) recognizes that although it is not the school students hover over their mailboxes for acceptance to, Harper holds intangible qualities. She esteems Harper College as a school excellent enough to ease her transition from being home-schooled to a college with over 25,000 students. “People often ask me if it was difficult to make the transition from home-schooling to college.” Hoyer claims, “I think it’s up to the student to make the most of their college’s resources, and keeping that attitude has led me to some opportunities that the average student probably overlooks. Every school has tangible and intangible qualities. Tangible things go in the viewbook. The intangibles become apparent only when you have the patience and willingness to uncover them.” (Read about the speech team’s great success on page 3.)

Less poetically: credits at \$63.25 a shot, a multitude of terrific professors, and more clubs and activities than this paper would be able to list, creates an atmosphere of business and intellectual curiosity, as well as unforgettable camaraderie. Becky Thomson (honors student), a senior at Rolling Meadows High School who takes a full load at Harper, declares, “Harper has provided me with unique opportunities, experience and people I will truly miss.” Thomson completed many advanced classes at RMHS and had acquired enough of them to start attending Harper in the fall of 2001 while she is

finishing her gym courses before graduation. Thomson is one of the countless students at Harper College who has been able to accomplish something that is truly astounding; with considerably less sacrifice than most any other school would permit.

In great faith of Harper College honors students I decided to call the first five people in the directory, knowing that the stories I would uncover were sure to be great. As I expected, the very first call I made provided me with a most encouraging collection of stories from 19-year-old Veronica Acebey (student ambassador, Honors Society, Phi Theta Kappa); I didn’t need to make another call after hers. What initially perked my ears was the news that Acebey is a member of Phi Theta Kappa, a society for students with outstanding grade point averages. Notably, Phi Theta Kappa is only available to students in community colleges.

Acebey’s membership provided her with half tuition (\$8000 per year), renewable, at Benedictine University.

Acebey initially hoped to attend DePaul University when she graduated from high school. Currently working at a veterinary hospital in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, Acebey would have had to not only quit the job which equips her for her studies and provides work experience, but she would have had to spend at least 30 hours a week on the commute from her home to DePaul. “I have a really old car,”

she says in defense of her having to take a train to school each day, “and I would’ve had to

drive to the ‘L’ station at O’Hare every day. It takes three hours to get there (DePaul) every day...that’s 30 hours a week.” Her job would be lost, the experience would cease, and the tuition would greatly rise. By process of elimination, Acebey came to the conclusion that many Harper students so wisely come to: Harper College makes wonderful sense! ♦

It’s up to the students to make the most of their college’s resources.

Antarctic continued from page 4

DA: Are you intending to revisit the classrooms as a follow-up?

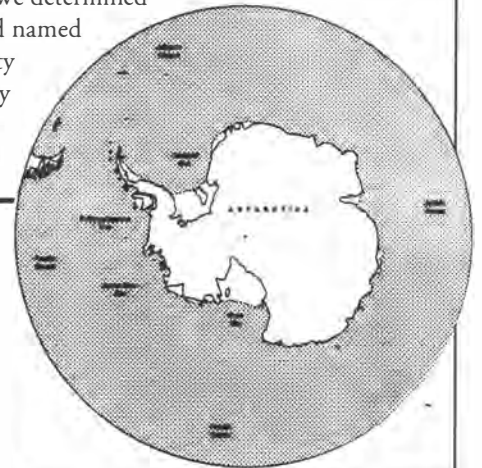
PS: Yes, I just don’t have a date set yet.

DA: During your trip, you named a lake, Lake Paula. What is the procedure for naming a lake?

PS: Although the area was surveyed in 1961, there was no interest in lakes. The lake we found was not really on a map. We attempted to take ice core samples and when we drilled two meters down, we hit water. When we determined we had something new, we characterized it and named it. Once the name is written in articles, it pretty much stays. The more articles that refer to it by the name you chose—such as Lake Paula—the more likely the feature will retain the name. ♦

To find out more

If you have an interest in vicariously taking a trip into the Antarctic, logon to <http://www.spaceadventures.com/terrestrial/antarctica/> and follow the journal created by the team.



Did you know? by Patrick Chartrand

Enrollment for the 2000-2001 school year was 25,256.

There are 47 clubs and organizations established at Harper.

One-third of Harper's facilities are more than 30 years old.

Since 1967, Harper College has served 450,000 students.

Prime time for classes is 9 a.m.-2 p.m., when 90% of the classrooms are utilized.

Lowest enrollment is during the summer. Highest enrollment is during the fall semester.

Average age of a Harper student is 28 years old.

Fifty-six percent of the students are women.

Approximately one in three high school graduates in the district attends Harper within three years of leaving high school.

Sixty-one percent of Harper's career students become employed full time upon leaving school.

More than two-thirds of Harper's degree credit students are part-time students.

Enrollment at Harper is projected to increase by at least 8.6% by 2005.

Eighteen percent of Harper's degree credit students have a bachelor's degree or higher; in continuing education, 46 percent have already achieved a bachelor's degree or higher.

Sources:

Fact Book 2001

www.harpercollege.com

Harper College brochure

by Trygve Thoreson
Honors Coordinator

Why Not Harper?

My seventeen-year-old daughter is thinking about college. She wants to remain in the area and isn't too particular about the length of her commute. If she needs to live on campus, that's fine, but living at home—at least for a year or two—is acceptable and may be financially necessary. We sit around the dining room table, tossing around some of the usual names: DePaul, Loyola, Northern, Northwestern, Marquette, Elmhurst, UW-Madison, UIC. I wait for a lull in the conversation. Then I pounce.

"Why not Harper?" I say, with an air of casual disinterest. My wife and my two children stare at me, uncomprehendingly.

"What was that you said, Dad?" my son asks.

"He said Harper," says my daughter. "You know, Harper College. Where he works."

"That's right," I say. "I mean, the price is certainly right. I know a lot of the people you could take classes from—I could guide you into some really good ones. You'd qualify for the Honors Program, and that would be great both for academics and for the social side of things. It's big enough so you could go entire days without even seeing me, if that's any kind of an issue. Then after two years, you could transfer to wherever you want—Champaign/Urbana, UIC, Northwestern, DePaul. Why not consider Harper?"

My family politely admits this into the discussion for a few minutes, but it's obvious they're merely humoring me. When our family discussions turn to life choices (such as whether it's necessary to buy a new dress for the Winter Dance, what to look for in boyfriends, private vs. public schools, where to look for a summer job), they tend to treat me like a harmless old coot on temporary leave from the mental institution. This strikes me as a peculiar way to treat someone who is (let's face it) always right.

Which, as it happens, is the case here. Why not Harper, indeed? Sweet Reason screams "HARPER COLLEGE" in an inescapable, two-thousand-decibel

declaration that pierces the atmosphere and paints itself across the sky. Harper has absolutely all of the qualities of any four-year institution (in some ways it's better than most) and its cost is the merest fraction of Big State U. I won't go into all the reasons (they're so damned obvious!), so why this resistance, not just from my loved ones, but from so many other local residents?

We all know at least some of the reasons. Some students can't wait to get away from home to enjoy the freedoms and the extracurricular delights of university life. Some are entranced with the feeling of being identified with a big-time "name" institution. Some refuse to believe that you can get a fine education at a community college—no matter how much evidence you can produce to the contrary.

But what keeps some people from considering Harper is the simple power of prejudice—literally, the act and habit of passing judgment on something before you know anything about it. A mysterious barrier is set up in the mind, and no power on earth is strong enough to dislodge it. Scary, really. Thankfully, every semester, we are blessed with a large number of first-rate students who ignore the prejudgments of others and come here anyway with, much of the time, very happy results. Who knows—with a little time and a little judicious administration of paternal sweet reasonableness, even my wife and daughter may come around?

Now if I could just get them to see that I'm always right about everything . . . ♦

pizza with the prof

by Stephanie Pierucci

THE FOOD'S ON US!

Come meet retiring professor

Karen Keres

Wed., March 27

3:30-5 p.m., Room L329

Students and faculty are invited to partake of pizza, soda, and Karen's stories!

Karen Keres

She will enthrall you with her storytelling.

She is sweet while maintaining a luminous threat of sauciness.

She is an unexpected wake-up call to students to rouse them in their intellectual and artistic lives.

Meet Karen Keres – Master of Intimidation who will tell you on the first day of class, “I have 34 years of psyching you out!” Proceed at your own risk. This year marks her retirement from Harper after teaching English for over 30 years. Those students who have navigated her classes have found she is quick to praise effort and ability, and just as quick to agree with you if you say you don’t think college is for you.

Her extraordinary life mirrors her exuberant classroom style. A prolific traveler, who was recently married in a cathedral in Italy, she can tell you how to travel overseas for next to nothing.

I got my own taste of the Keres challenge last fall when I inadvertently scoffed at having to read feminist literature in an Honors English class. Her voice dropped to a pleasant and poetic tone and she asked me to give her three reasons why I hate feminists.

I blubbered and faltered. She challenged my ignorant and uninformed opinions and put me in my place. Until that day I never realized how ignorance could be fearful. I registered for two of her classes that semester and never looked back.

Her ability to constantly spur her students on is legendary. “Put down your pencils!” she has yelled on more than one occasion, “Speak up! Don’t talk to me, respond to the writer!” She hustles her classes into participation, earning her the titles of Master Intimidator and Pressure Princess (my own moniker for her). In reality, she is just a Teacher. Her students rejoice every time another student drops her class because they know they get her more to themselves. And she will push you, prod you, and drag you kicking and screaming into expanding your mind. Underneath your breath you may curse her, but you will be profoundly changed for the better. I know that when I look back on my classes with her, I will thank her.

Thank her for her enthusiasm.

Thank her for outrageousness.

Thank her for being a Teacher. ♦

Favorite Karen-isms

Can go from the most sober subjects to screaming, “I love Harper!” with a resounding laugh.

Can quote Shakespeare with undeniable eloquence.

Can recite a passage from any book you can name.

Tops off her outfits with stunning early-90s black L.A. Gear high-tops adorned with hot pink shoelaces.

Says “twer” and nobody questions it.

“I don’t think tigers change their stripes.”

Discussion Topics & Dates

March 6	DUI Policy
March 13	Family vs. Career
March 20	St. Patrick's Day, Ireland, and the Irish
March 27	Study Abroad Programs
April 10	American Culture vs. Other Cultures
April 17	Careers in the Arts
April 24	Homosexuality and Adoption
May 1	Censorship in the Media
May 8	Political Correctness
May 15	Food and Fun!

Upcoming Events

March 23

Adopt-a-Highway #1
10 a.m., parking lot 1, followed by horseback riding.

March 27

Pizza with the Prof - Karen Keres
See page 7 for more information.

May 25

Adopt-a-Highway #2
10 a.m., parking lot 1

Honors Information

Honors Society Meetings
Wednesdays, 3:30-5 p.m. in L329

Honors Program/Phi Theta Kappa Office: L334 (open to Honor students)

Honors Society Web Site:
<http://www.harper.cc.il.us/cluborgs/honors/honors.html>

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Challenger Advisor

Susan Dennison

The Challenger is a newsletter written and designed by students enrolled in IDS 290. All opinions expressed in this publication are those of the student editors and do not represent the views of staff or administration.

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