Doug Owsey

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junior year and introduced me to Dr. Barn," Owsey says. "He opened the door. It's amazing how one individual can do that for you." Once Owsey graduated from UW in 1973, he went to work in his master's degree at Tennessee, working at an archaeological site. "Nothing in this field is really mentoring," Owsey says. Tennessee had a strong faculty and a good skeletal collection. "So, though he could have gone elsewhere for his Ph.D., he decided to stay. Then he taught for several years, first at Tennessee, then at Louisiana State University.

Owsey, who married a woman he'd met as a child on the playground in Luski, received an invitation in 1987 to apply for a curator position in the Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institute. He never thought he would get the job. He did. Today Owsey is the curator and division head for physical anthropology at the Smithsonian. Anthropology is a broad discipline, he explains; there is both a cultural side and a biological side. "I am far over to the biological side," Owsey says. "It's probably coming from some of my experiences with my father, doing things like rescuing baby animals. The field took me more into the human side of it.

In fact, he has spent his career looking at humans — and their skeletons. His basic research is looking at those bones in relation to past populations. Currently, for example, he is preparing for an exhibition called "Written in Bone: Stories of Life and Death in Colonial Chesapeake." "Many of these people lived their entire lives without anybody writing a single word about them." Owsey says. "Their remains are the only story that is left to us about the kinds of lives they led. We look at them with the eyes of a scientist, but we also recognize that they were once people that someone cared about, so we handle them with care and respect." Their bones are their entire legacy.

Owsey also works on forensic cases as a public service, taking on as many of them as time permits. On his desk right now are the bones of a young man who was killed and burned in what may have been a drug deal. Owsey's job is to identify him. The police have provided him with x-rays — they think they know who he is based on missing portions in that area — and he will provide a description of the remains. Because these bones are so badly burned, it is not possible to recover DNA. His other forensic cases have included the identification of Jeffrey Dahmer's first victim, Waco Branch Davidian compound members and the Pentagon Plane crash victims.

He traveled to Crete at the request of the State Department, to help train people there to recover, excavate and identify bodies from mass graves. His historical cases include the ongoing process of identifying the Civil War soldiers aboard the HL Hunley, the first submarine to successfully sink in enemy warship in battle in 1864. He has enlisted the help of a forensic genealogist, who gathers background information on the individual on board; part of the detective work is to find living relatives who have DNA that the men on the vessel had. So far, four of the eight men have been identified. There are a number of steps in trying to identify a specific individual, starting with a very careful examination of the skeleton. "You learn what the bones can tell you and obtain a profile on that individual," Owsey says. "But it's not like an identification you can make in a missing persons case, where you might have x-rays or dental records of the person you are attempting to identify. It's not that cut and dried. But it doesn't mean it's impossible." Several different kinds of information need to come together to solve the puzzle: historians to look at historical records and determine what is known about the individuals and the time period they lived in, archaeologists to recover the remains and examine the coffin and forensic experts to look at the remains.

Owsey has also been involved in the case of Kenne biom, the remains dated to 9,000 years ago, which ended up in court. The federal government wanted to give the remains to the local tribe under the Repatriation Act. "But you can't just assume that old bones are Indian bones," Owsey says. "They need to be properly identified — tribes don't want to bury other people's relatives. We didn't go to court willingly. We tried to talk to the Department of the Interior and the Army Corps of Engineers. We talked to the tribe. That didn't work." Eight scientists sued for custody, and nine years later, they have won and are engaged in studying the skeleton at the University of Washington. "Nothing in the law prohibits the study of the remains, but it can be a sticky situation. In fact, we have a lot of finders the number of skeletons from that time period that were well preserved. The problem is that when skeletons are found, they have to be stored and the 5,000 or 9,000, the story really belongs to all Americans." Kenne biom Man's value for science is hard to overestimate. While it has been generally accepted that the first humans migrated to this continent from Asia across a land bridge over the Bering Strait, many now think that people came by boat from other continents. Kenne biom Man may support that theory.

Owsey's work on such groundbreaking cases earned him a place in the November 2005 issue of Smithsonian magazine as one of the "35 Who Made a Difference." Bill Gates, Steven Spielberg and Yo-Yo Ma were some of the other names on the list.

While Owsey is passionate about his work, he allows that his field is not one to be entered lightly. "It's got to be very cautious, very meticulous," he says. "But it's rewarding. You're not going to bring someone back, but you can do good jobs to know what happened. You are an advocate for the person who is dead — and you just do your job.

Mary Ellen Smyth

by Suzanne B. Bepp
Alumnius editor

Mary Ellen Smyth came of age in the 1950s, which she calls a dreadful time. "It was a very boring decade," Smyth says. "It was between Frank Sinatra and Elvis, so there was so much music, and there were no magazines devoted to us. It's a wonder some of us managed to do anything!"

Her mother — Smyth calls her "a phenomenon woman for her time" — was supporting the family by working as a waitress after Smyth's father died. They moved from Thermopolis to Laramie, and she worked in the Diamond Horseshoe restaurant, which was about a mile out of town toward Rawlins, until she died at the age of 50. "She was an orphan, raised in an orphanage," Smyth says. A high school sophomore, she was farmed out by the orphanage to take care of children. She dropped out of school after her sophomore year. But she made sure her children went to college. "She always talked about education as the great savior," Smyth says. "College education was the secret to doing better than she did." Smyth excelled in school and was valedictorian of her high school class; she was offered several scholarships to UW, where she double-majored in English and speech and theater (they were one department at that time). Smyth became a Pi Phi, and made most of her good friends there.

After graduation, she taught in Denver high schools before returning to UW to earn a master's degree in theater. At that point, she was planning to marry another former UW student, Pat Smyth, who was in the service and was going to be a doctor. The master's degree was part of a plan to get a better teaching position while he went to medical school. Instead, the couple broke up. He went to medical school at Northwestern University, and she got a teaching job at Penn State University. She found she enjoyed teaching college students and stayed at Penn State for more than three years. "I continued on page 6
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wish, had gone straight for a Ph.D.," she says. 'I'm not sure I would have had a career as a professor, but having that degree opens so many doors.'

Still, the time at Penn State 'opened my eyes to the big world out there. I finally got to New York, which was my dream because I loved theater. I came close to trying to become an actress there. But that was a hard thing for a girl from Wyoming to do. I was a product of my times.'

She realised that without a doctorate she wasn't going to get much further in academia. "The students were getting younger and younger, and I was there and single," she says. 'I thought I was ready to move on.' She landed a job overseas as a director of entertainment at a military base, but before she left, she learned that her mother had developed leukemia, so she came back to Laramie and scrambled to get a teaching job at UW. Her former boyfriend, Pat Smyth, had finished his PhD at a school by that time; they got back together and decided to get married. After her mother died, the couple moved to Chicago, where he worked as an orthopedic surgeon, she as a high school teacher of English and speech.

When the Smyths adopted twin boys, she stopped teaching and did not return, which suited her fine. But after she spent a few years at home with the boys, her husband decided to start his own practice.

"He pressed me into service to run the place," she says. "I didn't know a thing, but boy, did I learn fast." His practice was one of the biggest solo practices in the country, and Smyth started out on a new career as a medical practice manager.

"This was their life until 1980, when one of her sons died suddenly. Three years later, her husband died. 'The 80's were a blur to me,' Smyth says. "My son and I were left pretty much clinging to each other. But you learn to cope. The sun comes up and life goes on. It was an incredible learning experience - about myself and about people, their shortcomings and their capacity for love and compassion. There has to be some good that comes out of something like that.'"

She sold her husband's practice and decided to start her own business. Her experience had taught her enough that she felt able to offer herself as a consultant for other doctors, calling her business The Smyth Organization. She found plenty of takers and enjoyed being her own boss, but she has since let that part of her business go. The health care world started to become very uncertain when Hillary Clinton was working on a new health care plan and planning for physicians' futures became difficult.

At the same time, Smyth began to do more of what she had been doing so much of as a volunteer: offering her services as a speaker and a trainer. Now Smyth is excited about embarking on a speaking career. "One of my passions now is women and philanthropy," she says. "How can they be good philanthropists? That's what I really want to talk about."

In her training work, she helps boards of all kinds to organize and devise strategic plans. Smyth calls this her third career, and part of it grew out of her involvement with the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the largest organization of its kind in the world. She had joined AAUW to meet some people in her community when she and her husband first moved to Chicago. She felt strongly about the mission of fostering education for women and girls; she got more and more involved and the AAUW became one of her great loves. She served as a national president from 2001-2005.

Smyth has also worked over the years with the UW Alumni Association, hosting gatherings in Chicago, even recruiting student athletes with her husband. She served on the UW Foundation in its fundraising efforts, serving on the last national capital campaign committee, which raised money to build the Centennial Complex and the Art Museum.

Underlying all her endeavors has been a strong sense of community service, but the paths her life has taken has been something of a surprise to her. "It is a little crazy and you wonder how it all comes together," she says. "But I was blessed with a good education provided by UW, and the vision to continue learning, exploring, growing. I think that's the better part of what education provides - the sense that four years is not the end but just the beginning. Once you learn how to learn, the world opens up."

For many of us from small towns across the country, and certainly from the 50's, those education years marked a beginning of wonderful things to come. Dr. Seuss said it best - "Oh, the places you'll go."

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John Clay

John Clay was born May 19, 1923, in Canton, Mo. His father died when he was 4 years old, and his mother moved him and his three brothers to the grandparents' ranch west of Laramie. The ranch is now a part of the University stock farm.

Clay's mother, affectionately known as Wanta, taught in country schools during the depression years and later became Albany County superintendent of schools.

During the summer months, Clay worked on a ranch in the Centennial Valley, where he was paid one dollar a day with board and room. Later, when he was in high school, he worked summers and after school at the First National Bank for $65 a month.

After graduating from Laramie High School, he continued at the bank while attending the University of Wyoming part time. In 1943, he enlisted in the US Army Air Corps and became a pilot. "I was assigned to a training base in California where I met a lovely lady, Esther," he says. "We were married before I went overseas."

Clay flew 68 missions over France Germany and Belgium in a F47 fighter bomber. His job was to give air support to the 1st and 9th Armies Armored Divisions by dive bombing and strafing the enemy ahead of them. One of their toughest times was during the Battle of the Bulge. Clay was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for an especially harrowing mission, where he blew up a munitions plant while under heavy ground fire. "I am blessed to have been home in one piece," Clay says.

After the war, he returned to the University of Wyoming, studying accounting and business. With only nine hours remaining to graduate, Clay was encouraged to take a position with Wyoming Farm Bureau Insurance Company, which was just getting started. He became the company CEO and eventually executive secretary of the Wyoming Farm Bureau.

In 1961, Clay took a position as vice president of the First National Bank of Kemmerer. He left to become a stockbroker in Cheyenne with the company now known as RBC Dain Rauscher. He has been with the same company, in the same town, since 1963. He held several positions with the company and today is a senior vice president.

Clay is a strong believer in giving back to his community and alma mater. He has served as a member of the University of Wyoming Foundation Board for 12 years - as chairman and now as an ex officio board member. He served as vice chairman to Chairman Senator Al Simpson on the UW Foundation's Distinction Campaign, which just finished raising over $200 million in five years from private donations. He served on the Y Cross ranch board and is now an emeritus board member. The Y Cross ranch was given to continued on page 7