



## Intellectual Integrity

By Bill Simons, Vice President for Academics

Violations of intellectual integrity are not confined to students. In his 1995 biography, *Lincoln*, the distinguished Civil War historian David Donald writes:

Of the many one-volume lives the best are Benjamin P. Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography...*; Reinhard H. Luthin, *The Real Lincoln...*; and Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln...* Because I wanted, so far as possible, to write a biography from the original sources, I have not read or consulted these distinguished works in the preparation of the present volume.

Donald's avoidance of relevant secondary works is disturbing. Immersion in primary materials is admirable, but it is the dialogue between authors of secondary works that identifies and refines interpretative issues. Scholars build on the work of predecessors and teach their students to do likewise. Why then would Donald pointedly eschew the work of experts in his field? The answer—Donald was determined to avoid the type of controversy that engulfed Stephen B. Oates.

Oates writes, like he speaks, with drama and passion. He was a history professor of mine at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. A photograph of Lincoln hung on the wall in the historian's office, and Oates would stare at it for long intervals. He did not write until Lincoln walked into his office. Make no mistake: Oates' *Malice Toward None* rests on extensive research and thoughtful analysis. But it enlists the muse of historical imagination to recreate the life and times of that complex and flawed figure who was America's greatest president.

*Malice Toward None* received popular and critical acclaim. For several years, after its 1977 publication, the book was widely regarded as the definitive Lincoln biography. In 1991, however, Oates was accused of plagiarizing material

from Benjamin P. Thomas' 1952 study of Lincoln, even of wholesale appropriation of language. In a controversial finding, the American Historical Association found that Oates "failed to give Mr. Thomas sufficient attribution" but dismissed the more serious issue of plagiarism. Subsequently, critics claimed to find evidence of plagiarism in Oates' biographies of William Faulkner and Martin Luther King, Jr. Again, the American Historical Association cited Oates for offenses less serious than plagiarism.

A decade after the Oates imbroglio, the intellectual integrity of some of the most honored members of my discipline has come under attack. A Pulitzer Prize winner for *Founding Brothers*, a magisterial study of the revolutionary generation, Joseph Ellis occasionally turned fabulist in the classroom. He garnered suspension from his Mt. Holyoke classroom for regaling students, in his course on the Sixties, with embellishments about his own odyssey during that decade, replete with Vietnam and Civil Rights vignettes.

Stephen Ambrose was America's most popular and prolific historian. His books on World War II, Ike, Nixon, Lewis and Clark, and the transcontinental railroad found a large and appreciative audience. But sleuths recently found passages in the *Wild Blue*, an eloquent paean to World War II aviators, taken verbatim from published materials sans quote marks. Critical scrutiny of other Ambrose books reveals additional departures from the professional canon. One critic concluded that Ambrose presides over a "history-book factory."

It bruises the heart to find Doris Kearns Goodwin embattled. In the 1960s, we both attended Colby College, an institution hospitable to an amalgam of scholarship and idealism. I value an autographed copy of Goodwin's *No Ordinary Time*, awarded a Pulitzer Prize for its magnificent rendering of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt's wartime America. Exemplar of high standards, Goodwin, in 1993, attacked Joe

McGinniss for appropriating her work without proper acknowledgment. Now, amidst revelation of an out of court settlement related to **The Kennedys and the Fitzgeralds**, Goodwin is charged with lapses similar to those she perceived in McGinniss' work.

Alas, for me the debate over intellectual ownership of property is not merely theoretical. This past summer Joseph Dorinson, a friend and professor of history at Long Island University- Brooklyn campus, sent compliments about an article of mine that he read in **Baseball History from Outside the Lines**, an anthology published in 2001 by the University of Nebraska Press and edited by Wichita State University Professor John Dreifort. Since I had no prior contact with either the University of Nebraska Press or Dreifort, I was, to put it euphemistically, surprised that my work could be published without my permission or even knowledge. Then, upon request, the University of Nebraska sent me two complimentary copies of **Baseball History from Outside the Lines**. Upon arrival of the anthology, a fine compendium of articles, I found that Dreifort has deleted all of my endnotes and citations. "I would have thought that the U. of Nebraska Press, or someone," offered Dreifort, "would have contacted you when the permissions were secured for the essays."

Compensation and repute are powerful lures. Temptation may beckon good and talented people to bridge the boundaries of intellectual integrity. Serious offenses may begin with haste and carelessness. We need be vigilant against transgressions of others—and of our own.

## Food For Thought

At last month's food for thought, Gail Malloy from the Benefits Office in Albany, came to explain the open enrollment period for Long Term Care insurance and the benefits of having Catastrophic Major Medical Insurance. Everyone who attended came away with a greater understanding of the issues surrounding Long Term Care and who could benefit from this type of insurance.

## Life Works Explained, 10:00, This Friday, April 19, Bacon Lounge

A presentation by the Family Benefits Committee staff about the new LifeWorks resource and referral service that is now available to all UUP members will be given on the above date.

You have read about it in the Bulletin now come see what it is all about.

Information about Parenting and child care, education, elder care, mid-life and retirement, personal budgeting, and many other everyday family issues.

Anyone can attend.

### *Special Thanks:*

To those that braved the snow storm to travel to Albany on Wednesday, March 10, to represent Oneonta. A group of Oneonta faculty joined about 85 others as they marched on the capitol steps in a effort to draw attention to the lack of funding for SUNY. Thanks to Bill Simons, Christine Bulson, Armand LaPotin, and Fred Miller. To the first three, who rode with me, I want to say thanks for not yelling too loud as we passed the "house on wheels" in less than optimum driving conditions.

## Revision of the Faculty Activity Report

We are still working to revise the FAR, we plan to meet in the next few weeks to discuss the final draft.

Pun intended

1. A bicycle can't stand on its own because it is two-tired
2. What's the definition of a will? (It's a dead giveaway).
3. Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.
4. A backwards poet writes inverse.
5. In democracy it's your vote that counts. In feudalism it's your count that votes.
6. She had a boyfriend with a wooden leg, but broke it off.
7. A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.
8. If you don't pay your exorcist you get repossessed.
9. With her marriage she got a new name and a dress.
10. Show me a piano falling down a mineshaft and I'll show you A-flat minor.