

The Best of The Best

INTERVIEWS BY JULIE GARNER

PHOTOS BY DENNIS WISE

They play racquetball. Were college DJs. Starred in Alice in Wonderland. Love to paraglide, run, cook, write and travel. Here's your chance to meet our TEACHERS of the YEAR.

Yan Bai



It's not something I do any more, but on weekends I used to go out dancing. I liked to free dance especially, just express myself to the sounds. Now, it's cleaning and laundry. But I have a book I want to write: As a teacher I see how culture and language differences affect learning style as well as career goals. I do some work-related reading but I reserve Sunday evenings for fancy footwork in the kitchen. I make a point to prepare a delicious meal for my family, and sometimes we are joined by relatives. My specialty: anything spicy.

Nyan-Ping Bi



Audrey Hepburn. I'd invite her to a fantasy dinner party. Her movies were my window on the Western world when I was growing up in Taiwan. I became interested in linguistics and the power to create energy with words while studying American Lit, in particular, Poe's "The Raven." It truly haunted me. After 30 years of this teaching business, it's the students who keep me young and motivated to go out of my comfort zone. I'm teaching first-year Chinese now, and truly, I feel young at heart.

Catherine Conners

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Who would I invite to dinner? Four Greeks and a Roman— five women poets from ancient times: Sappho, Corinna, Telesilla, Moero and Sulpicia. I'd like to hear the stories they could tell. I like to explore language and language learning by making things myself and with all kinds of students, including middle-schoolers: a little book of "Aesop's Fables" in Latin, board games, comics. It was a Latin teacher I had as a child who started me on this path. At the same time, I starred in "Alice in Wonderland." I still feel that learning a language opens up a new world of wonders.



Cole DeForest

In college I was a boy in the boat, but it was eating up my study time and I was a hard worker in school. In high school, what I studied was science and Japanese. I was a three-time state champion in the Japan Bowl, a quiz competition. Credit Bill Nye, the Science Guy, for inspiring me to become a scientist. I saw him once on a street in Pasadena. Another science-guy influence is Thomas Edison. I see him every day in my lab where a cardboard cutout of the prolific inventor keeps us company. I love the outdoors, especially skiing, camping and mountaineering. Extreme heat is one thing I hate. That and liver.



Linda Martin-Morris

A little cow town outside of Syracuse is where I was born. At Cornell, I spun records for a top-40 radio station, The Voice of the Big Red, where I was criticized for my esoteric playlists. On the flip side, it's also where I met the love of my life. He usually—but not always—wins our Sunday racquetball games. Thirteen years of research made me more poised to be a better teacher. I have become close friends with a number of my students, one of whom I just heard from. He had his first child.



David Masuda

Teach six to nine courses a year and eventually you figure it out. I've tried a lot of novel things in the classroom and some have failed grandly. But I love it when I design a learning event and it goes well (unlike my one-time foray into the restaurant business). Moving on. Weekends you'll find me paragliding or sometimes, as my wife would attest, catching up on work. What I'd like to do is someday become comfortable playing guitar and singing for friends. After all, when I was 5 years old, I wanted to be Roy Rogers.



Sandra Silberstein

Donald Trump saw large numbers of Arabs celebrating in the streets of New Jersey on 9/11. Seemed plausible enough to lots of people, but of course, it never happened. I'm interested in the media discourses around wars and terrorism—what they make plausible. In times of national crisis, there's a rupture that gets filled by media narratives and images. I'm working on coverage of the Boston bombing. Right now I'm mentoring the best crop of graduate students I've ever had. Well, I say that every year about my students. This makes the 34th time I've said it.



Janelle Silva

Running gives me time to think. Early fall is the best time, the smell of the trees, the sight of Mount Rainier at sunrise. To qualify for the Boston Marathon is a goal. I've traveled a lot, 21 countries and counting. Years ago my sister and I went to Paris to see Balzac's house. We got the silly idea from an episode of "Beverly Hills 90210." An inspirational figure for me as a Latina and a teacher is Jaime Escalante. I've watched the movie "Stand and Deliver," which is based on him, many times. I know all the words.



Wendy Thomas

When I was a little girl and asked my parents a question, the answer would always involve the scientific method. Mom had a Ph.D. in biochem and dad in bioengineering. I followed along, studied molecular biomechanics. Outside the lab and away from my computer, I like to work in my garden, or anything that keeps me moving. I cycle a lot now, but in high school I was a runner. I ran a sub-5 minute mile as a Garfield freshman. In retirement, I'd like to have a greenhouse. And an automatic garage door opener for my bike.



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Ulrike Gendron says:

August 13, 2016 at 3:27 am

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Hey there, You've done a fantastic job. I will certainly digg it and in my opinion recommend to my friends. I am confident they'll be benefited from this site.

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