1,000 yards in a single season. Two weeks earlier, with 103 yards against Dartmouth, Dawson had eclipsed the career record of 3,330 yards rushing set by Menick in 1999. Having finished the season with 266 career points, Dawson now holds the all-time Harvard scoring record. The old record of 215 points was set by Charlie Brickley ’15. Dawson’s 42 career touchdowns are also a new Harvard record.

Triple threat: Dawson accounted for the team’s longest rushing play of the season (58 yards against Penn), its longest reception (52 yards against Lehigh); and its longest kickoff return (92 yards against Dartmouth).

Patriot act: In three non-Ivy games against Patriot League teams, Harvard came from behind to defeat Holy Cross, 31-21; lost to Lehigh, 49-24; and topped Lafayette, the eventual league co-champion, 24-17.

The Crimson led Lehigh, 17-14, early in the third period, but the Mountain Hawks forced five second-half turnovers and scored four unanswered touchdowns, turning a close game into an embarrassing rout. The loss ended a 13-game Harvard winning streak.

At Lafayette, O’Hagan threw three scoring passes, two of them to Kelly Widman, and the defense held the Leopard ground game to 43 yards rushing.

Ball hawk: Alternating at linebacker and safety, senior Robert Balkema emerged as a defensive star of high magnitude. In the 55-7 win at Columbia—in which the Lions were held to minus-14 yards rushing—he was credited with two quarterback sacks, two forced fumbles, and an eight-yard interception return for the team’s fourth touchdown. With 38 tackles among them, Balkema and linebackers Thomas, Tully, and Adam Miller ’07 led the defense against Yale.

Postseason laurels: For the third year running, Clifton Dawson was a unanimous first-team all-Ivy selection. Matt Thomas, defensive tackle Mike Berg, and offensive linemen Will Johnson ’06 and Brian Laplham ’06 were other first-team choices. Dawson received the Crocker Award as the team’s most valuable player. Thomas, of Silver Spring, Maryland, and Currier House, will captain the 2006 squad. A government concentrator, he has been the team’s top defensive player for the past two seasons.

Bragging rights: Since the formalization of Ivy League play 50 years ago, Harvard now leads Yale, 26-23-1. The Crimson also has winning records against Brown, Columbia, Dartmouth, and Penn. It’s even-up with Cornell and Princeton at 24-24-2. Harvard has never before had a season in which it defeated both Ivy and Patriot League titlists.

“All over now, Baby Blue.” Tailback Clifton Dawson had much to celebrate after scoring the winning touchdown in Harvard’s 30-24 triple-overtime victory over Yale. The Crimson’s all-time rushing leader, Dawson has gained 432 yards in three outings against Yale.

Viola Canales ’79, J.D. ’89, grew up in a close-knit, highly religious community in the south Texas border town of McAllen, when it was at least 80 percent Mexican American. Entering first grade, she still did not know English. “My grandmother lived with us and it was considered disrespectful to speak English at home,” she explains. “At school the teacher only spoke English. If you were caught speaking Spanish, even on the playground, you were sent to the principal’s office.”

She picked up the language by third grade, loved to read, and grew into such an exceptional student that by age 15 she had earned a scholarship to the “predominantly white” world of St. Stephen’s Episcopal boarding school in Austin. It was a dramatic move away from her family, its strong Latino identity, and “a sense that you did things not for yourself but for the community,” Canales says. “St. Stephen’s is a terrific school and I got a wonderful education. But at prep school, the emphasis is much more on the individual, on building character, and on getting into the right school. It’s an interesting juxtaposition with the culture I was raised in.”

To combat terrible homesickness, Canales began writing down her experiences growing up—some of which appear in her debut novel, The Tequila Worm, published in August by Wendy Lamb Books/Random House. “I write to make sense of things, to understand life,” she says. “It is really about connecting to spiri-
tuality and is part and parcel of an activity like meditation and prayer, which I also do.” The Tequila Worm is a coming-of-age story told by its young narrator, Sofia (who earns a scholarship to the fictional St. Luke’s Episcopal school and faces el otro mundo—another world). “Even though this is a story of a Mexican-American girl,” she says of her work, “it is talking about people who are poor and who have come from outside communities, and about how the majority of society sees them and what they do with their rituals and traditions. We are so tired of stories of gangs and drugs. Tequila Worm really celebrates the positive side of our culture—the family, the spirituality, the food, and the music.”

At 48, Canales has held many jobs: U.S. Army captain, litigator, federal business administrator, and recruiter for women and minority CEOs. But it is in writing fiction, which she now does full time, that she feels most empowered to improve young lives. “If we don’t, as Asians, African Americans, and Latinos, pass our stories amongst each other and down to our kids, we’re going to lose the kids,” she says. “We are already losing many of them at around 12 and 13; they drop out of school, join gangs, get pregnant, et cetera. Stories need to be told; they anchor us.”

Fittingly, her novel opens with a visit from Doña Clara, a storyteller who travels through the barrios of the Rio Grande Valley strengthening young Mexican-Americans’ ties to their past. In the last four years, Canales herself, who now lives in Stanford, California, has traveled extensively to schools, colleges, libraries, and community centers to talk about The Tequila Worm and her short-story collection, Orange Candy Slices and Other Secret Tales (2001). Last fall, she was a featured author at the Texas Book Festival and at a literacy conference in Mission, Texas, where she visited schools—the pupils, she says, “were very excited that the books were talking about what they know”—and stayed with her mother, who still lives in McAllen. Some of the children she meets come from extremely poor communities and have never visited a bookstore, much less met an author. She tells them about the richness of roots and about not knowing English in first grade: “that I cried every morning before going to school, for this was so overwhelming, confusing, but that I had gone on and accomplished things that were important to me. And that they can, too.”

She meets with Anglo audiences as well. At one Texas reading for The Tequila Worm, a group of women “were saying the most striking things, such as, ‘I know there are a lot of Mexicans in Austin, but I did not really understand the richness of the culture—and now I am feeling culture envy.’ Culture envy,” Canales repeats. “That is where I want to go with this. I want people to weep for the destruction of the Ninth Ward in New Orleans and to weep for the music lost, the recipes, the warmth and the magic lost, the creativity gone. I want them to feel the same appreciation for the Mexican-American culture...because we don’t want to go to the Smithsonian and see exhibits about how the Indians lived. We want to keep these communities alive. The future is not just about making everybody white.”

She also wrote Sofia’s story of spiritual growth for white America. “Visualizing a better world for everyone is important to me; it is part of spiritualism. In America, people are like the Christmas trees that are dead and then they put ornaments on themselves and say ‘Look at me, look at me!’” she explains. “America is great at innovation and making gadgets, but where people really need to work is on their spiritual sides.”

The intense faith and mysticism that surrounded Canales as a child turns up in The Tequila Worm: saints and the Virgin of Guadalupe are spoken to like family members; people sing and dance in the graveyard to celebrate the Día de los Muertos; and a curandera cures her sister of susto (shock) after a car accident. “That really happened to my sister. And a curandera cured me when I had trouble with my eyes as a girl,” Canales says. “A curandera is a healer who, through herbs and prayer and ritual, cures people. It’s a way of conjuring up a state of mind where psychologically you open yourself up to being healed. It’s a childlike view of faith that most people would laugh at or mock, but it is a state of mind, a way of interpreting the world, that is part of a living faith that gives people strength and hope every day.”

And there are endless rituals, ranging from the intricate creation of the Christmas nacimiento—
the nativity scene—to the simple household task of preparing pinto beans. “I loved sitting and cleaning beans with Papa,” Sofia tells the reader. “He told me secrets about beans, how they were better than meat, how they were like us, mestizos—the pale part Spanish, the brown spots pure Indian.” For Canales, who did the same thing as a girl, the ritual still raises memories of her late father. “It is very powerful,” she says. “When Catholics are asked what attracts them to Mass, they say the chimes, the flickering candles, the incense. It is conjuring up the other—the spiritual or supernatural or the holy—and bringing the spiritual into the physical. We need more rituals.”

Such traditions can offer a path of survival in the face of hardship—and racism. A girl taunts Sofia as a “taco head” because her lunch lacks American sandwiches. At boarding school, another student challenges her: “Don’t you think Mexicans are obsessed with death?” and pieces of her dorm-room altar are stolen only to appear, embarrassingly, as people enter the school chapel for an Episcopal service.

“Texas is a place of haves and have-nots,” Canales says. Her mother grew up in a family of migrant farm workers and told stories of sleeping in rat-infested warehouses, of not being served in a restaurant because she was Mexican, of a boy’s head being crushed under a truck’s wheel because nobody knew he was there. Alongside the richness and love in her culture, Canales also absorbed these bleaker messages. Prep school represented “what else was out there,” she explains. “I wanted to help my community, to help my family, by kicking things in my way. There were four of us on scholarship and we were the hope of our families. My grandmother, whom I shared a room with growing up, made me feel, through her stories and her care, that I was very much loved, that I was wonderful. And the economy and politics were all saying something else: that as Mexicans we were poor and inferior. I wanted to bust through that.”

Canales says her father was thrilled when she went to Harvard because John F. Kennedy had gone there; it was the only thing he knew about the university. Yet she was restless as an undergraduate and left twice in search of “adventures.” (During one summer she worked as an organizer with the United Farm Workers union.) The second time she left Harvard was to complete officers’ training at Fort Benning; she was later stationed on the border of what was then West Germany and also worked on the Hawk and Patriot missile systems. Returning to Harvard, she concentrated in government and graduated in 1986. Her next step, the law degree, would help her improve “equality and opportunity for everybody, whatever their culture or race or gender,” she explains. “I feel peoples’ lives are about evolving and finding their don—a supernatural gift that everybody has that’s used for the good of a whole community—and being given a chance to give their gift.”

After graduation, she joined O’Melveny & Myers in Los Angeles, where she worked for the commission that investigated the Los Angeles police department after the beating of Rodney King. In 1994 the Clinton administration appointed her a regional administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA); she helped guarantee $3 billion in loans annually in California, Nevada, Arizona, Hawaii, and Guam.

“It was a thrilling job because I believe what Jesse Jackson said about the last leg of civil rights being equity,” she says. “It was returning to the communities and trying to help women and minorities start and grow businesses.” It was also frustrating. “The legal profession, the business profession, the military: they all reflect what the dominant society says about power—i.e., it favors white men,” she explains. “I saw this at the SBA. Every year the government buys with taxpayers’ money about $200 billion in products or services from tanks to pencils, and over and over again these contracts go mostly to the same people, even though we have a program to help women and minorities learn how to get federal contracts. I would go and talk with all of these people and many of them could not get a contract.”

Some of them, especially those of the younger generation, became demoralized and dropped out of the process. “I feel that for there to be [societal] change, we have to go back to step one and ask, ‘How do we build self-esteem? How do we feel we are equal, too? How do you face the world for there to be [societal] change, we have to go back to step one and ask, ‘How do we build self-esteem? How do we feel we are equal, too? How do you face the world” she says. “I feel that through writing I work on a different level with people, work on a subconscious level, to help them transcend limitations, scripts, stereotypes...Changing consciousness is done..."
The Oldest Ever?

Walter Seward, LL.B. ’24, turned 109 in October, making him the oldest living—and longest lived—Harvard alumnus known. He was born in Toledo, Ohio, on October 13, 1896, while Grover Cleveland was president. What accounts for his longevity? “I’m still trying to figure that out,” says Seward with characteristic flair. His daughter has attributed his old age to consistent exercise. “Oh yes, I’ve got to do that everyday,” he agrees. “I can’t sit still. If I didn’t exercise, I know I’d become something made of plastic.” Seward, who lives in his own home in West Orange, New Jersey, last visited the law school on August 23, 2004—which Dean Elena Kagan declared Walter Seward Day—to celebrate his then-forthcoming 108th birthday.


Alumni Networks

Crimson Compass, a new on-line alumni career network developed by the HAA to replace Professional Connection, is available for free to all alumni and current students of the University. So far, about 15,000 alumni from a wide range of fields have signed up as advisers; the HAA encourages more alumni to offer mentoring services and asks those who participated in Professional Connection to update their listings.

The system is accessible through www.post.harvard.edu (click on “Alumni Services” and then on “Professional Connection” or “Crimson Compass”) or visit www.post.harvard.edu/olc/membersonly/HAA/networking. Users can type in search criteria and obtain the names of alumni to whom they may send e-mail messages.

Olympic Fever

“Harvard in the olympics,” an alumni college offered by the HAA and the Harvard Varsity Club, features alumni discussing their Olympic experiences. The day-long event on January 21 is at the Harvard Varsity Club, features alumni college offered by the HAA and the Harvard Varsity Club, features alumni discussing their Olympic experiences. The day-long event on January 21 is at the Harvard Varsity Club, features alumni discussing their Olympic experiences. The day-long event on January 21 is at the Harvard Varsity Club, features alumni discussing their Olympic experiences. The day-long event on January 21 is at the Harvard Varsity Club, features alumni discussing their Olympic experiences. For further information and registration, call 617-495-1920 or visit http://post.harvard.edu/olympics.