

Colby



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From the Editor

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Colby College

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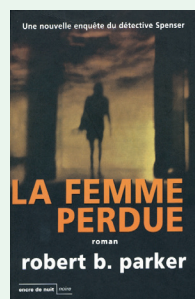
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In the cynical view of newspaper reporters, a story is sometimes defined as something that happens to your editor. I may be proving that true, but still I want to add something to the obituary in this issue for Robert B. Parker '54.

Parker, of course, was the best-selling writer known widely as the creator of the wise-cracking Boston P.I., Spenser. The author of more than 70 books, "Ace" Parker, as he was known at Colby, made his monumental mark in the world of crime fiction. He also kindly assisted another Colby alum, *moi* (more French later) to make a smaller mark.

I was a reporter some 20 years ago when I heard that Parker was speaking at Colby. I proceeded to ask him some carefully constructed hypothetical questions about a fledgling writer who had written a mystery novel. Parker, penetrating my smokescreen like Spenser sees through lying crooks, replied: "Don't show your manuscript to your mother, your best friend, or your girlfriend. Get it to a professional who can tell you if it's publishable."

I did, the book was published, and a couple of years later, I was back. This time I sent Parker my second manuscript and said I was looking for a good literary agent. He wrote back a nice note with the name, address, and phone number of his agent. His message: "Tell her I sent you." I did, was signed, and went on writing.



He was generous in addition to having a gift for witty dialogue. But don't take my word for it.

I had an interesting conversation about Parker with French Professor Arthur Greenspan, who, in addition to teaching Colby students, knows American crime novels. It turns out Greenspan translates detective fiction for French publishers. "I've done a lot of [renowned noir writer] James M. Cain," Greenspan said. He's also translated a lot of Parker.

Greenspan talked about the challenge of translating American slang and the difficulty of translating the blackness of the dialogue of Spenser's sidekick, Hawk. Rather than just translating, the translator has to look for new expressions to convey emotions and observations, and all with the goal of prose that is as seamless as the original. "It should just flow," Greenspan said. And Parker? "He's quite easy to translate," Greenspan said, "because the voices are so clear."

One of the remarkable voices in 20th-century American crime fiction may be stilled, but the clear voices Robert B. Parker created will endure.

Gerry Boyle '78, P'06
Managing Editor

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P. 60) is majoring in biology and ethical genetics (an independent, interdisciplinary major). She will enter a premed post-baccalaureate program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro this fall. Faustin grew up in a Creole-speaking household. Her family lives in both Brooklyn, N.Y., and Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Aileen Evans '12 ("In the Footsteps of the

Holocaust," P. 12) is a human development and French studies double major. Evans is involved with Colby Cares About Kids (CCAK) and is a research assistant for Assistant Professor of French Audrey Brunetaux. She is from San Francisco, Calif., and spent a semester in Dijon, France. Evans will study in Senegal next fall.