

Krista Margot Smith '86

Krista Smith graduated from Colorado College in 1986 with a degree in English. In 1989, she joined *Vanity Fair* magazine in New York as a freelance fact checker, literally starting at the bottom, working out of a basement office, and subsequently moved up from that position to become associate research editor and then features associate in 1990. In 1993, under the leadership of Editor Graydon Carter, Kristin relocated to Los Angeles to become *Vanity Fair's* West Coast editor, a position she currently holds. As I go down this list of stellar accomplishments, I am reminded of Krista's ironic counterpart, the Rolling Stones' "Under-assistant West Coast Promotion Man." Unlike Krista Smith, that poor shlump never made it into the big time, although he was the subject of a great song. Krista Smith has, on the other hand, risen meteorically in her West Coast endeavors. For starters, she has written cover stories for the magazine, including articles and interviews with Naomi Watts, Kate Winslet, and Jude Law, and a separate shorter piece on Reese Witherspoon. She seems to know and to have interviewed everyone who is somebody, or about to be somebody. Shades of Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons from a bygone era.

Krista writes a number of articles every month, and has also been involved in organizing cover photo shoots taken for the magazine on the West Coast. In addition to these duties, she represents *Vanity Fair* at several film festivals throughout the year, including the very best: Telluride, Sundance, and Cannes. Additional interview subjects have included Jessica Simpson, Paris Hilton, Monica Lewinsky, and the talented but "sketchy" Drew Barrymore. I began to feel my age when I looked down a list of Krista's recent star profiles and recognized nary a name. I must admit I'm still recovering from Old Blue Eyes and the '60s Rat Pack. The more *au courant* Brat Pack is also a mystery to me. Were they on "Friends?" Is the child-star category, which Krista also covers, called the Gnat Pack? Crime film stars, the Gat Pack? The possibilities, as you can see, are limitless. It's Tinsel Town, folks, and we love it.

One of Krista's important responsibilities at the magazine is to organize the *Vanity Fair* Oscar Party each year. She is, as you can see, red-carpet ready and extraordinarily well-connected in the L.A. entertainment industry. Colorado College is grateful to Krista, who has recently begun actively pursuing visits to the college by high profile Hollywood directors and writers to teach blocks at CC. This will be a wonderful opportunity for our students to learn from the best in the business. In the past such distinguished Hollywood directors as Paul Mazursky and the late, great Sydney Pollock, both of whose daughters attended the college, have worked with our students and taught film courses at CC. Krista will help us to continue that venerated tradition.

In many respects, Krista Smith, no one-trick pony she, is a characteristic "liberal arts story," as there are so many things that she does so exceptionally well. She is a stellar example and role model to our current students, and all of you would-be stars and Hollywood "players" will I hope get a chance to meet her before she heads back to the Dream Factory. We are delighted to honor a distinguished Colorado College alumna and one of the best and brightest of Hollywood's leading lights, Krista Margot Smith.

— John Simons

Marc Evan Acito '90

Marc Acito's career is not easy to summarize in a few paragraphs. One must move gingerly through his home page, blogs, essays, radio commentaries, plays and books (which are purportedly semi-autobiographical) and live dramatic and musical performances and then try to pull a synopsis together. We then see a career of many trajectories, a product of his electric personality. But in reality, his personality, talent, and intelligence are focused on social and artistic commentaries that are consistent, truthful, and enjoyable for those who know him or are lucky enough to read, see, and hear the products of his creative force.

Marc was born in Bayonne, New Jersey, and grew up in nearby Westfield as, "the small-town star of high school and summer camp musicals. Y'know, the guy who wore Capezio dance shoes and leg warmers to school. In my defense, it was the 1980s." (Marcacito.com). After two years in Carnegie Mellon's performing arts program, he transferred to Colorado College and was graduated — *cum laude* and *Phi Beta Kappa* — in 1990 as a drama major. While here he performed continuously, studied drama and music, as well as biology, physics, German, linguistics, etc. He was a genuine flower of the liberal arts and enriched the lives of all of us who were in his audiences. He earned a prestigious Watson Fellowship after graduation and spent a year studying singing in Europe. After that he pursued a career in opera, earning roles with companies such as Seattle Opera, Opera Ireland, and the Colorado Opera Festival.

He soon realized that his interests were turning more and more to writing. He began his professional career with a column titled, "The Gospel According to Marc" which originally appeared in 19 alternative newspapers. One commentator dubbed him "the gay Dave Barry." In a subsequent meeting with Barry, Mark reports that the celebrity writer "looked him in the eye and said 'Let's just get one thing clear: I'm the gay Dave Barry.'" Before long, he was publishing more articles and essays in national media such as *The New York Times*, doing spoken commentaries for National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* and *Live Wire Radio*, and eventually writing books. Most recently he has become a regular contributor to AOL's financial site, *walletpop.com*, writing "The Upside," a positive look at the recession.

His first book — "How I Paid for College: A Novel of Sex, Theft, Friendship and Musical Theater" — was published by Broadway Books in 2004 and won the Oregon Book Awards' Ken Kesey Award for the Novel. As Marc points out, he "sometimes leaves out the Oregon part to make it sound more important." It was also selected as a Top Ten Teen Pick by the American Library Association and *The New York Times* chose it as an Editor's Choice. It has been optioned for film by Columbia Pictures and has been translated into five languages.

The New York Times' interest in a sequel was rewarded in 2008 with the appearance of "Attack of the Theater People." This book continues with some of the same characters who appear in "How I Paid for College. . ." but takes them into the next phase of their lives.

Last fall, the Artist Repertory Theater in Marc's home city of Portland, Oregon, produced his first play, titled "Holidazed" (co-written with C. S. Whitcomb). The work examines the joys and pains of Christmas.

Marc's success as a writer has been balanced by two other important facets of his talent and character. First, he continues to sing and to do his own version of the "one-man-show" in which he comments on many important issues facing the world. In Summer 2005, he came to CC for a presentation that brilliantly mixed song, story, and message. He returned with a more contemporary performance in the summer of 2008, when he helped inaugurate the opening of the Cornerstone South Theater

He has also been a model in his own life for the right to free choice in sexual practice. He is married to his partner of many years, Floyd Sklover, and has represented the outed male with dignity and pride in his work for his entire professional career. In his professional career as a performer and singer, a radio commentator, and widely read writer, he has been highly successful. In his personal career as a human being who is sensitive to human dignity and personal rights, he is a beacon of hope for many. I am honored to present him for the Doctorate of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.

— Michael Grace

Tijani R. "T. J." Cole '87

T. J. Cole graduated from Colorado College in 1987 with a degree in political science. He went on to earn his M.A. from the University of Nevada-Reno, a Ph.D. from LaSalle University, and a J.D. from the University of Denver College of Law. He is the juvenile and family court magistrate for the 20th Judicial District in Boulder, Colo., since 1993, and also an adjunct professor at Metro State College in Denver. As a CC student, he was Black Student Union president, a Van Diest Award recipient in football, and a MEChA project coordinator. He has coached the Metro State club football team, and served on the CC National Alumni Council Minority Concerns Committee (1988-91). He was head coach for the Colorado Springs Flames (1994), was featured in "9 Who Care" on Denver's Channel 9 (1997), received the Denver Community Award for work with juveniles (1997), the Beyond the Gavel award (1998), the I Have a Dream Foundation of Boulder Award (2001), and was Magistrate Award recipient of the Colorado Judicial Institute in 2003, especially noted as an "innovator for new programs and helping to improve the judiciary." He is co-founder of Boulder Prep High School, Justice High School, and Zoubida Cole Junior College — so named in honor of his parent. He is the author of three books and lectures widely.

T. J. Cole is particularly known for his innovations in developing outreach programs for high school students. He started an at-risk high school in the courthouse and has helped hundreds of delinquent students graduate and go on to college. T. J. Cole's career combines his grounding in classical liberal arts education with a distinguished record in public service and as an educator. For all these accomplishments we are proud to present him for the degree Doctor of Laws, *Honoris Causa*.

— Timothy Fuller