PACIFIC PORTRAITS

The People Behind the Scenes at Pacific University

VOLUME 1
Pacific Portraits: The People Behind the Scenes at Pacific University (Volume One)

Photographs by Cailyn Andreasen, Bronson Barretto, Malia Bartolome, Stephanie Bultman, Chloe Chambers, Cameron Chow, Anastasiya DeWolf, Emily Farnham, Caleb McGee, Emily Miller, Mahla Nelson, Carrie Ann Randolph, Marie Rewick, Lauren Tierney.


Cover and interior design by Emily Coats
Interior layout by Pacific University Students

Published by Pacific University Libraries 2015

© Authors 2015
All rights reserved

ISBN-13 978-0-9884827-6-0

Pacific University Libraries
2043 College Way
Forest Grove, Oregon 97116

www.pacificu.edu/libraries

Published in the United States of America

Bee Tree Books
An imprint of the Pacific University Libraries

Our treasure lies in the beehive of our knowledge. We are perpetually on the way thither, being by nature [...] honey gatherers of the mind.
Friedrich Nietzsche

The “Bee Tree”, an iconic ivy-covered tree that stood on the Pacific University campus for many years, was already old and hollow when pioneer Tabitha Brown arrived in Oregon in 1846. Mrs. Brown started a home for orphans that would grow into Pacific University. According to the Forest Grove News-Times, the tree was “said to have housed a swarm of bees who furnished the little old lady with honey which she sold to buy provisions for her orphan children.”
Outside of the Campus Public Safety building, the officers argue over who would win in a fight—Spider-Man or Batman. Jerry Rice, the supervisor, wearing the standard CPS jacket with a badge stitched to the fabric, stands against the brick wall and shoots pretend webs from his hands. The other officer pulls his Kevlar vest down to show us a Batman t-shirt underneath—his secret identity just one layer deep.

Earlier, in the CPS headquarters—a one-room trailer drenched in beige paint from linoleum to ceiling, blinds drawn, cobwebbed baseball player bobblehead neglected atop a cabinet in the corner—Jerry tells me his origin story.

“Ever since I was a teenager, I always wanted to be in law enforcement.” He relaxes his shoulders into the chair, sips on a protein shake. “Due to different factors, that didn’t happen, but this job did. And this is kinda the best of both worlds because you get to help people.”

Jerry has been working in campus safety at Pacific University for over fifteen years. Every day, he wakes up, makes the two minute walk to work from his home on University Avenue, updates procedures and officer schedules, orders supplies, attends impromptu meetings—mostly about parking, the “bane of his existence”—and solves crises, such as an FBI-verified security threat at a recent lecture on campus.

Before getting promoted to supervisor a few years ago, Jerry worked as a regular officer. He performed routine patrols around campus, acted as a visual deterrent against crime, and sometimes, put himself in danger for the safety of his students.

“Probably the scariest interaction was back when I was an officer. It was about five in the morning on a week day, and someone was trying to get into the main entrance door of Walter Hall. It turned out to be a local community member, high on meth. He was really amped up and all over the place, mindwise,” Jerry says behind the desk.

But when I ask him about the challenges he faces in his job, he says
nothing of the threat of danger, the fear of a particular violence that has scarred many colleges of late. No. The major challenge he faces stems from those he has sworn to protect — the students.

“Most people think of us as the bastard stepchild, the unnecessary evil, the guys who bust us, who don’t let them party, who don’t let them drink. But that’s part of our education processes. At a university, I believe everyone here, not just faculty, are here to educate the students,” Jerry says, his face motionless, his words detailed and careful like a police report.

All of this changes when he talks about Spider-Man.

A week after I met him, Jerry holds a framed cover art of Spider-Man fighting Carnage and Venom up to the light. The frame is plastered with retro comic clippings — acrobatics, punches, webshots, the words “Stan Lee Presents” sprawled along one side. We stand in the living room of his home. Stacks of comic books lay scattered across the coffee table as though he’d sifted through them the night before, handpicking rare issues from a collection that once numbered over 2600. Jerry points out all of the details in the Spider-Man cover art, how the original artist signed it for him at the Portland Comic-Con a few years ago, how his wife set it into the frame, pasted the comic clippings on, then wrapped the whole thing up as a Christmas present.

He smiles. “The thing that marks me outside of work is my comics. Basically anything Spider-Man. You had Amazing Spider-Man, Spectacular Spider-Man, Spider-Man Team-up, Web of Spider-Man.” After returning the frame to the wall in the center of the living room, Jerry removes the Scrabble box off of the kitchen table and starts to display the highlights of his comic collection. One by one a Watchmen anthology, Absolute Dark Knight, The Road to Civil War, Wolverine #1, Spider-Man #1 in both black and yellow covers, The World Around Us series, some Archie’s. His most valuable issue — Giant-Size X-men #1 — is estimated to be worth sixteen hundred dollars. He shows me his Manga — Soul Eater, Pumpkin Scissors, Blade of the Immortal. When he’s finished, the table is covered, and he still grips another stack of comics.

Jerry started collecting comics when he was eight years old. His first time in a comic book shop he spent over an hour assembling a thick pile of books that he presented to his mom with a “shit-eating grin” on his face. For the next month, he pored over the superheroes until their stories had been consumed, then begged his mom to return to the shop. When he explains this to me, I see something in him I had never seen before. A feeling in his eyes — the touch of soft paper to skin, the smell of a cover, memories of masked heroes defeating crime beneath the bedsheets.

“As a teenage boy, I could’ve seen myself as Peter Parker. Definitely a
geek.” Jerry smiles again at the frame on his wall. It’s the pride of his home. He places one hand over his mouth. “You know, Spider-Man puts on the persona of Spider-Man, but he’s actually Peter Parker. The old school Spider-Man didn’t even have web capabilities from his body because he was a scientist, an engineer, that sort of thing.” I stare at the silver badge stitched into Jerry’s jacket. It’s small, the size of a nametag, yet I can’t imagine its absence. It covers the heart.

After some time, we leave his home. Jerry keeps his collection on the kitchen table, on display for no one. In the cold, we cross University Avenue, past the Pacific welcome sign, past the throngs of students walking to class, their eyes mesmerized by cellphones, their own stories.

Where the concrete path splits off toward the CPS office, I shake Jerry’s hand. His face has hardened, that smile replaced with nothing at all. His eyes scan the lawn between McCormick and Walter, pausing on a flock of students, some vehicles parked across the street.

Again he’s an officer.

But if you stripped off that mask, you’d know how, on a work-study job, he encountered a ghost named Vera in Knight Hall, how he started as an Exercise Science student at Pacific but later switched to Sociology because he couldn’t pass Chemistry, how he reads Naruto and Watchmen and lives next to the party houses and owns an entire bookshelf of comics and defends Spider-Man over Batman in arguments with other officers.

Jerry crosses the path between Walter and McCormick. Hands shoved in pockets, shoulders hunched, weaving through students. Before long, I can only see the red and black pattern of another officer on patrol. The CPS badge on his jacket, the plastic earpiece jammed in his ear.

Then I watch the students, hoping for someone else to open his cover.