



CARRIE QUINNEY PHOTO

History professor Barton Barbour, wearing mountain man regalia, stands near the Idaho State Historical Museum's Pioneer Village with a copy of his new book.

# ON THE TRAIL OF A LEGEND

History professor Barton Barbour searches for the real Jedediah Smith

It was summer of 2003 and Barton Barbour was driving across the vast, brutal expanse of the Mojave Desert. Heat waves shimmered skyward from the desert floor as the mercury rose to unbearable heights.

From the comfort of his air-conditioned car, he imagined traveling through that hostile terrain on foot, with only a few comrades and a packhorse for

company, on a trailblazing journey from Bear Lake, Utah, to Southern California.

In this case, imagination failed him. "When you

step out of your car into that heat, even for a moment, it's impossible," he said.

Barbour, a history professor at Boise State University who focuses his research on the culture of the mountain men and the fur trade, was on the trail of early 19th century explorer and trapper Jedediah Smith. According to the few available facts, Smith was killed by Comanche Indians in 1831 in the plain near the Cimarron River in modern-day Kansas as he was searching for water.

Barbour's book, *Jedediah Smith: No Ordinary Mountain Man*, chronicles the exploits of this larger-than-life figure in detail. Not only was Smith the first white man to travel overland to California via the Southwest, he also roamed through more of the West than any of his peers.

According to Barbour, Smith is among the top mountain men and adventurers of all time in North American history. "Jedediah Smith is important as an explorer and also for his map-making and journaling," Barbour said. "These features make him compelling and also allow for the study of his life. Most explorers, like Kit Carson or Jim Bridger, were illiterate and wrote nothing."

That's not to say Smith left an extensive literary trail. His journal entries are brief but do give important clues to his activities. And while his original maps have yet to be found, much cartographic evidence from that era only could have come from Smith's painstakingly detailed documents.

"There is enough information from his writings to allow a look into his mind – a very unusual exercise for a Western history character," Barbour said.

Barbour spent 10 years researching the book, which opens with an account of how Smith most likely died, then backtracks to his early life and extensive career, including his travels throughout the West, his dealings with Native Americans and his interaction with Mexican officials in California and Hudson's Bay administrators in Oregon.

In addition to retracing Smith's Mojave journey, Barbour traveled up the coast to San Francisco and the inland valley, north to the Umpqua River, east to Fort Vancouver, then down to Idaho.

"The trip gave me a better sense of the landscape and added color to my writing," Barbour

said. "There are a lot of remarkable landscape changes along that route."

Barbour admits that he long has been a fan of the intrepid explorer, whose life, he says, is intimidating and defies belief.

"The sheer magnitude of his adventures is very unusual and so are the achievements of his life," he said. "He is the discoverer of the South Pass, the first man known to have led a party

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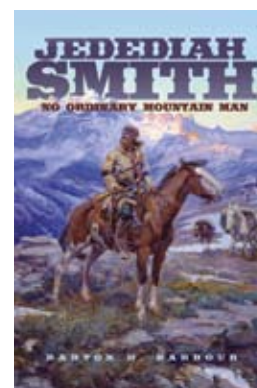
– History professor Barton Barbour

across the Great Basin to California, the first man to have crossed from California back to Utah and the first known to have walked from San Francisco to the Columbia River. And he was the most competent cartographer of all the mountain men."

But Barbour's book doesn't just deal with where Smith went and what he did. It strives to give the reader a more meaningful glimpse of the explorer's life and how he affected those around him – both fellow adventurers and those interested in his discoveries.

The book, part of the Oklahoma Western Biographies Series published by the University of Oklahoma Press, will be used to supplement other texts in history classes and seminars across the U.S., as well as by Western scholars and casual historians eager for more information on this legendary figure. More than 800 copies of the book had been sold before a single review was published in scholarly journals, a fact that Barbour finds gratifying.

"I knew I was tackling a great character in fur trade history and had to do my very best to create a compelling narrative," he said. "But I knew that Jedediah Smith was much better known than I am, so hitching my star to his coattails would be a great way to reach other people with my creative work." – **Kathleen Tuck** ◆

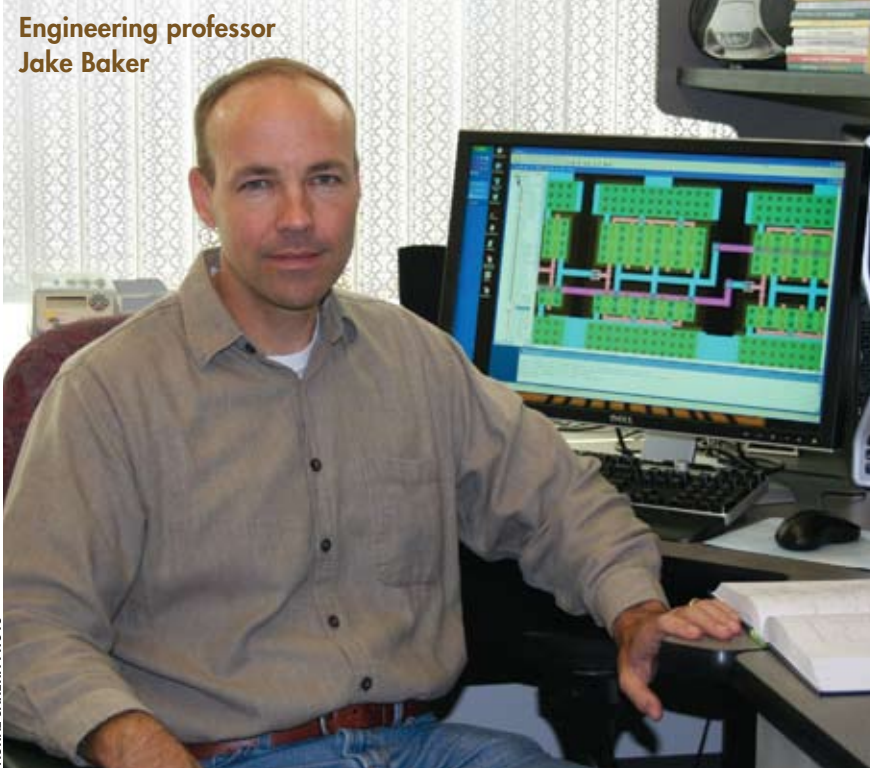


*Jedediah Smith:  
No Ordinary  
Mountain Man*

By Barton H. Barbour

University of Oklahoma  
Press, 2009

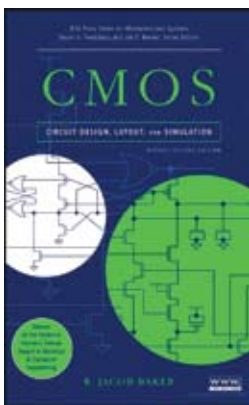
Engineering professor  
Jake Baker



VISHAL SAXENA PHOTO

## A LONG SHELF LIFE FOR JAKE BAKER'S SEMINAL TEXT

Anyone who has studied complementary metal-oxide-semiconductor, or CMOS, technology most likely knows the name R. Jacob Baker. Baker is a professor of electrical and computer engineering at Boise State and author of one of the most widely used books on CMOS in publication today – *CMOS Circuit Design, Layout, and Simulation*.



CMOS technology is used to fabricate integrated circuits used in microelectronics devices from computers to hearing aids, and Baker's book helps students, educators and entrepreneurs understand the processes integral to their design and development. The book's impact is enhanced by its widespread usage as required reading in college engineering classes across the nation and as a standard text on the reference shelves of electrical

engineering firms around the world.

Initially released in 1997 and updated in several editions over the ensuing decade, *CMOS Circuit Design, Layout, and Simulation* has sold more than 50,000 copies in the United States and abroad, making it one of the most successful textbooks

*CMOS Circuit Design,  
Layout, and Simulation*

By R. Jacob Baker

John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1997  
Revised 2nd edition, 2008

ever written on integrated circuit design.

According to Baker, a Web site he developed, CMOSedu.com, has been a significant factor in the book's success. "The site offers support material ranging from instructional videos to solved problems that help students and engineers learn CMOS integrated circuit design," he said. "It has been used by tens of thousands and gets roughly 500 hits a day."

Accolades from reputable electronics publications are plentiful. Baker's seminal text was described as "a worthwhile and practical reference that will hold you for those next 25 years of CMOS challenges," by *Electronic Design*. A reviewer for the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Circuits & Devices recommended Baker's book for use in entry-level digital and analog circuit design classes. And the *IEEE Solid-State Circuits Society Newsletter* noted the book offers "a vital, contemporary view" of CMOS technology.

Baker also is author of *CMOS Mixed-Signal Circuit Design* and shares authorial credit for a popular text on dynamic random access memory, or DRAM, one of the primary products of Boise-based Micron Technology. While being a successful author is gratifying, Baker wrote his first book because he wanted to be better equipped as an educator.

"You see the need for a book with a specific emphasis, for example, one that integrates CMOS circuit design, layout, and simulation in one location," said Baker, who in 2007 received the American Society for Engineering Education's Frederick Emmons Terman Award, which annually recognizes an outstanding electrical engineering educator. "If others agree that there is a need for such a book, then you may have a bestseller on your hands." – Erin Ryan

## CREATIVE ORGANIZATIONS SHARE COMMON GROUND, NAPIER FINDS

Whether on the football field, in a boardroom or backstage, highly successful, creative organizations tend to behave alike. In business professor Nancy Napier's most recent book, *The Creative Discipline: Mastering the Art and Science of Innovation*, she

closes in on how and why.

Co-written with Swedish creativity expert Mikael Nilsson, the book addresses how creativity defies organizational differences, why some organizations are more creative than others, what sets innovative, high-performing organizations apart, and how creativity and innovation can be learned. The authors illustrate six key factors that power creative, high-achieving organizations, and how managers can use them.

Napier studied four Boise-based organizations for her research, including the Boise State football team, ProClarity (now part of Microsoft), Healthwise and The Idaho Shakespeare Festival. She's since expanded her research to encompass eight organizations, including law enforcement

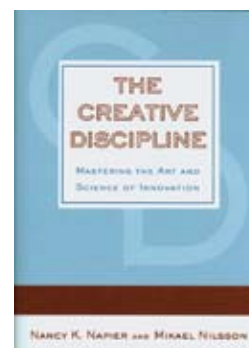
and dance. All are high performers in their fields, objectively measured by rankings, profits or other observable criteria.

The work has led to another book, *Insight: Encouraging Aha! Moments for Organizational Success*, due out this spring. But it also has brought together the eight organizations she refers to as the "Gang" in meaningful ways. Senior leaders meet to discuss "messy problems" faced by all of the organizations, use one another as sounding boards, and are identifying ways to help Boise build an economy that thrives on creativity.

"Economic development binds them," Napier said. "When they

began to talk, they realized they could leverage off of the importance of one another – from employment, to the arts, to sports to a safe community.

"The 'Gang' is a test tube of creative organizations in a test tube city," Napier said. "They will help Boise become known as a global creative hub." – **Sherry Squires** ◆



*The Creative Discipline: Mastering the Art and Science of Innovation*

By Nancy K. Napier and Mikael Nilsson

Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008



Business professor  
Nancy Napier

JOHN KELLY PHOTO

## WIELAND'S NEW NOVEL SET IN OWYHEE DESERT

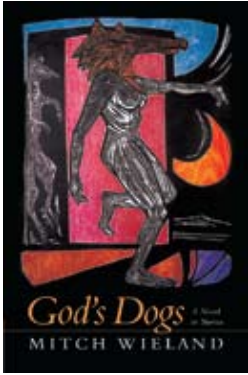
With its stunning vistas and harsh climate, the Owyhee Desert in Southwest Idaho can seem a mythical place. In Mitch Wieland's well-received new novel, *God's Dogs*, the Owyhee Desert also is a place of transparency, where complex emotions are laid bare under the heat of a blazing sun.

"There was something about those endless miles of sage and chaparral that got under my skin," said Wieland, a professor in Boise State's master of fine arts program in creative writing and founding and current editor of the university's literary journal *The Idaho Review*. "I found myself writing these stories because I wanted to capture the powerful sensations I was feeling."

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Written as a series of interconnected short stories, *God's Dogs* brings to life Ferrell Swan, a retired teacher who has fled the shambles of his life in Ohio for Idaho's high desert. Swan moves toward self-acceptance and discovery in the course of the book through visits from his stepson and his ex-wife and occasional contacts with a few reclusive neighbors – including a fellow who lives underground in a storage tank.



*God's Dogs: A Novel in Stories*

By Mitch Wieland

Southern Methodist University Press, 2009

The Owyhee Desert and the wild animals that roam there, including mustangs and coyotes – the “God’s Dogs” of the book’s title – are integral to the stories Wieland weaves. *God’s Dogs* was

praised by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Richard Ford as “fastidious, trenchant, spare and often eloquent. Mitch Wieland’s stories have great breadth, powerful sympathies, and a renewing comprehension of our human selves we only find in the best literature.”

One of the book’s stories, “The Bones of Hagerman” was among only 18 selected for inclusion in the *Best of the West 2009* anthology. Editors reviewed 250 magazines and journals in making their

selections, and Wieland’s story appears alongside the work of famed writers Annie Proulx, Joyce Carol Oates and Louise Erdrich.

*God’s Dogs* is Wieland’s second novel. His first, *Willy Slater’s Lane*, published in 1996, was described as “immensely moving” by *The New York Times* and received starred reviews in *Publisher’s Weekly* and *Booklist*.

Wieland is the recipient of a 2007 Christopher Isherwood Fellowship and two literature fellowships from the Idaho Commission on the Arts. He currently is working on a novel set in Tokyo, where he lived for several years.

– Janelle Brown ◆



English professor  
Mitch Wieland

CARRIE QUINNEY PHOTO

# ILLUMINATING THE WORLD

## Why Humanities Research Matters

By MARK RUDIN

Research, at its core, is a disciplined search for truth. It is the means by which we systematically acquire new knowledge. Research leads to new discoveries, inventions, products, ideas and practices. To be a researcher is to be an explorer, open to possibility, treading new ground.

A definition of research is a good place to begin a discussion of the role the humanities play in intellectual inquiry for a simple reason: It reminds us that research is multi-faceted, broad-based and pretty much involves everything in the world. While there is a tendency to think of research primarily as the domain of the sciences and engineering, it is integral to all disciplines. At Boise State University, our faculty in the humanities are engaged in research and creative activities that are central to the overall strength of our university, the education of our students, and the quality of life in the Treasure Valley, Idaho and farther afield.

Why is humanities research, and its importance, sometimes overlooked? Perhaps because it can appear so different from scientific research that takes place in laboratories or field settings, where sophisticated instruments, experiments and complex calculations are required to pursue the work at hand.

Humanities research may take place in a library basement in a distant country as a history professor sifts through reams of primary source material to bring a heretofore unknown event or person to life and relevance. It may occur in a quiet campus office as a philosophy professor ponders the seminal texts of great civilizations and develops new theories for unanswerable questions. It may be centered in public presentations, outreach and education at locations across Idaho and around the world. Or it may reside in the body of work created by an artist over a span of many years, work that shows a progression of experimentation and insight. Creative pursuits in the arts are akin to other forms of research, requiring the same level of intellectual inquiry, ingenuity and rigor to succeed.

Research in the humanities, like most worthwhile endeavors, seldom yields results quickly. At times, the