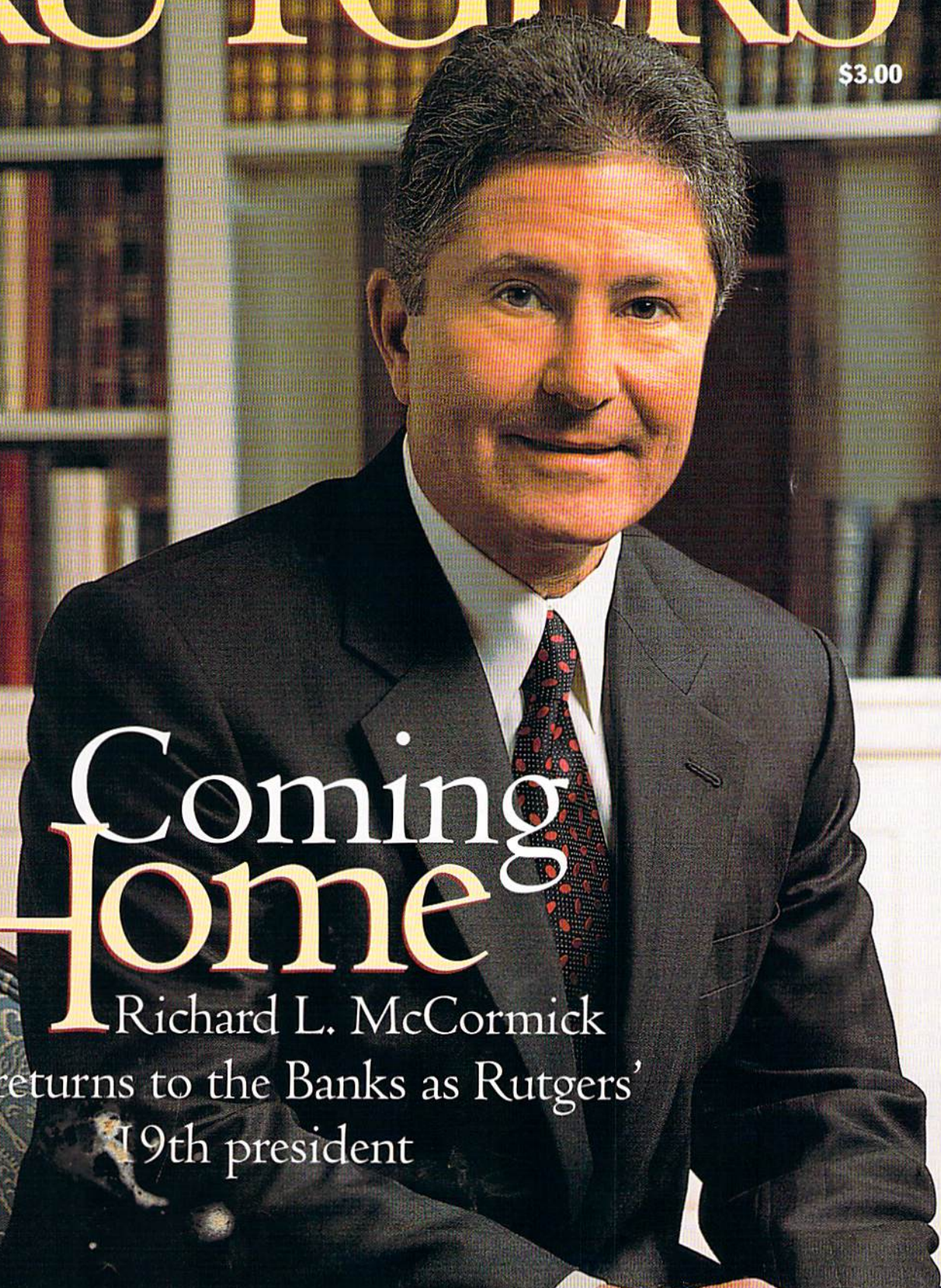


FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS OF NEW JERSEY'S STATE UNIVERSITY

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RUTGERS

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A portrait of Richard L. McCormick, a middle-aged man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a patterned tie. He is seated in a blue patterned chair, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a bookshelf filled with books.

Coming Home

Richard L. McCormick
returns to the Banks as Rutgers'
19th president

Philosophy is No. 1! ♦ "9·11·01" by Rachel Hadas ♦ 7 Outstanding Students



Favorite Son

NEW RUTGERS PRESIDENT
RICHARD L. MCCORMICK
RETURNS TO HIS
ROOTS AT A PIVOTAL JUNCTURE IN
THE UNIVERSITY'S HISTORY. *By Bill Glavin*

The large doors to the elegant board room at Winants Hall slide open with a flourish to reveal the Rutgers Board of Governors and Board of Trustees at a U-shaped mahogany table. They are about to formally and unanimously appoint Richard L. McCormick as Rutgers' 19th president. When McCormick strides through a side door and steps up to the podium, people rise to their feet for a standing ovation, celebrating the end of a successful search that took a dramatic, surprising twist and acknowledging the dawn of a new era in the university's 236-year history.

"Let me tell you from the bottom of my heart how proud I am to accept, and let me tell you how proud I am to be home," McCormick begins. "Becoming president of Rutgers is something I've always thought about; it's a dream come true." He thanks his family—all present and seated behind him—for their support and talks about the strengths of the university and the challenges ahead. "I appreciate the opportunity you've given me to lead," he says in closing. "I do not intend to let you down."

Those words echo what McCormick, 54, said when he was named president of the University of Washington (UW) in 1995. By all accounts, he didn't let UW down, improving on its already considerable stature and earning a reputation as a tireless, effective leader. "A lot of people are visionaries, but Dick had the guts that go along with vision," UW's governing board president Gerald Grinstein tells a large audience on McCormick's last day there. "Dick has had a profound impact on this university and the one thing I'll always remember about him is something that Edison said, 'Invention is 99 percent perspiration and 1 percent inspiration.' Dick is the hardest-working person I have ever encountered." As McCormick leaves the podium, Provost and new Interim President Lee Huntsman remarks, "That will be a hard act to follow."

McCormick, the leading candidate in Rutgers' eight-month search for its next president, pulled out of the process on September 30, days before the release of a report recommending the revamping of higher education in

IN CONVERSATIONS
AROUND THE FAMILY
DINNER TABLE, RICHARD P.
AND KATHERYNE
MCCORMICK TAUGHT
THEIR SON TO LISTEN TO
ALL POINTS OF VIEW.

New Jersey. The board of governors subsequently suspended the search and named former Rutgers-Newark Provost Norman Samuels as acting president. Lloyd Gardner, Beard Professor of History Emeritus and vice chair of the presidential search committee, suggests that the board left the door open in case McCormick changed his mind. They may have even prodded him a bit: "Dick never applied. He had to be talked into being considered, and then the board of governors wouldn't take no for an answer."

For two weeks, McCormick struggled with his decision, and then—with the blessing of his wife, Suzanne Lebsock, and their two children, Elizabeth, 17, and Michael, 13—phoned Gene O'Hara, chair of the board of governors and the screening committee, and asked to be reconsidered. Says Gardner, "It was not easy for him to leave Washington, where he was very well thought of, and come to New Jersey, where huge challenges loom." Back in Seattle, McCormick's colleagues joke that perhaps Tony Soprano himself put the squeeze on their popular president.

The campus that McCormick once played on as a child will be where he faces some of the most formidable challenges of his career, including a complex proposal to merge Rutgers with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) and the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT). Meanwhile, Rutgers—already bursting at the seams—is under pressure to admit more students as it copes with a \$23.5 million cut in last year's state appropriation.

"In these first few months I will listen and listen hard to all of the university's constituencies," says McCormick. He is true to his word soon afterward, spending three days visiting all three campuses. In Newark's Center of Law and Justice, he already hints at decentralization: "It's your turf, you know what needs to be done." In the Camden campus center, he announces that one of his first tasks will be to examine the structure of the central administration. "Coming on board as a new president provides a logical opportunity to take a look at how the place is administered."

He also pledges to visit Camden and Newark regularly and meet with faculty and students. "In my travels to bring the message of this university to the citizens of the state, I'll need you at my side," he tells students. "You can make the case for Rutgers better than anyone." Following his addresses, he lingers, answering questions and looking like he enjoys meeting people and making them feel a little better about the future of their university.



Katheryne McCormick (GSEd'73) shows off her son's former room in their modest ranch home on River Road in Piscataway. They moved into the house in 1950, five years after coming to Rutgers from the University of Delaware. Richard P. McCormick (RC'38, GSNB'40), a prominent history professor whose distinguished career spans decades, wrote *Rutgers: A Bicentennial History* in 1966, became the subject of a biography published last year, and has a dormitory on the Busch campus named for him. Katheryne, a former chemistry and math instructor and administrator, was active in local Democratic politics and served as president of the local chapter of the League of Women Voters.

The McCormicks were genuinely surprised when their son changed his mind and became Rutgers' president. "We've been out to UW; it's one of the most beautiful campuses in the country and a fine institution," says Richard P. "I don't think we ever realized how attached Dick was to Rutgers."

Over breakfast in Seattle a week later, McCormick talks about changing his mind. "People I've known all my life asked for my help, and I couldn't let them down. I really





What he doesn't say is that he was also an outstanding student. "I was interested in American studies, so my dad queried the director of admissions of Rutgers about the school that had the best department in the country," McCormick recalls. "He said Amherst, so I applied as an early admission candidate and was accepted." He entered Amherst in 1965 and was immediately inspired by such noted cultural historians as Leo Marx and John William Ward. "It was a turbulent time in America, and I had the advantage of trying to figure out the essence of what it meant to be an American through the eyes of some brilliant people," he recalls. McCormick grew his hair long and joined Delta Kappa Epsilon, serving as the fraternity's president his senior year.

At Amherst, McCormick took particular interest in the social injustices that African Americans have faced throughout American history. It began a lifelong commitment to civil rights, one that would later shape his career as a historian and administrator. "But it wasn't enough to just understand the black experience in America; I wanted to feel connected," he says. And so he put off graduate school at Yale to teach sixth grade at an inner-city public school in West Philadelphia in 1969.

"I was terrible," admits McCormick. "It wasn't that I couldn't explain things; I just didn't have a knack for maintaining control. I was too rigid and I could see that my African-American colleagues, especially the women, were able to keep the kids' attention and foster an atmosphere where learning went on."

He left the cinder-block school the next fall for the ivy-covered walls of Yale, focusing on the post-Civil War period and Progressive periods in what he calls "the best history department in the nation." After receiving his doctorate in 1976, he applied for teaching positions at four universities, including Rutgers.

Richard P. describes receiving a surprising phone call from his son soon afterward. "I was the dean of Rutgers College at the time and I didn't know of any openings in the history department. But I told Dick, 'Come for a visit anyway.'" It turned out that the chair of the history department had traded funding for three teaching-assistant positions to the graduate school for one full-time faculty appointment. "I knew nothing of the swap or the search," says Richard P., who later taught a course in U.S. politics with his son.

Even though McCormick's father was a "towering" figure at Rutgers, "I don't think it ever bothered Dick," says Paul Leath, the provost in New Brunswick at the time. "He did his own thing. Somehow it never became an issue."

In quick order, the young, energetic professor published three books and was granted tenure. Paul Clemens, professor of history at FAS-New Brunswick and a member of the search committee that hired McCormick in

(continued on page 44)

thought I'd be in Seattle forever. Rutgers is the only other place I would have considered," he says. "I've spent 33 of my 54 years of life on the Rutgers campus."

One of his earliest memories is taking swimming lessons at the College Avenue gym and afterward going with his dad to the home of William H. Demarest, the 11th president of Rutgers. "I would play while they talked about Rutgers' history for my dad's book." The five-year-old was intrigued by a replica of the Liberty Bell on the former president's desk—which Demarest had obtained as a Rutgers Prep student in 1876 at the 100th anniversary commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia—so Demarest gave the bell to the boy, who has kept it on his desk ever since.

A few years later he was sneaking into games at the Rutgers football stadium near his house, working on school projects at Alexander Library, and playing Little League games on a field that is now part of the Busch campus. At Piscataway High School, he delivered the *Home News*, edited the school newspaper, and founded the foreign-student exchange program.



MCCORMICK MEETS STUDENTS IN CAMDEN (TOP) AND NEW BRUNSWICK (NEAR LEFT); HITS THE BOOKS WITH HIS MOTHER AND KID SISTER, DOROTHY (EAR LEFT); AND GETS A WARM WELCOME IN NEWARK (MIDDLE PHOTOS).

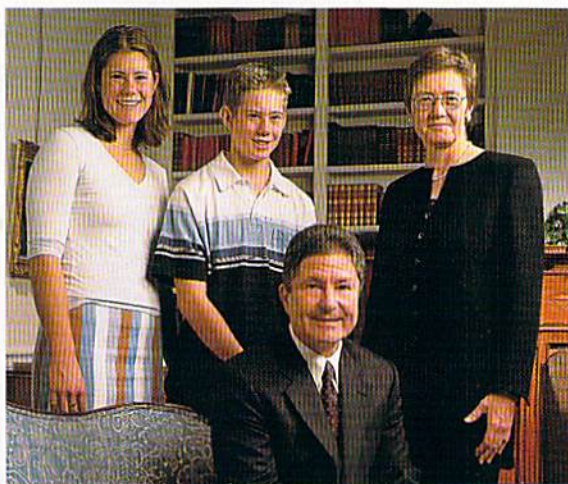
1976, remembers teaching a large undergraduate class with him. Clemens recalls that his colleague suggested reenacting the Lincoln-Douglas debates to hold the class's attention. "Dick played an engaging Stephen Douglas, who was pro slavery," says Clemens, who played Lincoln. "Dick also reenacted Teddy Roosevelt's advance up San Juan Hill. It isn't commonly known that Teddy had a rather high-pitched voice. Dick's delivery of 'charge!' was very funny."

Rutgers reorganized its undergraduate colleges and merged its history faculties in the '80s, which brought McCormick together with a colleague who would later become his wife, history professor Suzanne Lebsock (see below). In 1987, he became department chair.

After McCormick took the lead in establishing a faculty council for the New Brunswick campus, a much-needed advisory body, Leath named him acting dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in 1989, an appointment that was made permanent a year later. At the time, New Jersey faced an economic downturn and department budgets were being cut across the board. McCormick describes his year as acting dean as "brutal, challenging, excruciating. I knew that my career was headed in a new direction, even though I hadn't gotten on that train intentionally. By the time I opened my eyes a

few years later, I was an administrator."

McCormick took another step up the career ladder in 1992 when he left Rutgers to become provost and chief academic officer at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC). Ten months later,



McCORMICK'S FAMILY—INCLUDING DAUGHTER ELIZABETH, SON MICHAEL, AND WIFE SUZANNE LEBSOCK—SPENDS PART OF EVERY SUMMER ON CAPE COD.

black students occupied UNC's South Building, demanding that the university build a black cultural center. "There was a segment of the university for it and a segment against it," says Lawrence Gilbert, associate vice chancellor at the time. "The idea for the center upset traditional liberals because they felt it harkened back to the segregationist South."

McCormick quickly opened up lines of communication with the dissenters and discovered that they wanted a center that would promote both African-American culture and study, and be open to the entire university community. He not only resolved the dispute but also launched a \$7-million fund-raising drive for the center. "UNC leads the country in the number of black students that were admitted this year, and Dick's work here had a lot to do with that," says Gilbert.

UNC's chancellor, Paul Hardin, was so taken with McCormick's performance that he created a new title—executive chancellor—for him after 18 months. In 1995, when Hardin announced his retirement, McCormick was one of two finalists for his position. "It was disappointing not to get that job, but it helped me immeasurably," says McCormick. "It made me consider all that goes along with running a university, and it made me think and talk like a university president. I feel certain that I got the Washington job because of my candidacy at Chapel Hill."

On McCormick's last day at UW, students on the campus's red-brick plaza toss Frisbees, practice skateboard tricks, and walk to class. Barely anyone notices a student attempting to balance a bicycle on his nose.

Nearby, in a massive student center

Chapter Two

MacArthur Fellow Suzanne Lebsock rejoins the faculty

At the end of a banquet on her husband's last day at UW, well-wishers approach Suzanne Lebsock to wish her good luck at Rutgers. "I'm not going anywhere yet," says Lebsock, a professor of history. "I can't desert my students. The plan is to finish the year here, move back to New Jersey, and rejoin the faculty."

Lebsock, a 1992 MacArthur Foundation "genius" grant recipient who has carved out a national reputation as a historian, will miss Seattle.

"It's wrenching to leave after seven years, especially considering that we were always treated so nicely and that this is such a beautiful place," she says. "But we have a lot of friends at Rutgers [Lebsock was on the Rutgers history faculty from 1977 to 1992] and the history department and women's studies program in New Brunswick are superb."

A native of North Dakota, Lebsock earned her bachelor's degree from Carleton College in Minnesota and her master's and doctorate from the University of Virginia.

"Suzanne is clearly one of the foremost figures in American women's history," says Rutgers colleague Paul Clemens. Her book *The Free Women of Petersburg* (Norton, 1985), which Clemens calls "a major historical work," examines the lives of 19th-century Virginian women in urban settings. It won the Bancroft Prize in 1985, awarded annually by Columbia University for distinguished works of history.

Lebsock's latest book, *A Murder in Virginia* (Norton, 2003)—about the unsolved killing of a white woman in Virginia in 1895 and a host of suspects, including three black women—will be published in March. "I'm hoping a reader can provide evidence to help solve the crime," she says.

The Shape of Tomorrow

One of Richard L. McCormick's top priorities since becoming Rutgers president in December has been the proposed restructuring of higher education in New Jersey. The proposal, announced on October 14 by the Commission on Health Science, Education, and Training, and endorsed by Governor James E. McGreevey, would combine Rutgers, the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, and the New Jersey Institute of Technology into a single research university system with three separate institutions in Newark, New Brunswick, and Camden. Each would have a president reporting to a Trenton-based chancellor. A study group of Rutgers' Board of Governors and Board of Trustees is reviewing the report and an internal task force assembled by the university administration is identifying strategic issues, including opportunities and challenges. President McCormick will join other higher-education leaders on a statewide review, planning, and implementation steering committee appointed by the governor.

known as the HUB, McCormick is saying good-bye to advisory-board members, regents, trustees, deans, and faculty members. "If you had told me a year ago that this would be my last day as the president of the University of Washington, I would not have believed you," he begins. "The seven years here have been the best of my professional life."

McCormick cites his efforts to skirt the passage of Initiative 200, a statewide public referendum in 1988 prohibiting affirmative action in the admission process. UW reacted by creating programs to better prepare minority K-12 students for college, increasing financial aid to minority candidates, and instituting counseling and tutorial programs to help minorities succeed once on campus. "Higher education is a very important instrument of opportunity, progress, and social justice," says McCormick. "We can learn as much from each other as we learn in the classroom. It's the university's responsibility to provide access to [everyone] on the basis of merit."

He fondly remembers his annual faculty field tours, five-day-long fact-finding missions on which he and new faculty members traveled by bus across the state and forged relationships that led to team-teaching and collaborative research

projects. David Hodge, UW's dean of the faculty of arts and sciences, says, "At first, I thought it was the dumbest idea I had ever heard, but it turned out to be brilliant. It showed the state that UW is theirs and was also indescribably important to the faculty. Every single person describes it as a transforming experience."

McCormick's University Initiative Fund, while initially controversial, was another hallmark of his presidency. The fund took one percent from all department budgets even as state appropriations declined and university budgets were cut. The fund, which Hodge describes as a "self-taxing system to create a culture of possibility," encouraged the kind of collaborations that have helped UW attract more federal grant money than any other public research university in the country for the last eight years.

"The short answer is yes, these are the kinds of programs I hope to implement at Rutgers," says McCormick. "I'm not sure what shape they'll take, but there's little doubt that you need to get people fired up about ideas and create a symbiotic relationship between teaching and research."

McCormick winds up his speech in Seattle with an impassioned plea for budget advocacy: "My farewell request to

you is, get involved; let your voices be heard. The future of this university is in your hands."

To a New Jerseyan, UW's statistics are strikingly familiar: Not only did it suffer a 16 percent decline in state-appropriated dollars per student over the past decade, but it takes in almost \$92 million less each year in state funding than comparable public institutions. For Rutgers, state funding has slipped 14 percent over the last 10 years. In 2002, for example, it fell \$96 million below the level recommended by the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education. Still, McCormick's message hasn't completely fallen on deaf ears. Partly through his efforts, Washington legislators appropriated \$47 million to renovate UW's magnificent Suzzollo Library.

McCormick bids farewell to Washington having brought together the higher education community. When he came to Seattle, UW and Washington State University perceived each other as rivals, but McCormick and Washington State's president started meeting and by the time McCormick left, they were lobbying legislators as a team.

The new president's ability to forge relationships isn't lost on Clement Price, Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor at Rutgers-Newark and a member of the presidential search committee. "In Dick McCormick, I believe we have someone of national stature who, for the first time, can bring the higher education community of this state together."

But who better than his father to offer perspective that spans more than a half-century at Rutgers. After all, the elder McCormick slept in Winants Hall—the very building where his son was named president—when it was a dormitory. "No one thinks more highly of our son than we do," he says. "But our son doesn't walk on water and won't solve all of Rutgers' problems by waving a magic wand. Considering all the challenges before the university, the success of my son's presidency is going to depend on the hard work and commitment of an awful lot of people." □

Bill Glovin is associate editor of RUTGERS MAGAZINE.