



THE RIDE OF HIS LIFE

Off-road motorcycling revs the engine of Dean Kevin Barksdale like nothing else

– by Doug Carroll



The dean of the Ken Blanchard College of Business is dressing for an appointment, and his deliberate manner has much to say about its significance. Like a perfectly knotted tie, everything needs to be just so.

This particular morning, he will wear a skull-and-crossbones bandana, a black “No Fear” T-shirt, a breastplate, a helmet, custom gloves, a pair of shin guards and a canary yellow bodysuit trimmed in black, specially fitted for the activity in which he is about to engage.

His “office,” in a remote location between Scottsdale and Fountain Hills, is slowly coming to life with activity as the sun comes up over the horizon.

Dr. Kevin Barksdale lives for meetings like this one, when he will put a four-stroke Yamaha Y2 250F through the paces on a dirt track that is close to a mile and a half of hairpin turns, hair-raising jumps and stark desert beauty.

To hear him tell it – and many on the GCU campus have – there is no time when he feels more alive.

“I think this makes me better at what I do,” says Barksdale, 49, who became dean of KBCOB last February. “It clears my head. It makes me have to slow down. There’s an order to this, and it keeps you that way.

“For me, this is a way to relax. I’m not one for sitting in front of the TV.”

There’s more at work here than a midlife male’s wild hair. Given an opportunity to expound on how the hum and whine of dirt bikes could possibly relate to business principles, Barksdale explains the connection at length.

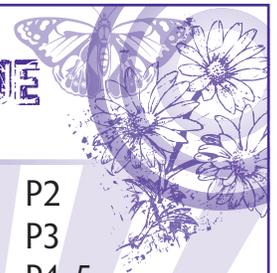
In fact, he’s in the process of writing a paper about it. His experiences on the bike have supplied him with more than just the stories he likes to tell to students and staff.

They’ve given him perspective.

“Leadership is a lot like riding a motorcycle,” Barksdale says. “There’s pace management, there’s balance and there’s straightness. Anybody can go fast, but can you maintain that? In a business setting, you can have an idea a minute, but you don’t want to overwhelm people. It’s much harder to communicate those ideas and navigate the process. If you’re out in front, are you able to bring others along with you?”

Continued on P2 →

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Finding Your Purpose	P2
Student Life	P3
Hello and Goodbye	P4-5
Outreach	P6
Student Profile	P7



Continued from P1

"Biking has taught me a lot. You learn to listen to your environment, to pitches and tones, when you're riding."

Although Barksdale has been on motorcycles since his Alabama childhood, his love of off-road bikes is the byproduct of a recent reconnection with his brother **Brian**, an accountant who is three years older. Separated by distance, with Brian in Birmingham and Kevin in Nashville, Tenn., at the time, they sought a common interest.

"We hit a point where we felt we weren't as close as we should be," Kevin says. "I started hanging out with him when he went to the track. I would watch and take photos."

"Brothers don't always talk about the touchy-feely stuff, and this gives us a common frame of reference. It's the language of the heart. Sometimes when we're talking on the phone, one will hold up his phone so the other can hear the bikes running."

Brian, who says Kevin is "serious about everything," wasn't surprised that a hobby accelerated into a passion for his brother. The two of them hope to enter some events together, although Brian prefers racing street bikes on asphalt, often at night with only the track's lights to guide him.

"You haven't lived until you've gone 150 miles an hour in the dark," he says, an indication that he's plenty serious, too.

For Kevin, sessions at the dirt track sharpen his skills for trail riding with a group of as many as 15 friends. Three or four times a month, they will head east out of Scottsdale toward the Tonto National Forest, covering as much as 50 miles.

The crew's easy camaraderie is reflected in the nicknames that have been dispensed. There's Righteous Dude (a reference to "Ferris Bueller's Day Off"), the Pig Farmer (owner

of a potbellied pig), Freak of Nature (never has a scratch on his bike) and Rockstar (Barksdale, for his riding attire that touts a popular energy drink).

"They think it's funny to ride with a dean," Barksdale says, "especially when there's mud on my face."

"You meet guys who are carpenters, guys who own their own business, engineers. One guy is a VP of marketing for the Porsche Experience. Some of these guys, their kids are grown, and they'll buy a new bike every year."

Righteous Dude (real name: **Mike Johnson**) says the dean is a quick study, as you might expect.

"He's a student of this," Johnson says. "He really applies what he learns. The track is very controlled, and you can work on technique and consistency. But in the desert, there's always a little twist, and you can be in survival mode."

"He's amazing. It's so easy to bond with him. He's fun to be around, and you learn things from him."

Barksdale, who says he never has been seriously injured while riding, insists he's aware of his limitations and doesn't push it too hard. As riders half his age rocket past him at the dirt track, he remains steady on the throttle. You could even call him businesslike.

"I wouldn't say I'm timid," he says, "but I'm mindful. I realize what broken bones could mean at my age. Most people seem to think it's pretty cool that I do this. I think my students find it fascinating, and sometimes it's a way to connect with them."

"Great business is all about calculated risk, and this is the same thing."



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Q: How Did You Find Your Purpose?



A:

TIM GRIFFIN, Campus Pastor

"I found my purpose in college. As a sophomore, it seemed that many of my Christian friends were 'hearing' from God much more clearly than I was. I reasoned with the Lord that I would just move through whatever door He opened and would trust Him to guide my steps. From that simple 'agreement,' God began to steer me toward vocational ministry opportunities almost immediately. He gave me a real love and joy in my heart that I was on track. Now, nearly 30 years later, I look back on an incredible series of experiences and job opportunities – including my current role with GCU – as confirmation of God's purpose for my life."



A:

DR. JAMES BEGGS, Professor of Humanities, College of Liberal Arts

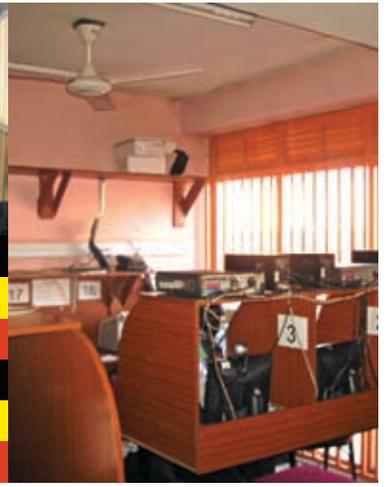
"First, I recognized my need for God. Second, I recognized the benefits of continuing my education. C.S. Lewis talked about first and second things. He said if we put first things first and the second things second, we can hope to achieve both. But if we put second things first and first things second, we will most likely not only miss out on the first things, but also on the second ones as well. Putting God first and getting an education changed my entire life and gave it a clear elevating purpose."



A:

JACQUELINE SMITH, Director of Career Services

"A little over 10 years ago, I was in a hospital in a coma, not expected to live. I begged God to let me go, but He told me He had a great plan for my life. After months of rehabilitation and prayer, I decided to quit my sales/recruiting job and called a local community college and asked if I could teach a class. The department chair hired me, and a year later I was director of career services. I was using all of my God-given talents and abilities, and I was helping students achieve their dreams. I met the love of my life, Dave Smith, at the same college. I told Dave we would work for a university and help further the kingdom of God by helping students to know God."

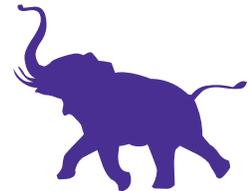


OUT OF AFRICA AND INTO GCU



An online classmate a world away gives new meaning to dedication

– by Gina Breadon



Louise Tamutebi and I met as online students at GCU. Such meetings occur all the time, naturally, as the University has an online enrollment of nearly 40,000.

There's much more to this story, however. You see, Louise has become one of my heroes. Read on, and you'll understand why.

After inquiring about the formal English used in class by Louise, I soon learned much more about her. Never again would I brood over having a bad day online, nor would I complain about a slow Internet connection or having to drive to the library to log on.

Imagine what your studies would be like if you needed to travel 90 minutes one way, every day, just to reach a computer with Internet access.

No way, right?

Louise finds a way.

Louise lives in Kampala, Uganda, and travels to an Internet café in nearby Nakulabye. She is taking courses from GCU toward her degree in elementary education (K-8) with a science specialty.

"By God's grace," she says, "I landed on this café run by believers, which has about 28 computers and is open from 8 at night until 1 in the morning."

Her daily trip is no ordinary drive. It's more like a journey. She takes two matatus (14-passenger public transportation vans) and a boda-boda (rented moped with a driver) just to get to class every night. She stays at the café until closing time – and often later.

"Sometimes the (Internet) link is so slow I am not done with my discussion forum until 1:30 a.m.," Louise says. "And most Sunday nights, it is only strong enough to upload my essay after 2 a.m., when it is not so busy."

Sometimes the café attendant stays up and waits for her. Otherwise, she wakes the attendant to let her out. She still has to get home, of course, so she pays someone

trustworthy to wait for her and take her back to Kampala via boda-boda. (Imagine doing this in a rainstorm.)

Kampala, a city of 1.4 million people, is Uganda's capital. In 2007, it was announced that the city would remove the matatus from its streets, replacing them with a comprehensive city bus service. The bus service has yet to be implemented.

Louise says God has blessed her in finding a café with reliable Internet service and staff, and she says He also has provided financial blessings. With the help of the café owner, she has been able to pay a subsidized monthly fee instead of a daily fee.

"Internet access (at home) is quite expensive," she says. "I would be lost without it, and I am thankful every day."

Although there are days when the connection is slow enough to delay her assignments, Louise says GCU is understanding and "very gracious." She has been able to tap into scholarships and is on the lookout for additional funding.

Her choice of GCU was not made lightly.

"For years, my friend Sarah and I were searching for a Christian university offering courses we wanted," she explains.

Sarah discovered GCU and passed the information along. In all, the women explored at least a dozen colleges and universities in Canada, South Africa, England and the United States.

"GCU seemed the one for me," Louise says, praising the encouragement she received from Enrollment Counselor **Phil Garcia**. "I thank God every semester for his faith that I could do it... but that is another story."

Louise has benefited from training in English since the age of 6. English is an official language in Uganda, as it was a British colony until 1962. (Swahili is the other official language, although a number of languages are spoken in the country.)

Instruction in English begins in towns and even remote villages, which initially use their original dialect and then switch to English as their primary language, she says. Louise's unique phrasing became evident in our classes and prompted my interest in her story.

Louise fills her time with work and education, but she also has children. When they are not at boarding school and while she is attending school at night, she says they sleep the first part of the night, wake up at midnight and then watch movies until she gets home. Everyone goes to bed an hour later.

I found Louise to be eloquent in her writing, inspirational in spirit and humble about her efforts.

When I'm having a bad day online, I think of my friend a world away, on her way to the Internet café aboard a boda-boda – a hero if there ever was one.

→ Online



Gina Breadon, a former Phoenix resident who now lives in St. Louis, Mo., is pursuing an English Literature degree at GCU.

She has been a martial artist for more than 20 years and operates a not-for-profit martial-arts school in addition to working, raising a family, caring for pets, continuing her education and writing in her spare time.

With the new Student Recreation Center complete and the Event Center on the horizon, GCU basketball celebrates its last season of competition in Antelope Gym.



Going to the Next Level

5 best features of the Student Rec Center

FULL-SIZE BASKETBALL COURTS

The court at the west end is reserved for practice by the Antelope men's and women's basketball teams, but the other two courts are for student and staff use. The practice court is similar to the Phoenix Suns' practice court.

THE PERFORMANCE ATHLETIC CENTER

An enormous, ground-level weight-training facility for GCU's athletes, outfitted with state-of-the-art equipment. Also available to students and staff at certain times during the day. A smaller facility, the Student Activity Center, overlooks the basketball courts from the east end of the second level.

THE SANCTUARY

A large, multipurpose room with hardwood flooring that serves as the hub of fitness and dance classes for students and staff. Classes range from yoga to kickboxing to Zumba. The space is similar to what you would find at a health club or YMCA.

LOCKER ROOMS

They're everywhere. The men's and women's basketball teams, the wrestling team, GCU's coaches, and students and staff all have space to shower, change and relax. Wood paneling enhances the plush vibe. Nice.

THE ANTELOPE SCULPTURES

The twin shade structures serve as exterior bookends to the Rec Center, with one on the west end (22 feet tall) and a larger one on the east end (38 feet tall). They consist of vertical aluminum fins that were laser cut. The Tempe firm Architekton was involved in the unique design.



5 great memories of Antelope Gym

DECEMBER 22, 1994:

First intercollegiate game, a women's basketball game won by Arizona State University, 99-67, over GCU.

DECEMBER 16, 1995:

Horacio Llamas (far left, center panel) of Mexico blocks a school record 10 shots in GCU's 106-59 victory over Clarke College (Iowa). Llamas, NCAA Division II Player of the Year as a GCU senior in 1996, went on to play two seasons for the Phoenix Suns.

JANUARY 26, 1996:

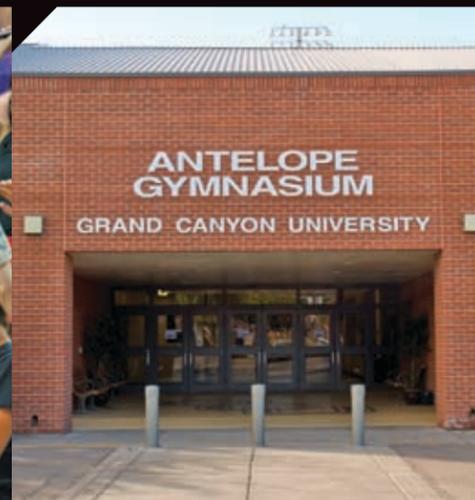
Pro football player Deion Sanders stages a charity basketball game in conjunction with Super Bowl XXX in Tempe. A packed house watches Magic Johnson and Ice Cube (middle, center panel) participate.

FEBRUARY 25, 2006:

Ryan Nelson records a school record 20 assists in GCU's 110-70 victory over Notre Dame de Namur University. Nelson, a transfer from Division I St. Mary's College, is the brother of current Antelope Rosalyn Nelson.

MARCH 4, 2010:

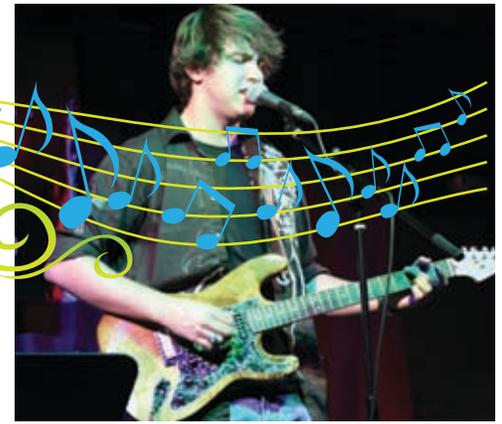
Before a capacity crowd against Hawai'i Pacific University on the last week of the season, the Antelope women lose, 67-64, in overtime and the men win, 100-91, in double overtime.





STANDING TALL

Freshman **Casey Lee Smith** Is Already an Award-Winning Songwriter



— by Zane Ewton

Late nights in Nashville honky tonks, cutthroat record labels, broken hearts and shattered dreams litter the road to country-music stardom.

They're at least the makings of a good country song.

Not for **Casey Lee Smith**.

At 18 years old, the award-winning songwriter and GCU freshman is taking a different path in music as he attends college with the intention of going on to medical school.

Smith, a Glendale native, is the winner of the 2009 John Lennon Songwriting Contest. He won the national contest in the gospel/inspirational category for his song "Never Stood Taller."

His mother and grandfather inspired the lyrics to the song, following his grandfather's diagnosis of cancer.

"My grandpa is a tough man," Smith says. "He is the **Clint Eastwood** of our family. The cancer diagnosis changed his heart and led him to Christianity."

"Never Stood Taller" is now up for Maxwell Song of the Year, worth a \$100,000 prize to the winner.

"I'd take the money and invest in the music," he says. "Buy a few guitars and try to find the right people to make this really take off."

Smith gushes over his passion for music. Country music. Rock music. Christian music. All music.

"My influences run from **Keith Urban** to **Rush**," he says. "My music is country, but you could hear it on any Christian radio station."

Smith got the performance bug in elementary school.

"My buddies dared me to try out for a school play," he says. "I did it just to make fun of it, but I got a big part. I was the villain."

He didn't want to follow through with the play; it was just a joke. But his principal made him promise to perform. When Smith followed the principal's advice, it changed his course in life.

"That show helped me find out I could sing," he says. "But now I had to learn how to play an instrument. I started with the drums. But I couldn't sing and play drums at the same time."

Whether it's coincidence or destiny, the principal who held Smith to his commitment in elementary school is now GCU's dean of students, **Mik Milem**.

After the play, Smith's search for an instrument eventually led him to the guitar. His sister had one gathering dust in her room. He borrowed it one day, borrowed it again and then just took it for himself.



An eagerness to perform took him to every open-night in Phoenix and across the state. He began writing music with his mother. It started during a Christmas trip to see his grandparents.

"We were throwing around lyrics for a silly song about Christmas pie," he says. "We were just passing the time on the drive home, but doing that became a way for me and my mom to bond."

Not only is Mom pitching in songwriting ideas, she's willing to let her son hang out in clubs. But only to perform, of course.

"We surround Casey with family and friends and trust that he will make good decisions," **Tammy Smith** says. "We've taught him as best we can. The rest is up to God and Casey."

Smith and his family have traveled to Nashville, Tenn., since he was 14 years old. The family attended songwriting conventions and other events to connect with people in the music industry.

Casey describes it as one of the most discouraging experiences of his young life.

"Everyone plays the game in Nashville," he says. "You have to think outside the box to be able to stand out in that town. Walk into a club in downtown Nashville and the singer will be incredible. Walk in next door and the next guy is even better."

Even among the competition, Smith connected with groups like the Nashville Songwriters Association and Cardinal Crossing and earned some recognition from Universal Publishing. The song-publishing group has given him an open door to come in and present his songs whenever he wants.

With all the doors opening in Nashville, the one he walked through was to GCU.

"He wanted to give the college experience a try," says his mother. "He can go back to Nashville later, but for now he wanted to get an education and be a college student."

Smith selected GCU because it is close to home, and he appreciates the Christian heritage and small-town feel.

He has emerged as an ambassador for the University. He is a member of the Chapel band. He's a frequent performer at campus events and is open to sharing about GCU in other settings.

"We're proud he wants to represent the University," says **Cathy Moses**, GCU's vice president of event planning and marketing. "We're fortunate to have a student with his background and experience to represent us in the community."

Moses says Smith is enthusiastic about his role, as long as it doesn't interfere with his class schedule.

"I'm hungry for people to hear my songs," Smith says. "This is an awesome opportunity to represent GCU, play my music and get a great education."

Giving Is Gaining

I'm thankful to receive
More thankful to give
Living simply to obtain
Is a life I do not wish to live.
And when you give
Do you not receive more?

Gaining is the art of letting go;
Giving is for
Growing—finding my purpose
And loving yours
Without regrets,
Without fears.

Should it not be your life you give?
More than giving
A dollar to the poor—
Is Generosity what it's for?
No, it is so much more.

I think about my family
And all they've given me;
I think about my God
In loving mystery.

All the friends and all the laughs
That color our lives—
Song of a thousand tiny gifts
In memory survives.
Spiritual gifts of love, joy and
Kindness overflow
When I give all and let go.

I give you my hands, my feet;
I give to bless and receive
A greater selfless gain.
How can one live without giving?

For such a life is as meaningless
And stationary
As a tree that refuses to give its fruit,
Its seeds.

Giving—showing up, loving,
Laughing, mourning.
Knowing that you have changed a life,
For the good,
Emotionally satisfying, indeed,
For the ones in need.

The joys of giving
The joys of knowing that
All things work together
For the good of those who
Love God
For those who are called
To His purpose.

To give or not to give?
To live or not to live?
To whom much is given,
Much is required of life.
When we die, it is gain
Because Christ can live.

The reason to give?
Because a Savior gave His blood,
His tears,
His hands ... can move in ours
To give us life.

*Anissa Rowe, Stephen Hartt, Andrew Frank, Ashley Hines, Rebecca Fair,
Ben Hewitt, Samuel Juardo, Andre Bell*

Edited by Professor Judie Kupillas, Anissa Rowe and Samuel Juardo

*This poem is a collaborative work by the GCU Poetry Club, created in the style of Haikai.
This Japanese style of poetry is a game where writers take turns adding verses to the poem.*

