

## **True to Herself: Gina Daggett '02 By Martha Calus-McClain '03**

Gina Daggett '02 has many "irons in the fire" and life is going well. However Daggett's life today is dramatically different from her life less than a decade ago.

Ten years ago Daggett was an undergraduate at Arizona State University majoring in recreation management and active in her sorority. Two significant events at ASU put Daggett on a very different path. The first was a dramatic change in her personal life, "everything I'd ever understood about myself and where I was going — I was a privileged debutante raised to make babies and a good home — was instantly blown to bits when I fell in love with a woman."

The second event was far more academic. She had already begun to explore independent films, art, philosophy and literature. Then she read "If You Want to Write" by Brenda Ueland. "Forget conception. Forget the birth canal. Forget the slap on the [rear] after I was delivered. I was truly born when I was 20 years old. Before that, I was just outgrowing shoes and taking my vitamins, simply going through the motions of life."

Upon graduation from ASU in 2000 Daggett was at an impasse. "I was swimming in muddy waters because I was living in the closet, so, really, all I could do was focus on mental and emotional survival as I tried to bury who I really was. It's a lot of work to live a double life." She made a crucial decision to leave behind her college girlfriend and the struggles of a closeted relationship and move to Portland.

Daggett realized that a lifetime of journal entries could add up to a career as a writer, but she needed to strengthen her skills. She began researching area universities and after a visit with Pacific English Professor Doyle Walls, she knew Pacific was the right choice.

Daggett speaks fondly of her time at Pacific, but it was not without challenges. She was older than her classmates and she was a commuter. "My biggest academic challenge was the damn drive from Portland. I hated that dead 45 minutes, where I couldn't write or brainstorm. I sometimes tried to read, but that's never a good idea when you're going 70 miles per hour."

Yet, her distance from home aided her desire to become a writer. She spent many breaks between classes sitting in Maggie's Buns coffee shop "scribbling word after word. This helped me sharpen the tools in my writer's toolbox."

Daggett did more than scribble during her semesters at Pacific. She poured all of her energy into becoming a writer. "I was very serious and super-engaged, wanting to soak up all I could." She credits her advisor Walls as a "great inspiration and influence."

While at Pacific Daggett won a Martin Luther King Jr. Day essay contest. The piece was run by local newspaper *Just Out* and Daggett began freelancing for *Just Out* soon after. She framed the piece and it hangs in her office today.

Daggett is now a contributing editor at *Curve* magazine — the best-selling lesbian magazine in the nation — as well as co-columnist of "Lipstick & Dipstick" which runs in *Curve* and is syndicated nationally. She and co-columnist Kathy Belge, "Dipstick" to readers, have expanded their column into a book of new material and a reality show for MTV's gay network, Logo. They also dispense advice through lipstickdipstick.com.

Daggett has also recently completed a novel, which began as her senior thesis at Pacific. In 2004 she won a grant from Power Up an organization dedicated to supporting new filmmakers. As a result she is adapting her novel for the silver screen.

Daggett will celebrate her four-year wedding anniversary this spring with her wife, Texas. As an advice columnist who "penned" her way out of the closet, Daggett is full of advice on many aspects of life, but one piece of advice seems to ring true. "You can't run away from who you really are."

*Martha Calus-McClain '03 is Assistant Director of Alumni Relations*

**This article appeared in Pacific University's *PACIFIC* Magazine, Spring 2008.  
[www.pacificu.edu/magazine/2008/spring/alumni/daggett.cfm](http://www.pacificu.edu/magazine/2008/spring/alumni/daggett.cfm)**

**Pacific University  
2043 College Way  
Forest Grove, OR 97116  
1.877.PAC.UNIV**