

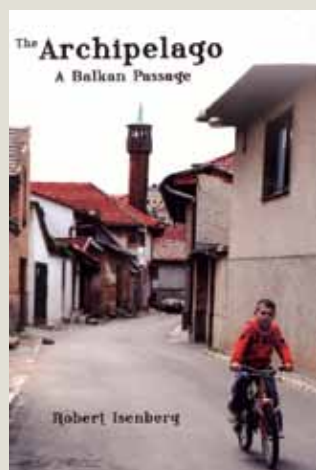
## A Balkan Passage

**W**hen a traveler returns to his hostel in Sarajevo, Bosnia, he's greeted by a locked door. First he knocks. Then he pounds. Nothing. The owner is strangely absent, and the American is left sunburned and sweating in the late afternoon heat.

But then an old Volkswagen approaches and slows to a stop. "Would you like a place to stay? Until they return?" the driver inquires. A few minutes later, the traveler is at the driver's house down the street, sipping coffee with him on the patio. The man's children and wife stir within the house, and the two strangers make small talk as the afternoon passes. This is hospitality that the traveler, Robert Isenberg, didn't expect.

Isenberg (A&S '01) came to Bosnia as part of a two-week journey through the Balkans, traveling by bus through Greece, Albania, Montenegro, Croatia, and Bosnia. He chronicles his adventure in *The Archipelago: A Balkan Passage* (Autumn House Press).

In Bosnia, he discovers a rich and beautiful countryside—contrary to the gray, war-torn streets he recalls from the news coverage of the 1992-95 Bosnian War, which he watched as a teenager in Vermont. Given the past conflicts, Isenberg expected to encounter a more cautious populace, but the people he meets brim with generosity and warmhearted sentiment.



It is a region where peace now reigns, although the war has left scars. As Isenberg wanders the Old City area in Sarajevo, he notices a mosque's minaret towering among nearby hills. Walking the old streets, he passes bright signs that illuminate shops around a vast, open square. But farther along, he finds pockmarked buildings with bullet-ridden or blown-out walls.

In the Croatian city of Dubrovnik, Isenberg learns that artillery and mortar fire rained on



PHOTOGRAPHY BY TINA CASTILLO

buildings for several months in 1991, when the city was under siege during the Croatian War of Independence. Yet, afterward, the people there fastidiously rebuilt the beautiful tile roofs, covering virtually all damage from the attack.

Isenberg, who lives in Pittsburgh and teaches playwriting at Duquesne University, has also traveled to Cairo, the Dominican Republic, Bangkok, and many other locales. He's happiest in a foreign land armed with only a map, some spare clothes and socks, and the regional hello and thank you. *Wander* (Six Gallery Press), a collection of his largely travel-themed poems, was published in the fall.

For Isenberg, less commonly traveled destinations like the Balkans are his favorite. Knowing so little about those distant lands forces him to pay attention and notice everything, he says, and that makes the experience more meaningful. He especially values those moments that transcend cultures and borders—when, for instance, the simple act of sharing coffee and conversation uplifts a weary traveler and lingers in his memory.

—Keith Gillogly

## The Blood of Cuba

A young boy lives through the turbulent revolutionary period of Cuba's history and, later in life, works his way up the ranks to become a colonel in the army. Hundreds of miles away, his half-brother lives out a troubled home life and later becomes a neurosurgeon. *The Blood of Cuba* (AuthorHouse) by Marko Rosso (A&S '68, DEN '73) follows these two brothers as their lives intertwine and the two are drawn into a conflict against one other for their very survival.—Sean Keeney



## Battle Songs

Four young men sit on an all-night train swapping stories of life in rural Western Pennsylvania. As draftees, the men know they are headed to the chaotic and unpredictable battlefields of the Korean War. One of them expresses misgivings about being drawn into a conflict he does not fully understand. *Battle Songs: A Story of the Korean War in Four Movements* (iUniverse) by Paul G. Zolbrod (A&S '58, '62G, '67G) follows these men as they confront the absurdity of war both on and off the battlefield.—SK



## Clash of Cultures

In 1915, at a time when the Haitian government was in turmoil, hundreds of U.S. troops poured into Haiti, ostensibly to restore order and "protect American and foreign interests." They even attempted to control the educational system in Haitian schools and impose values that subverted French-Haitian culture and raised the specter of racism. *Clash of Cultures: America's Educational Strategies in Occupied Haiti, 1915-1934* (University Press of America), written by Leon D. Pamphile (A&S '73, EDUC '78G, EDUC '80G), examines this intervention and its effects.—SK



## Blood Will Tell

Molten steel flows through the veins of the steel mill like the blood of a great industrial organism. The hardhat-clad immigrants working the floor cope with dangerous conditions and bear witness to the epic scope of humankind's industrial might. Craig Paulenich (A&S '75) worked in those mills to put himself through college, and his book of poetry, *Blood Will Tell* (BlazeVOX), explores the lives of Slavic steelworkers who toiled in the mills with him.—SK

