President's Convocation (2013 Program)

Illinois Wesleyan University

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SCIENCE HALL

From a 1931 booklet of pen sketches:

“THIS BUILDING WAS MADE POSSIBLE LARGELY BY A GIFT OF ANDREW CARNEGIE IN 1910 AND HAS CONSTANTLY BEEN KEPT MODERN IN EVERY RESPECT DURING THE PAST TWENTY YEARS. CHEMISTRY, BIOLOGY, ZOOLOGY, AND PHYSICS DEPARTMENTS ARE QUARTERED IN THIS ATTRACTIVE BUILDING.”

The Edgar M. Stevenson Hall of Nursing, formerly known as Science Hall, was dedicated on October 9, 1965.

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Outcasts United was selected for the 2013 Illinois Wesleyan Summer Reading Program and discussed by new students, faculty and staff during Turning Titan Orientation in August. The book was published in the United States in 2009 and subsequently in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Japan and China.

The story takes place in Clarkston, Ga., a small hamlet situated approximately 10 miles from downtown Atlanta. In the 1980s and 1990s, agencies for the resettlement of refugees chose the town as a home for new arrivals. It was hoped that the town’s proximity to downtown Atlanta would help the refugees find employment. The earliest refugees were from Southeast Asia. Then refugees arrived from the conflicts in the Balkans and later from Africa and the Middle East, radically changing the cultural landscape of the small southern town.

According to Mr. St. John, the story of Clarkston interested him because this kind of change, catalyzed by the movement and displacement of people, is happening all over the United States and Europe.

Mr. St. John’s debut book about collegiate football fans, Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer, was named one of the best books of the year by Sports Illustrated and ranked number one on The Chronicle of Higher Education’s list of the best books ever written about collegiate athletics. In his quest to find answers to the question, “Why do fans care?” Mr. St. John joined a caravan of fans in RVs as they migrated across the south to follow the Alabama Crimson Tide, University of Alabama’s football team.

In reference to his two books, Mr. St. John said, “I think what the books have in common is that they’re both essentially about sociology, not sports. They’re about how people get along, how they organize themselves socially, how they – we – search for meaning in our lives and a sense of safety amid the unpredictability of the world.”

Mr. St. John was born in Birmingham, Ala., where he attended The Altamont School. He studied English literature at the Columbia College in New York City, where he now lives with his wife and daughter.