


The Statue of Liberty stands tall against a clear blue sky, its green patina contrasting with the stone base. The statue is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the page, with its right arm raised holding a torch and its left arm cradling a tablet.

Hammond
lives and
loves a

DOUBLE

A man with glasses and a tan uniform stands in the foreground, looking directly at the camera. He is positioned in the lower left area of the page, with the base of the Statue of Liberty behind him.

Raymond Hammond '86 spends his days as the editor of a major poetry magazine in New York City and his nights as a park ranger working counterterrorism at the Statue of Liberty. He jokes that his two careers are literally “as different as day and night.”

“But to me, poetry is life, so it imbues everything you do,” he says. “Law enforcement is no different. If it’s done right, it’s a search for the truth, the truth within yourself and a confidence within yourself to deal with people who for the most part are just ordinary people in extraordinary situations.”

Hammond, a second-generation Roanoke College grad, is in an extraordinary situation himself. He works 35 to 40 hours a week unpaid as editor of *The New York*

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day and night.”



Raymond Hammond '86 works evenings on Liberty Island (left). He shares the philosophy he finds there with Roanoke College students on the Back Quad (above).

LIFE

BY LAURA HART '06

Quarterly, a national publication he describes as a collection of poetry for the working class. Hammond works closely with his *NYQ* staff to choose 300 poems to publish from the 50,000 submissions they receive every year.

As a law enforcement officer with the National Park Service for the last 16 years, Hammond also works full time at the Statue of Liberty as one of only three park rangers there who report to the U.S. Park Police. He works the night shift as part of Liberty Island's counterterrorism unit and is trained as a hostage negotiator. He was even living on Liberty Island five years ago and helped evac-

uate it during the Sept. 11 attack and then, as a trained paramedic, helped with the injured from the World Trade Center. The experience changed him.

"It made life more imperative — the need to accomplish things," he says. "It also made me live more in the moment."

Life and death have had a profound effect on Hammond, who actually was *willed* the editorship of *The New York Quarterly* by the magazine's founding editor and Hammond's mentor William Packard. The two met when Hammond was taking English classes and workshops at Vermont College. A biology

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*From his home office in Brooklyn, Hammond (left) edits the distinguished poetry journal *The New York Quarterly*. One of his featured poets is Cynthia Atkins (above), the part-time English lecturer at Roanoke College who invited Hammond to return to his alma mater and inspire her students.*

major at Roanoke, Hammond had been told by several colleges that he needed more English courses before he could begin a master’s degree in poetry.

Packard, one of his poetry professors, knew Hammond was in law enforcement and asked him to help stop a woman who was stalking him. The New York City Police couldn’t find her to serve a warrant, but Hammond tracked her down and in the process impressed Packard, who then took Hammond under his wing.

Hammond studied with Packard, worked as his teaching assistant and got an entry-level position at *The New York Quarterly*. He had worked his way up to associate editor when Packard asked him to take over the magazine upon his death. In 2002, 69-year-old Packard passed away, leaving the magazine to Hammond in his will.

It was “very intimidating. You’ve got a 35-year legacy to acknowledge and live up to,” says Hammond, who by then had earned his master’s degree in poetry from New York University and had started on a doctorate.

Hammond’s commitment to *NYQ* continued to grow, and one of the poems he selected to publish last fall turned out to be by Cynthia Atkins, a part-time English lecturer at Roanoke College. The piece, titled “Birthday Poem,” was in memory of the late William Matthews, her teacher at Columbia University, her mentor and a nationally known poet.

“I was elated to have my poem appear in *The New York Quarterly*,” Atkins says. “It has a long and impressive history of publishing in-

teresting and eclectic work, not to mention many great writers that I have long admired.”

Hammond told Atkins casually in an e-mail that he was originally from this area and had graduated from Roanoke College. She quickly invited him to visit her classes if he was ever in town. Hammond, son of the late **Amos Patton “Pat” Hammond III ‘61** and Troutville resident **Patricia “Pat” Hatcher Hammond ‘62**, was going to be in the area also to see his two teenage children, Paul and Rebecca, who live nearby with their mother. So on April 18, Hammond had lunch with some of the College’s advanced creative-writing students and talked with them about poetry. He then lectured two of Atkins’ classes, one group in their classroom in Trout Hall and the other under a tree on the Back Quad. Both classes asked Hammond about his jobs, how he ended up where he is today and his favorite experiences at Roanoke College.

“The students were extremely interested to meet him,” Atkins says. “Not only is he an editor of a very famous literary magazine, but also someone who was once in their shoes at Roanoke College. It was great for them to put a face to an editor and find out a bit about ‘the real-life’ publishing world. I think it was inspiring for all of us.”

Atkins also enjoyed meeting her editor. “You seldom get to meet in the flesh the person who publishes your poem,” she says.

The trip meant a lot to Hammond as well — especially talking poetry under a tree on the Back Quad with his own children also sitting there with the students. “It’s like home. I stood there and

**“Teachers give us the history
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Hammond encourages students in Trout Hall to try expressing themselves through poetry.

looked at the mountains that I had stared at when I was in class,” he says, smiling. “I feel at peace there, and I have a great respect for the people I learned from there.”

In fact, Hammond also tracked down and contacted Robert R. Walter, a former Roanoke College English professor who had taught here 32 years before retiring in 1999. Hammond had taken three English courses with Walter and says he almost became an English major because of the experience.

“What he gave me was permission to love literature for the literature’s self,” Hammond says. “That was a great gift, and I still consider him a mentor.”

Walter lives in Boones Mill with his wife, Carolyn, who is director of development research for the College. Walter was surprised and delighted to hear from Hammond, whom he describes as “an eager student.” Hammond had sent him copies of *NYQ* in the past, and his professor liked it. “I’m very pleased with where he is — somewhat surprised,” Walter adds, chuckling, “but he’s intelligent and knowledgeable, and it’s a very nice magazine.”

The most recent issue of the magazine coincidentally shows yet another poetry connection to Roanoke College. That issue featured an interview with the U.S. Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner Ted Kooser, who in February had visited campus and presented a powerful poetry reading through the Jordan Endowment and the department of English.

Hammond says he really enjoyed his campus visit and would love to return. The message he hopes to convey to students is that

TORCH PASSING

and there is much they don’t teach us
when in youth we inhale their brains
learning, forgetting, yearning all
to be something more than we are
but what we don’t much consider
we just savor, suckle and seek
not thinking beyond the thinking

and there is much they don’t show us
but the lonely path of process
streetlighted road down town’s main street
whose end is always at the edge
of night. Slight sight squinting to see
so slowly illuminated
until leaving us all alone

and there is much they don’t leave us
except to learn without teachers
and a knowledge that is useless
unless passed on to crusaders
lighting their own streets through dark ages
who can never be shown where they
are going until we are gone

— Raymond Hammond

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pursuing the things you love is very rewarding, even if your loves are as different as night and day.

“After a while you realize that everything is interconnected,” he says. “Biology is interconnected with chemistry, which is interconnected with history and with math. This ‘indefinable’ thing is what’s inside the student — and it’s how they, or we, put it all together that counts. Teachers give us the history and the math, but it’s up to us to see the big picture.” 