

The *Touey* Chronicles

**A closer look at the life experiences
of a free-spirited professor**

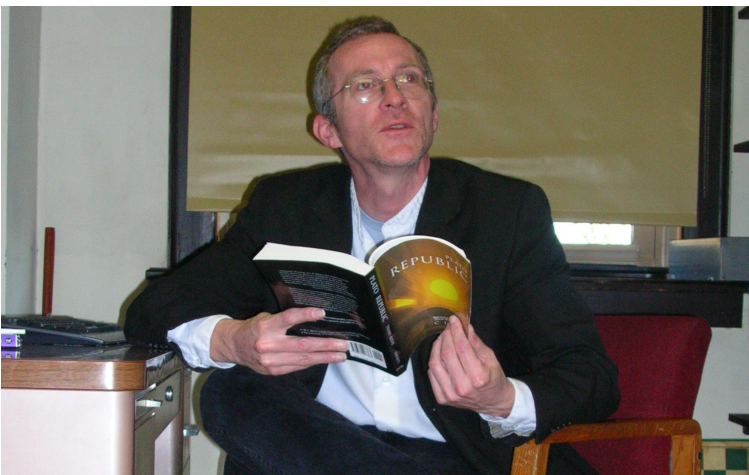
Story By Michael Levins
Layout By Maria Allegretto

Photos By Jeff Landis
and Maria Allegretto

Waiting patiently on the subway platform, Dan Touey pulls up the sleeve of his leather jacket and checks the time on his wristwatch. Milling around him are 20 to 30 other commuters anxiously awaiting the arrival of the train that will carry them to various corners of the city. Walking to the very edge of the platform, he places his foot on the cautionary yellow line and peeks his head out ever so slightly over the precipitous drop beside him. Staring out into what appears to be an infinite blur of pure black, Touey is hoping to see a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel that indicates the impending arrival of the next

train. Finally, after just a few moments, a dim beam of light pierces the perpetual darkness of the tunnel, and suddenly the hustle and bustle on the platform quickly begins. Almost everyone hurriedly grabs their belongings and swarms to the track's edge. Touey readjusts the book bag he has slung over his back, and prepares to begin his journey from downtown Philadelphia up north to the campus of La Salle University.

The train arrives in a blur of silver and fluorescent light and the sound of screeching metal fills the air as the brakes of the mighty machine bring the line of cars to a stop. Stepping through the sliding doors, Touey surveys the rows of plastic seats that line both sides of the subway car, as a blast of stale air surrounds him. Eventually, he decides on a seat close to the doors, and rests his weight on the unforgiving surface. The seats are a slightly beige color with worn-out red cushions, and each one appears as if it is covered in a thin layer of permanent dirt. As the train departs to its next destination, Touey pulls out a copy of a philosophy textbook and begins to read it in preparation for his upcoming class. While other passengers put headphones over their ears and begin to listen to their MP3 players and iPods, Touey simply reads his book, as he has never been one to get caught up in any technological fads. He does not own an iPod or any other cutting-edge gadget. While most people take



Professor Touey reads in his La Salle University office.

public transportation because it saves gas mileage or wear and tear on their cars, Touey rides trains and buses because he has no other alternatives for transportation. Dan Touey has never once owned an automobile; in fact, he has never even had a driver's license. He has lived his entire life without the use of a personal car.



Daniel P. Touey was born in the winter of 1967 and grew up in Delaware County, outside of Philadelphia. The man affectionately referred to as "House," due to his likeness to the fictional television character, had an uneventful childhood and attended the very liberal St. John's College in Annapolis, Md. He spent his early adulthood working various dead-end office jobs. "I could never picture myself making a career out of those types of jobs. I would never be able to live with myself if I chose that path. It just wasn't an option," Touey says. When he was 25, he received a grant from Temple University and began his teaching career. "It was great, man. I felt like that was all I needed to get by. The pay was barely enough to live on, and I lived off of the value menu at McDonald's, but I had the freedom to be creative." While Touey eventually gave up on his dissertation and never earned his Ph.D., he was able to parlay his experience into the three adjunct professor positions he holds currently at La Salle, St. Joe's, and Temple University. In some regards, he has always been a bit of a free spirit; perhaps that approach to life influenced his decision to never drive an automobile.



Touey's career as a philosophy teacher allows him to develop and design each class in a new and different manner. "I can't even imagine myself teaching intro courses in biology or math. I think boredom would just overwhelm me," Touey says. A veiled sense of horror consumes his face when he even considers the notion of such a lifestyle. His father's work as a philosophy teacher provided him with the inclination to pursue such a path, and his persona pushed him the rest of the way. While he speaks very highly of the faculty and staff at La Salle University, his open-minded ways become crystal-clear when he begins to talk about the current status of college life in general. "Nowadays, there are so many limitations on what kids can do at college. There



Professor Touey teaches a class at La Salle University.

are all kinds of rules and regulations. Back when I went to college, we had so much freedom to do what we wanted, and we got away with so much more. It's a shame things aren't like that anymore."

Although Touey has been slow to grasp the technological revolution, he has made steady strides towards becoming more integrated with modern technology. For instance, nowadays he begins most of his classes by showing various clips from YouTube.com. "YouTube.com is the best. I don't think there's really anything else worthwhile on the Web besides it," Touey says with a full grin. Also, he finally gave into the mounting social pressure by agreeing to get an e-mail address. "I thought it was crap, but the administration at Temple University forced me to set up an e-mail account." However, there are still certain things he refuses to succumb to. "The other day my mother was telling me that I should get the Internet hooked up to my home computer. She said I was depriving my son Kellen of educational resources. At first I thought she might have a point, but then after a



Professor Touey helps a student before class.

while I felt like I wasn't doing anything wrong by not having the Internet. My son can still read books and study here. He has the Internet at school; he'll be fine."

Ultimately, Touey is content with his position in the world, and his free-flowing ways have allowed him to live a life centered on philosophy, family, certain arts and more. After speaking with Touey for a little bit, one can tell that his yearning for a sense of freedom influences many of his decisions, and that approach to life may have been what led him to forego the luxury of automobiles.



While it's a rite of passage for most teenage males to pursue their driver's license, Touey never saw it that way. He went through high school and college without even attempting to get his license. When he returned home from finishing his degree at St. John's, he finally succumbed to the social pressures and picked up his driver's permit. However, he waited until the last day before his permit expired to take his driving test. The events of that day are what ultimately sealed the fate of Dan Touey as an automobile driver. "It was awful. I failed every part of the course. I wasn't close on the parallel parking part. I didn't even slow down for the stop signs," Touey says with a smirk. Perhaps a higher power was at work that day, pushing Touey away from life as a motorist. Or maybe, deep down he truly never wanted to get his driver's license. Either way, that failed test would be as close as he would ever get to driving a car.

"I know some people would say it's childish, and it probably is. But I think everyone is better off and a lot safer without having me behind the wheel of a car."

According to Bureau of Transportation statistics, nearly 200 million people in the United States have a driver's license, and over 10 million people

in the state of Pennsylvania alone have their license. Owning and driving an automobile is considered a necessity by thousands to millions of people, and many of them could not imagine a life without one. The Transportation Department says that during the beginning of this decade, only 8 percent of all households in

this country did not own a car. According to the same survey, 91 percent of all commuters use their own personal car to travel. The numbers are irrelevant to Touey. "I really don't need a car when you consider my lifestyle. I live in center-city Philadelphia — anything my family



Professor Touey enters the Broad and Olney station.

needs is right near us. We can walk pretty much anywhere, and public transportation takes us everywhere else."



Touey's wife, Dianne, also does not own or operate an automobile. "She had a Connecticut driver's license at one point, but she just let it expire. She really only used it for identification anyways." According to the statistics of the Bureau of Transportation, the odds of finding two people without a driver's license living together in a major city are very slim. But, in this case, Touey's influence apparently has rubbed off on his spouse. At this point, the only question remaining is whether or not their son will follow in the footprints of the parents, or blaze his own path.

Sitting at a cafeteria table in the Union Building on La Salle University's campus, Touey

picks up his roast beef sandwich and takes a bite, crunching his lettuce and lunch meat in his mouth. The fingertips that grasp his lunch are stained a light yellow, the result of smoking one too many cigarettes. As he chews the bits of his meat, bread and roughage, he ponders the question of whether or not he sees his son, Kellen, getting

“We can walk pretty much anywhere, and public transportation takes us everywhere else.”

a driver's license when he turns 16 years old. "You know, I really can't even picture that at this moment. It's so hard to imagine your little child doing grown-up things," Touey says as he swallows a mouthful of sandwich. Excitement can be detected in his voice when he begins to discuss his son. "I don't know, man. It's too hard to get my head around." Eventually, one can infer that he will give his son the freedom to pursue whatever lifestyle he wishes.

Touey begins to explain the bond he shares with his only child. "It's the most amazing feeling when you can pick your kid up and hoist him over your shoulder, carrying him around. We enjoy most of the same comic books. In fact, I went over to my mother's house the other week and rooted through my old stuff and found some old *Zombie* comics. They're pretty much awful and I can barely read them, but I got to collect them all for my son," Touey says with verve in his voice. He plans to scour eBay.com in order to find all the copies in the series in hopes of gaining a complete collection. Besides comic books, the two also enjoy drawing and pursuing other artistic avenues together.



In his spare time between teaching various philosophy courses, Touey practices his craft as a musician. "It was only a few years ago that I decided to start playing the guitar. There was a professor, Bruce Langfeld, I taught with at Temple that I knew played the guitar, and I asked him if he'd be willing to teach me. We began almost immediately." Over time, their teacher-pupil relationship developed into a partnership, as the two decided to form their own band. "Eventually I realized that I had a real talent for writing lyrics. I borrowed lines from T.S. Elliot, Shakespeare, Keirkegaard, a whole bunch of poets and philosophers and just put a bunch of songs together." After a few performances in front of live crowds on various open-mic nights at bars and clubs, the duo decided to release an album.

In the fall of 2006, the group known as HKM released their debut album, which featured 10 tracks all written by Touey.

While the band seemed to be on the rise, even planning a second album's release for late 2007, tragedy struck. Langfeld lost his life this past February. His body was suddenly discovered



Professor Touey enjoying one of his hobbies.

alone in his apartment. The cause of death was undetermined. "I'm still trying to cope with the loss. Obviously, it's a tremendous loss when you lose someone who was close to you," Touey says. Still, Touey appears to have the determination to carry on. "Don't worry. There will be a second album, and hopefully it will be done by the end of the year."



While Touey is certain about the second album, he has no idea what he will be doing in a decade. "It's really kind of ambiguous to tell the truth," Touey says as a matter of fact. He says he will most likely not be teaching 10 years from now. "I think that

“Eventually I realized that I had a real talent for writing lyrics.”

after a certain point everyone gets burned out with what they're doing one way or another." The only thing he knows for certain

is that his occupation will have to provide him with some source of creative freedom. "Maybe I'll be a freelance writer or lyricist, something with some kind of freedom, that's for sure. Either way, 10 years from now, when my son goes off to college, it will be a major shock to my system no matter what job I have." ❧