

Gordon Doug Thornburg

“Make sure you take time to just sit down on the lawn, ‘shoot the bull’ with friends, and soak up the sunshine.”

GORDON D. THORNBURG
Senior

“My biggest weakness is I like to do everything, and unfortunately, I can do almost anything that I’ve undertaken moderately well,” says Gordon “Doug” Thornburg. This “weakness,” along with a small-town background, led Thornburg eventually to California State University, Fresno. Having graduated from high school in 1981 with numerous academic honors, \$15,000 in scholarships, and a virtual “ticket” to almost any university in the country, Thornburg, nevertheless, experienced a shaky start in college. He was enrolled in three institutions of higher learning during his first year of college.

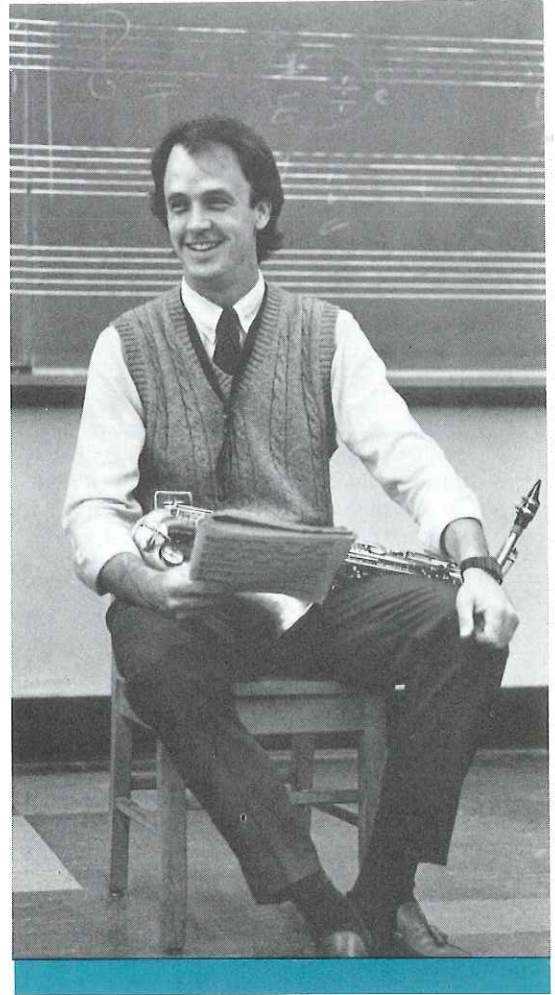
Following graduation from high school in Bishop, California, a small town of approximately 3,500 persons, Thornburg enrolled at the University of Southern California (USC) in spring 1982. But at USC, Thornburg felt he didn’t fit in with the faster-paced Los Angeles lifestyle, the commuting routine, and the on-campus Greek system. He left for Boston’s Berklee College, one of the most noted jazz music schools in the United States. However, that locale didn’t work out either because, in Thornburg’s words, “I found I was still a boy from the sticks inserted into an urban environment. I was really naive and very homesick.” Finally, as a matter of chance and good fortune, Thornburg enrolled at California State University, Fresno, where he has successfully pursued a multidisciplinary college career.

Today at California State University, Fresno, Thornburg, a senior liberal studies major with a 3.9 grade point average, is a model of success. He has recently been named the 1987 Dean’s Medalist for the

School of Education and Human Development and is a member of several national academic honor societies, including the Golden Key National Honor Society, and *Phi Kappa Phi*. He also was named to the 1987 edition of *Who’s Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges* and in *Outstanding Young Men of America*.

Aside from his many academic achievements, the multitasking Thornburg works as public affairs director for the university’s KFSR radio station and has played saxophone and flute for the university’s “B” and “C” Jazz bands and the Swing Band. He played musical accompaniment for the cast of CSU, Fresno’s 1982 production of *Cabaret*, took an acting role in the Experimental Theatre Company’s fall 1985 production *Shades of Gray*, and played a part in the fall 1986 mainstage production of Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*. He also managed to participate in the London Semester and served a five-month writing internship in Texas with the San Antonio Institute for American Studies. He worked as an English tutor at the campus tutorial center and as a reporter for the *Fresno Daily Report*. Thornburg jokes, “The things that have let me survive have been my organization and a meal card at the dorms.”

After graduation, Thornburg plans to take it “easy” for a while before entering graduate school to work again in one of three areas — music, writing, or drama. In Thornburg’s words, “I feel pretty harried this year. I’m going to have to stop and breathe, as I did after high school, and think things over before I make a next move — simplify things.”



Why did you choose to be a liberal studies major?

Both my parents are teachers. My dad teaches 6th grade, all the disciplines. My mom teaches high school English and drama. Sometimes, I look at them, and seeing how diverse they are, I feel as if I’m a “natural” offspring; maybe, being multidisciplinary is genetic. When I entered the university, I declared a liberal studies major because I didn’t know what I wanted to do. I knew, however, that the liberal studies major was the most diverse major on campus, requiring upper-division coursework in English, mathematics and sciences, humanities, and social sciences. And, because my biggest goal in life since high school has been to affect people’s attitudes and improve people’s lives through writing, music, or drama, the liberal studies degree was a perfect solution. I remember seeing as a kid the movie *The Elephant Man* and that just did it to me, wrenched me for hours. I decided at that point that I was going to affect people as that movie affected me. What interested me in the movie’s presentation was the way its separate parts were put together — the script, the camera angles, the technical and writing elements, and then, of course, the acting. That