Common Reading Initiative Spotlights
To The Last Breath By Francis Slakey

Every year the University focuses on one book, required for all entering freshmen, that we hope challenges the students and inspires them in some way. This year’s selection is To the Last Breath, a work by Georgetown physics professor Francis Slakey detailing his adventures climbing the highest mountain on every continent and surfing in every ocean. This “surf and turf” adventure began as simply a way to pass time and amuse himself. Ensuing events, however, cause Slakey, who describes himself in the beginning as isolated and cold, to examine himself and his approach to life; he learns that the world is interconnected, that we are all involved with each other in one way or another, whether we know it or not. As a result of his about-face, he has established the Georgetown Program on Science in the Public Interest, a program that helps students identify problems in the world and then join with students in other disciplines to help solve those problems. At least for Slakey, we are indeed our brother’s keeper.

One of the reasons the Common Reading Initiative committee chose To the Last Breath is that we want our students to come to the same realizations that Slakey does. We want our students to be open to all that they will experience at Troy University and take advantage of the richness that is present here. We want our students to be aware of the different cultures that exist on the campus, to realize they are part of something much bigger than a small campus in southern Alabama—and this world we live in is getting smaller every day. Our Troy University students will be able to participate in a global environment, and everything they learn at the University (including what they discover in To the Last Breath) will help prepare them!

Written by Elaine Bassett
Coordinator of Troy University’s Writing Center