LITE OF THE MIND
(a light-hearted look at all things Chicago)

The X files

To many readers it’s a mysterious marker. “Was he an unknown quantity?” wrote Daniel Mann, AB’52, in a June 2004 letter to the Magazine after he noticed a classmate labeled “X’52” in Alumni News. “Was he so wilted after those six-hour comps that he couldn’t even sign his name?”

The X designation is simply explained. It’s short for an ex-student who was accepted into and attended the University but left before completing a degree. And it’s by no means a mark against a person. The X ranks include Oscar winners, Nobel laureates, and Pulitzer Prize recipients. Formerly given to students who had completed at least two courses toward a degree-granting program, the X label, bestowed by the University’s administration, was recently changed to include anyone who has completed one quarter and earned course credit.

Only time will tell what other names get added to the list of Chicago Xs. Here are a few standouts we found. Send more our way at uchicago-magazine@uchicago.edu.
—Brooke E. O’Neill, AM’04

ED ASNER, X’48
Emmy Award-winning actor

SAUL BELLOW, X’39
Pulitzer and Nobel Prize-winning novelist

JACK CELLA, X’73
Sernitary Co-op’s longtime manager

CELESTE HOLM, X’34
Oscar-winning actress

JESSE JACKSON, X’67
Civil-rights leader

BENJAMIN O. DAVIS JR., X’33
First African American Air Force general (Tuskegee Airmen commander)

JOHN H. JOHNSON, X’42
Founder of Johnson Publishing Company

ROGER EBERT, X’70
Pulitzer Prize-winning film critic

KURT ELLING, X’92
Grammy-winning jazz vocalist

ROGER BLACK, X’70
Magazine designer (Rolling Stone, Newsweek, Esquire)

ERNEST LAWRENCE, X’23
Nobel laureate in physics, 1939

JAMES FARRELL, X’29
Novelist (The Studs Lonigan trilogy)

MIKE NICHOLS, X’53
Oscar, Grammy, Emmy, and Tony-winning writer-director

ROBERT MILLIKAN, X 1894
Nobel laureate in physics, 1923

ALEXI GIANNOULIAS, X’98
Democratic U.S. Senate candidate from Illinois

MARILU HENNER, X’74
Golden Globe-nominated actress and Taxi star

EDWARD LAWRIE TATUM, X’31
Nobel laureate in physiology or medicine, 1958