

Sawdust

SPRING 2018

THE MAGAZINE OF THE SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AND STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

Promising Solutions to Global Problems

SFA team's research
leads to breakthroughs in
potential cancer treatment,
invasive species control





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President's Letter

"The spring semester is well underway, and exciting progress is taking place all across campus. You can read about some of that progress, along with interesting stories about our alumni, in this issue of Sawdust."



WHILE WE CERTAINLY wouldn't complain about our winter weather to friends in the northern states, I think most people in Nacogdoches would agree that, by East Texas standards, it has

been a cold few months on campus. The early signs of spring have been welcome sights, indeed. The spring semester is well underway, and exciting progress is taking place all across campus. You can read about some of that progress, along with interesting stories about our alumni, in this issue of Sawdust. I also would like to take this opportunity to provide you with some additional updates.

In November, Gov. Greg Abbott appointed four members to our Board of Regents, and all of them are proud SFA alumni, like you. McKinney attorney Karen Gantt, former president of the SFA Alumni Association Board of Directors, and Tom Mason, executive vice president and chief financial officer for Hillwood Development Co. in Dallas, were appointed for the first time. Brigettee Henderson of Lufkin and Ken Schaefer of Brownsville were reappointed to second terms on the board. The newly appointed regents were administered their oaths of office by District Judge Ed Klein at the board meeting in January.

In that same meeting, the regents had the honor of recognizing a special group of high-performing SFA students. They were the 40 SFA student-athletes who earned a perfect 4.0 GPA last semester. Their efforts combined with those of many other student-athletes to make fall 2017 the most academically successful semester for athletes in the history of the university. Our athletes can boast an overall cumulative GPA of 3.0, 12 teams with cumulative GPAs above 3.0, 180 student-athletes on the Athletic Director Honor Roll, 89 Southland Conference Commissioner's List honorees and a record three Academic All-Americans. In addition,

Marlon Walls, the senior engineering physics major and football safety who was featured on the cover of last fall's Sawdust, was named Academic All-America of the Year for all of college football at the Football Championship Subdivision level. The numbers leave no doubt — Lumberjacks make great student-athletes!

Some of those student-athletes will be among those attending classes this fall in the new \$46 million Ed and Gwen Cole STEM Building, which is on target to open in July. Under construction since fall 2016, this beautiful, one-of-a-kind facility will be a visually striking and tangible sign of the university's strong commitment to improving the science, technology, engineering and mathematics education of Texas college students.

Just a couple of months after the STEM Building ribbon-cutting ceremony, on Sept. 18 we will celebrate the 95th anniversary of the opening of Stephen F. Austin State University. The details of the celebration are still being finalized, but I can assure you that cake and purple ice cream will be part of the agenda. This tradition dates all the way back to SFA's opening day, when faculty and staff and about 270 students gathered outside to celebrate the 50th birthday of SFA's first president, Dr. Alton W. Birdwell. I hope many of our alumni will be on hand that day as we take the opportunity to recognize 95 years of extraordinary history, tradition, scholarship and achievement. And I invite you to take part in upcoming initiatives that will help ensure SFA's continued success through our 100th anniversary and beyond. ★

Axe 'em, Jacks!

Baker Pattillo '65 & '66
President, Stephen F. Austin State University



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In This Issue



EARLY IN THE spring semester, SFA’s Reserve Officers’ Training Corps caught the attention of onlookers when 52 cadets rappelled from atop Steen Library. The leadership laboratory focused on leader responsibilities and development through practical exercises. Cadets learned to trust their equipment and build confidence in an adventurous and memorable way. / Photo by Kasi Dickerson

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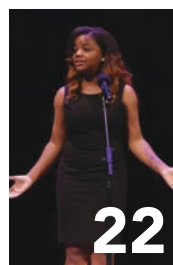
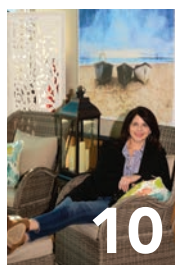
THE SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION is a nonprofit organization dedicated to engaging SFA students, alumni and friends to create an attitude of continued loyalty and support.

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ON THE COVER:

Dr. Shiyu Li, director of SFA's National Center for Pharmaceutical Crops, and his team of researchers were recently granted a U.S. patent for anti-cancer Salviniol, a compound extracted from giant salvinia, that shows promise in reducing or destroying cancer cells without injuring normal cells. They also made a shocking discovery that could significantly impact the battle against invasive species. Li calls the concept endocides, or endogenous biocides.



United States Patent
Patent No. 5,538,884 B2
Date of Patent: Nov. 3, 1997

Abstract
A method for determining the presence or absence of a specific nucleic acid sequence in a sample. The method involves amplifying a portion of the nucleic acid sequence using a pair of primers, and then detecting the amplified product using a probe that is complementary to the amplified product. The probe is labeled with a detectable marker, and the detection of the marker indicates the presence of the specific nucleic acid sequence in the sample.

Claims
1. A method for determining the presence or absence of a specific nucleic acid sequence in a sample, comprising:
a) amplifying a portion of the nucleic acid sequence using a pair of primers;
b) detecting the amplified product using a probe that is complementary to the amplified product, wherein the probe is labeled with a detectable marker, and the detection of the marker indicates the presence of the specific nucleic acid sequence in the sample.

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PROMISING SOLUTIONS TO GLOBAL PROBLEMS

SFA team's research leads to breakthroughs in potential cancer treatment, invasive species control

Story by Christine Broussard
Photos by Hardy Meredith

A team of researchers, including Dr. Shiyu Li, pictured left, research professor and director of the National Center for Pharmaceutical Crops at SFA, was recently granted a U.S. patent for Salviniol, a compound derived from the invasive giant salvinia plant. Lab trials conducted at the NCPC show Salviniol can slow and, in some cases, completely inhibit the growth of a wide range of cancer cells, including pancreatic and lung cancer cells.



WHAT DO GIANT salvinia, fire ants and Chinese tallow have in common? A fatally toxic compound, specific only to them, that could control their invasive spread.

In fact, Dr. Shiyu Li, director of SFA's National Center for Pharmaceutical Crops, and his team of researchers believe the same could be true for every plant and insect in the world.

The primary goal of Li's research during the past 30 years has been, and continues to be, the pursuit and discovery of anti-cancer agents. Li and his team have successfully isolated dozens of plant compounds, several of which show promise in reducing or destroying cancer cells without injuring normal cells. Most recently, they were granted a U.S. patent for anti-cancer Salviniol, a compound extracted from the floating fern giant salvinia — one of Texas' most invasive aquatic plants.

In the process of conducting his research, Li made a shocking discovery that could significantly impact the battle against invasive species. He calls the concept endocides, or endogenous biocides. ➔



PROBLEM: Giant salvinia is one of the most widespread and environmentally, economically, and socially destructive invasive plant species in the world.



THE PROCESS: The entire process, from collection and extraction to treatment and residue disposal, is relatively inexpensive and can be completed in the field. This process is under patent application by SFA.



STEP ONE - EXTRACTION: Using special machinery equipped with a conveyor belt, salvinia can be directly extracted from the waterway for evisceration. Once crushed, the vegetative pulp is pressed, releasing the liquid containing the endocidal agent.

"In our research, we involved hundreds, even up to 1,000 species of organisms, and we found a very interesting pattern," Li said, seated in the conference room of his on-campus laboratory. Pausing on a slide in his PowerPoint presentation filled with various photos of flora and animals, he explained, "All the chemical compounds we are working with are called secondary metabolites. These are small molecules that some people think may involve defense for the producing organism but don't involve its normal reproduction or development. We found that is not entirely true."

Li and his team set about extracting these secondary metabolites first from dozens of different plants and later from various insects. They reintroduced the molecule, whose purpose Li believes is to regulate growth, back into the host organism either by direct spray or via the roots. In every single case studied by Li's team thus far, this method killed the host without significantly harming any other surrounding organisms.

The discovery's potential is thrilling to wildlife professionals fighting a relentless war against the spread of certain biological invasions, including giant salvinia.

"One of the drawbacks of using herbicides to manage salvinia, or any plant, is that the herbicides will affect other non-target plants," said Thomas Decker, an invasive species biologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. "In large mats of salvinia, this isn't usually a concern, but when salvinia is mixed in with other species, a manager has to weigh the benefits of treating the salvinia against the damage to other plants. Having a compound that selectively kills salvinia could allow more aggressive

and thorough management of salvinia in conjunction with the conventional herbicides and biological control currently in use."

PUTTING DOWN SCIENTIFIC ROOTS

In 1984, Li began botany research in China where he successfully identified nine new plant species or varieties, one of which was a new species within the *Camptotheca* genus. At that time, camptothecins, or CPTs, comprised the main compound in cancer-fighting drugs and received FDA approval for use with ovarian, lung and colorectal cancers.

Li's first book on *Camptotheca* and camptothecins was prefaced and endorsed by Dr. Monroe Eliot Wall, an American chemist who co-discovered with Dr. Mansukh C. Wani anti-cancer compounds camptothecins and paclitaxel — two cancer drugs that comprised more than 25 percent of the world's chemotherapy supply.

"Before we did the research, only one species, *Camptotheca acuminata*, was being used worldwide for cancer drug production," Li said. "I was able to discover a second species within the same genus, but it was morphologically different."

Li's early research in the *Camptotheca* field involved experiments aimed at shortening the plant's evolution process and, in turn, shortening the length of time needed to cultivate the plant for CPT production. To say he was successful is an understatement.

Several different *Camptotheca* cultivars were produced in Li's lab with the same leaves and seeds as the parent plant but in a smaller, more condensed shrub version. As the cultivars grew smaller, the CPT yield



STEP TWO - APPLICATION: After filtering vegetative material, a surfactant is added to ensure the solution adheres to the surface of the salvinia. The prepared solution is then sprayed on the treatment area.

grew much larger, meaning even a shrub-like version of what was once a tree contained at least the same amount of cancer-fighting compounds.

By applying endocides, Li also has developed several other dwarf cultivars of trees and herbaceous plants.

GROWING RECOGNITION

Li's research did not go unnoticed. His discoveries caught the attention of Norman Borlaug, a man whose name is considered synonymous with the Green Revolution for his agricultural work. Borlaug received a Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 for his contributions to increasing the world food supply.

Li's method of hastening the evolutionary process of plant growth excited Borlaug, so much so that Borlaug personally contacted the Rockefeller Foundation and told them to support Li's work.

"He spoke to the director there, and the director of the Rockefeller Foundation then called me and said, 'Well, Norman just called me and asked us to fund your research. He said he found it tremendously interesting,'" Li said. "However, he also said, 'because we concentrate (our funding) on food production, we don't support medical research.'"

Even though Li's research did not fall within the Rockefeller Foundation's philanthropic purview, he continued to receive support from a number of individuals, including then-U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, U.S. Rep. Louie Gohmert and U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, among many others.

In fact, several years ago, Hutchison contacted Li directly to ask that he try to identify a native U.S. resource that contains shikimic acid, a chemical used in the production of Tamiflu. The world supply of shikimic acid is

derived from the Chinese spice star anise, but in years of flu epidemics, supply would run short.

"We probably spent a few months working day and night, even through the New Year holiday, to identify a plant with the same compound," Li said. "I even remember going to the field at 1 a.m. collecting samples. We screened a lot of plant samples, and we finally found this."

Moving aside compound diagrams and sifting through various plant matter on the table in front of him, Li held up a leaf from a sweetgum tree.

"I told Senator Hutchison it's not an issue because the sweetgum tree supply in Nacogdoches was enough for the needs of the whole U.S."

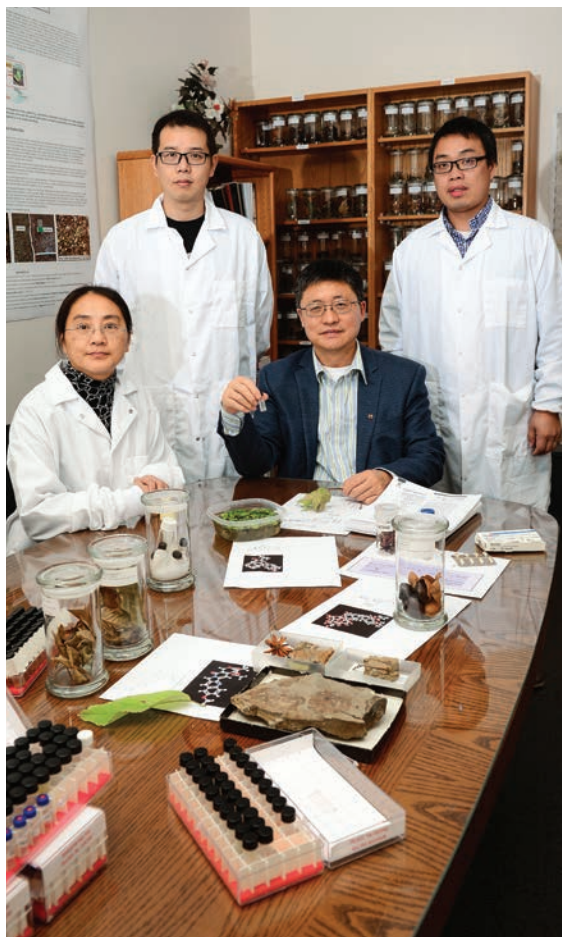
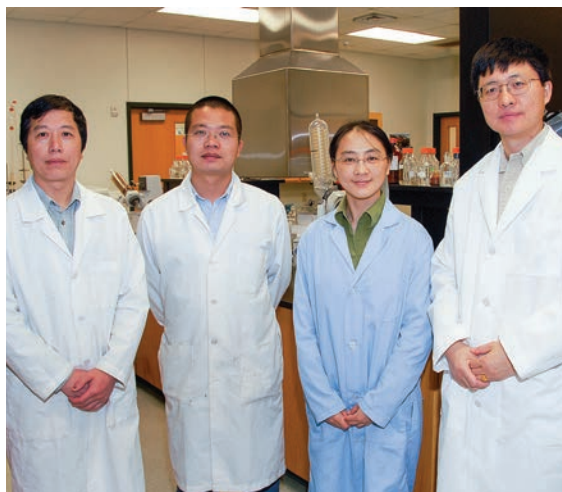
Li also is one of a team of 12 working for M.D. Anderson's Center for Cancer Prevention by Dietary Botanicals investigating the curative effects of turmeric.

CLAIMS TO FAME

In 1994, Li joined SFA, working explicitly with plants from East Texas and other regions. During the past two decades, his team has screened more than 1,300 species of plants and isolated more than 2,000 compounds from 52 of those species. Of those 2,000 compounds, 186 had never been discovered.

Currently, Li has two staff scientists working in the lab. Dr. Ping Wang has worked for SFA since 2005, and she is responsible for the isolation of 27 new compounds, including Salviniol and salvinisides. Dr. Zushang Su has worked with Li since 2011 and has isolated 43 new compounds.

Thirteen patents have been filed, a few of which are still pending, for a number of compounds Li and his team have discovered that show promise in fighting the spread of cancer. ➔



RESULTS: The salvinia's decomposition can be seen as soon as two weeks after application, leaving the surrounding flora unaffected.

TOP: The research team in 2011 included Drs. Zhizhen Zhang, Wei Yuan, Ping Wang and Shiyu Li, principal investigator.

BOTTOM: Drs. Ping Wang, research scientist; Yingchun Wu, visiting scientist; Shiyu Li, principal investigator; and Zushang Su, research associate, comprise today's research team.



During the past two decades, Dr. Shiyou Li's team has screened more than 1,300 species of plants and isolated more than 2,000 compounds from 52 of those species. Of those 2,000 compounds, 186 had never been discovered.

“Right now, we are only in the early stages of discovery. For this to become an available medicine [for cancer treatment] you need human clinical trials, and you need FDA approval.”

~ Dr. Shiyou Li



Five years of lab and field investigations by SFA's National Center for Pharmaceutical Crops revealed that salvinia endocides successfully controlled giant salvinia plants in various stages of growth.

The most recently granted patent was for the compound Salviniol, which Li's team discovered in and extracted from giant salvinia. Lab trials conducted at the NCPC verify Salviniol can slow and, in some cases, completely inhibit the growth of a wide range of cancer cells, including pancreatic and lung cancer cells.

“Dr. Li and his team of researchers at the National Center for Pharmaceutical Crops are engaged in cutting-edge, basic research that is raising the national profile on the quality of research conducted at SFA,” said Dr. Hans Williams, dean of the SFA Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture. “We have been aggressive in promoting Dr. Li's results in various outlets because it is critical for us to continue to highlight his research. Raising awareness of his important discoveries will assist Dr. Li in his efforts to find financial support to continue his work.”

Of course, while incredibly exciting, the discovery of Salviniol is the first step in a long and arduous process of clinical and other testing before the compound could be potentially used in the creation of a cancer-fighting drug.

“Right now, we are only in the early stages of discovery,” Li explained. “For this to become an available medicine you need human clinical trials, and you need FDA approval. All of that is the medical doctors' job. We are just doing research. We don't know how toxic this is to human systems yet. We don't know the long-term impact on humans.”

Li's hope is to use compounds like Salviniol in conjunction with the theoretical discoveries inherent to the endocide process to both target cancer cells and rebalance the body's growth abilities. If endocides do, in fact, regulate an organism's growth, Li hopes to harness those processes to better understand why cancer grows and to control it.

In the meantime, endocides have vast possibilities in the realm of invasive species management.

“Basically, the endocide is solving environmental cancer,” said Dr. Steve Bullard, SFA provost and vice president for academic affairs. “Invasive plants and insects are absolutely huge problems worldwide, so when you look at ecological health, these invasive species are like cancer. They take over, and soon you don't have your native ecosystem anymore.”

Endocides show promise that invasive species can be effectively managed without polluting the environment or harming nearby, non-invasive plants. And maybe eventually they can be used to regulate invasive human cells, too.

For now, Li and his team of talented scientists continue to trek through East Texas landscapes, snipping leaves here and plucking weeds there, in the hopes that, one day, they'll peer down through a microscope in the SFA National Center for Pharmaceutical Crops and realize the cure for cancer was hidden in the Texas wilderness all along. ★



The endocides are highly selective in acting against salvinia species without damaging other tested aquatic and terrestrial plant species.

Work Space / Inside Veronica Beavers' Office



VERONICA BEAVERS '09 & '11 / Director / Office of Multicultural Affairs

1. The handwritten document hanging on the wall was gifted to Beavers in 2016 by a group of Orientation staff members and student supervisors when she left her position as assistant director of Orientation to become the director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Underneath the document's title, "Distance means so little when someone means so much," Orientation staff members and student supervisors wrote personal notes to Beavers detailing the impact she had on their lives.
2. The cork display board hangs directly across from Beavers' desk. It holds graduation announcements and special notes from students she's worked with during her career at SFA. The board serves as a constant reminder to Beavers that her passion is to ensure student success.
3. Beavers is a member of the Upsilon Zeta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. The AKA letters that sit atop the bookcase represent the sorority's principles and values, which include high scholastic achievement, friendship and service to all mankind.
4. Beavers saw this artwork by Alima Newton at a diversity conference and fell in love with it. The work is titled "Harmony" and represents unity, religion and womanhood.
5. In 2015, Beavers received this plaque recognizing her as the Outstanding New Orientation, Transition and Retention Professional during the National Orientation Directors Association Region IV Conference. Beavers said having her coworkers nominate her for this award is one of the proudest moments of her life.
6. This axe is one of many in Beavers' office. It was given to her by a former coworker and highlights all the titles Beavers has held at SFA. It reminds her of how much she has grown since her freshman year.
7. During Beavers' wedding in April 2016, she asked the photographer to take a group photo with all attendees whom she and her husband, also an SFA alum, knew through their relationship with the university. She said it was amazing to see how many friends they had gained through their connection with SFA.
8. The softball sitting atop the desk is a souvenir from when Beavers threw the first pitch at a Ladyjack softball game.
9. In her former position with Orientation, Beavers said the staff members would write letters to students who worked in Orientation that were filled with motivational sayings and quotes. She said these "love letters," as they were referenced, recognized the students for their hard work and provided encouragement to keep them focused. When Beavers left her position in Orientation, the staff gifted Beavers with her own personal "love letter."
10. This poster commemorates the first Women's Empowerment Summit, which Beavers helped coordinate last year. She said the event was filled with positive energy and motivation. The OMA hosted the second summit in March. ★

A Treasured Career

Stacie Shirley '90 serves as
executive vice president,
CFO and treasurer of retailer
Tuesday Morning

Story by Kasi Dickerson
Photos by Hardy Meredith



EVERY DAY IS “Tuesday Morning” for Stacie Shirley '90, who since January 2016 has served as executive vice president, chief financial officer and treasurer of the national retail chain.

“I wear a lot of hats, but all my roles meld together,” Shirley said. “I love that I get to be involved with so many different aspects of the company. It makes the job exciting and dynamic.”

A firm believer in working hard and enjoying the fruits of your labor, Shirley typically arrives at her office off Lyndon B. Johnson Freeway in Dallas earlier than most of her team members to focus on and prioritize the day’s projects, as well as address some of the hundreds of emails she receives daily.

Upon entering the building, employees and guests are greeted by Tuesday Morning’s teal color palette, which is reflected in their products around the room, including vases, throw pillows and decorative signs. Two banners in the lobby’s center serve as a reminder of the company’s vision, mission and values. The entry also reminds everyone that Tuesday Morning associates “share a passion for finding incredible deals.”

Known for its “no-frills” shopping experience, Tuesday Morning began in 1974. Founder Lloyd Ross, who was working with big-name manufacturers, realized there was potential to sell closeout inventory at lower prices. Soon, Ross hosted his first pop-up store in a warehouse in Dallas on a Tuesday morning. Ross’ success prompted him to open Tuesday Morning stores, which are named after the “first positive day of the week.” ➔







With more than 700 stores in about 40 states across the nation, Tuesday Morning specializes in offering domestic and international closeouts of medium- to high-end name brand gifts, luxury home textiles, home furnishings, housewares and seasonal decor.

Much like the variety of merchandise at Tuesday Morning, Shirley has myriad responsibilities, including financial planning, budgeting, forecasting and analysis, accounting, internal auditing, cash management, capital budgeting and analysis, investor relations, and strategic leadership.

"Given my role, I am involved in all investment decisions we make, which can range from information technology enhancements to real estate strategy to merchandise plans," Shirley said. "One of my favorite aspects of the job is building both internal and external partnerships because I'm a people person."

Deal of a lifetime

As a well-established businesswoman in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, Shirley said she wasn't looking for a new job, but when the position opened at Tuesday Morning, it was an opportunity she could not resist.

"The timing was attractive. The company was going through a

transformation, and it was exciting for me to come in and be a part of taking the company to the next level," Shirley said.

Before joining the Tuesday Morning team, Shirley worked for 14 years at Neiman Marcus and eight years at CompUSA. Her friend and assistant Shawn Pierce began working with Shirley at CompUSA and has been with her for almost 20 years. The two said they are like family.

"Stacie is firm but fair in her interactions with people. She doesn't pull any punches; basically, what you see is what you get," Pierce said. "Since this is Stacie's first job as a CFO for a major retailer, I think she transitioned beautifully into the role. I admire all she has accomplished."

The majority of Shirley's workday is characterized by team meetings and meetings regarding current business, financial updates and strategic initiatives.

At one of the corporation's newest locations in Allen, Texas, visitors can see the company's new branding and vision. A bold teal Tuesday Morning sign is centered on the tan building's façade. Inside the store, aisles of treasures, from garden decor and ceramic vases to beauty products and wooden furniture, await shoppers hunting for a deal.

"I can't imagine not working in retail because you have that tangible proof of your work," Shirley said. "There's satisfaction in being able to go into one of our stores to see and feel the environment that you're impacting every day."



*“I think it is important
to have a passion for
whatever industry you
choose to work in.”*

~ Stacie Shirley '90



Always a numbers person

A numbers person and problem-solver, Shirley was destined to major in accounting. In high school, the Wylie, Texas, native enrolled in an accounting course and with little surprise did well in the class. Her knack for numbers and general interest in the field led her to enroll at SFA.

“SFA had a reputation as a university with a great accounting program,” she said. “The size of the school and city was appealing to me.”

After growing up in a small town, Shirley felt at home at SFA with its tightknit student body and smaller student-to-faculty ratio. Shirley and her husband of 27 years, Todd, met when she was 12 years old, and the high school sweethearts attended SFA together.

As a Lumberjack, Shirley was a determined and dedicated student who finished her degree in accounting early.

“The university created an environment that allowed and encouraged questions,” she recalled. “Not being afraid to ask questions is still important to me in my career every day because I’m not going to know everything.”

She also remembers professors who had a lasting impact.

“I feel very fortunate to have had strong accounting professors during my college experience. They were there to help me learn and develop

skills that would assist me later in my career,” Shirley said. “Dr. Jack Ethridge is the professor I remember the most because he loved his profession and had a passion for it.”

Ethridge, who has taught at SFA for 35 years, remembers Shirley as an excellent student.

“Stacie was highly motivated and showed a strong desire to learn, which is what makes teaching fun and why I like to teach,” Ethridge said. “Through her work ethic in class, I knew she would be very successful in her career.”

As one who seeks to “never lose sight of her purpose,” Shirley works to ensure her team is supporting the company in ways that will help it achieve its mission.

“I think it is important to have a passion for whatever industry you choose to work in,” Shirley said. “I have a passion for my job, my people and my company.”

While there is no such thing as a typical day for Shirley, her passion for business is constant. Whether she is meeting with potential investors or strategizing with her team, her work ethic seems to mirror Tuesday Morning’s values: passionate about the deal, open and honest, driven to continuously improve, resourceful, and welcoming. ★

Vista Viewpoint / By Dr. Kimberly M. Childs '88



DR. KIMBERLY M. CHILDS '88

Dean, College of Sciences and Mathematics

Executive Director, STEM Research and Learning Center

Professor, Department of Mathematics and Statistics

must depend on institutions of higher education to recruit, retain and graduate STEM majors who are academically prepared to enter these high-demand careers.

With the addition of the Ed and Gwen Cole STEM Building, SFA is perfectly positioned to lead this charge across the East Texas region and to have a far-reaching impact in Texas.

Rising to great heights, the Cole STEM Building, which is scheduled for completion in summer 2018, will help ensure future growth and success for SFA students and the university. This newest on-campus facility was funded through a Texas tuition revenue bond and offers many exciting features.

Anchored by a 52-foot domed planetarium, the building will house large makerspaces, engineering, cyber security, computer science, research and multipurpose labs, classrooms, and a machine shop. It also will house the Department of Physics, Engineering and Astronomy; the Department of Computer Science; an administrative suite; and the STEM Research and Learning Center.

Through the STEM Research and Learning Center, the facility will not only be utilized by SFA students and faculty but also will service various local communities and K-12 institutions. The center offers outreach programs, educational summits and lecture series that annually

A VIBRANT SCIENCE, technology, engineering and mathematics workforce is vital to America's innovative capacity and global competitiveness. The United States has launched a national campaign to widen the STEM pipeline and

serve more than 3,000 K-12 students and teachers, administrators, SFA personnel, and community members. With \$3.2 million in external funding, the center supports grant activities that include undergraduate research, teacher preparation and professional development.

As educational opportunities within the College of Sciences and Mathematics expand, our goal is to develop additional undergraduate programs, such as data analytics, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and SFA JackTeach, a STEM teacher preparation program.

The outside of the building also will "speak" science, technology, engineering and mathematics with displays and features that reflect the hands-on and inquiry-based learning opportunities that will take place inside.

As faculty members within the college contribute to the knowledge and research base in the STEM disciplines, they simultaneously engage in outreach and recruitment efforts designed to encourage and prepare students to enter STEM careers. We are committed to academic excellence and understand the magnitude of our mission. We are preparing students to lead and serve in a changing world. ★

Rising to great heights, the Cole STEM Building, which is scheduled for completion in summer 2018, will help ensure future growth and success for SFA students and the university.

Athletics Highlights

NFL SCOUTING COMBINE

FOR THE FIRST time since 2015, the SFA football program was represented at the NFL Scouting Combine in Indianapolis, Indiana, as defensive end John Franklin was invited to participate in the coveted workout. Franklin is the first Lumberjack to be invited since All-American and SFA's all-time leading rusher Gus Johnson participated in 2015.



ATHLETIC DIRECTOR ROBERT HILL

FOLLOWING A 31-YEAR affiliation with SFA athletics, Robert Hill announced his plans to retire in May. Under Hill's leadership, SFA has enjoyed an unprecedented run of success both in the Southland Conference and on the national stage. Among the notable athletic achievements are an NCAA Division I national championship in bowling; four men's basketball appearances in the NCAA tournament; Demi Payne becoming the first SFA athlete to claim an NCAA Division I individual title by winning the outdoor pole vault title in 2015; 10 consecutive women's conference track titles; and five consecutive women's soccer league titles.

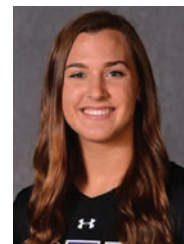


LADYJACK VOLLEYBALL

THE LADYJACKS UPPED SFA's Southland Conference championship total to 88 when the team captured the program's ninth regular season league title in November. Head coach Debbie Humphreys was named the Southland Conference's Katrinka Jo Crawford Coach of the Year for the sixth time after leading SFA back to the top of the league standings for the first time since 2014.

ACADEMIC ALL-AMERICANS

THREE SFA STUDENT-ATHLETES received College Sports Information Directors of America Academic All-America honors this past fall. In addition to Marlon Walls' (pictured, top) selection as the CoSIDA Academic All-America of the Year in December 2017, sophomore volleyball player Ann Hollas (pictured, center) collected CoSIDA Academic All-America third-team honors after maintaining a perfect 4.0 GPA in biology. Sophomore soccer player Carli Arthurs (pictured, bottom) also earned CoSIDA Academic All-America third-team honors by maintaining a 4.0 GPA in mathematics.



MARLON WALLS

MARLON WALLS WAS named to the 20th annual Football Championship Subdivision Athletics Directors Association Academic All-Star Team for a second consecutive time and was one of nine finalists for the FCS ADA's annual \$5,000 postgraduate scholarships. Walls' accomplishments were highlighted in front of one of the most powerful audiences in all of sports in early December at the 2017 National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame Annual Awards Dinner in New York City. Walls received an invitation to the event by becoming a finalist for the William V. Campbell Trophy.



'JACK TALK

Facebook - SFASU
Instagram - SFA_JACKS

Twitter - @SFASU
Pinterest - SFALUMBERJACKS

Use #AxeEm or #SFAJackTalk on social media.



Flying out of Gate 27 at Hobby Airport and noticed SFA banners with notable alumni and a player's jersey displayed in the airport! #AxeEm

PHILIP RICH / TWITTER



My mom's CHEERLEADING outfit from Stephen F. Austin State University ... 1960-ish.

@SFASpiritTeams
@SFA_Football

LEE ANN WOMACK / TWITTER



We have a lot of @SFASU grads at @Wilson_Rams representing during College Week! Axe 'em, Jacks!

TODD MCCONAUGHY / TWITTER



Packing up to move to my new place and look what I found!

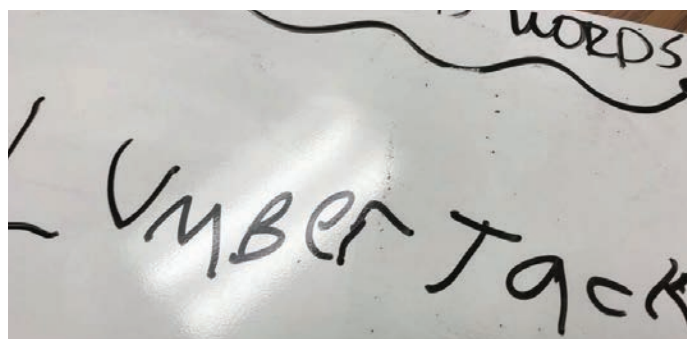
#sfamemories
#axeem

JUSBRI_81 / INSTAGRAM



Press conference at 11 a.m. Dec. 5 on ESPN3. Awards dinner tonight and meeting Peyton Manning. #NFFawards #CampbellTrophyFinalist #NewYork #axeemjacks @SFA_Football

MARLON WALLS / TWITTER



When teaching compound words, and the student looks around the room for ideas ... and comes up with this word. He then lets me know he found it on my SFA poster. #axeemjacks

REBECCA RICE / FACEBOOK

Love this school! It's been a family tradition to attend.

AMANDA MICHEL SAYLOR / FACEBOOK

'Jacks of All Trades / With Brent Broussard '86

BATTING A THOUSAND: Marketing alumnus enjoys career with Astros

Story by Donna Parish

BRENT BROUSSARD '86 rounded third base and stole home plate (figuratively speaking) in 1994 when he went to work for the Houston Astros. During the past 24 years, he has worked his way up in the organization, now serving as a senior account executive for group ticket sales.

With an office space adjacent to the historic Union Station, a building that originally opened in March 1911 as a hub of rail transport and now serves as the cornerstone of Minute Maid Park, Brent is a stone's throw from the baseball field where the 2017 World Series champions play ball.

Growing up in Houston, Brent attended as many home games as he could.

"Back in the 1970s, my Uncle Jeff came to live with us the summer before his final year of college," Brent said. "We are both huge baseball fans — especially fans of the Astros."

Brent said his uncle, Jeff Broussard, was working a summer job as an assistant manager at a Woolworth's variety store, so he had a little spending money.

"My uncle's nickname for me is Bud, and I remember during that summer he said, 'Bud, I have a choice for you to make. We can go to a couple of home games in the Astrodome and sit in the more expensive field box seats, or we can go to a lot of home games and sit in the pavilion.' That really wasn't a choice for me. Of course, I chose the pavilion. I think seats were about 50 cents each back then. We attended a lot of games that summer."

Jeff now lives in Austin but continues to support the Astros by attending all home playoff games and a few games during regular season at the team's Minute Maid Park facility, the home field for the Astros since 2000. This past fall, Brent was able to reciprocate the generosity his uncle showed him as a young boy by taking him to Game 7 of the World Series in Los Angeles.

"I didn't think Brent was planning to travel to Los Angeles," Jeff said. "His home was flooded during Hurricane Harvey, and he was still dealing with the cleanup. I was shocked and thrilled when he called and invited me to travel to Los Angeles with him."

According to Jeff, it was a very special moment on Nov. 1, 2017, when he and his nephew were together when the Astros won the World Series.

"It felt like we had kind of come full circle," Jeff said. "Being there with Brent to witness the Astros' first World Series win was one of the most-memorable moments of my life."

As any Major League Baseball fan can attest, winning the World Series is the pinnacle for the fans, players and teams that comprise America's favorite pastime. Another major highlight is receiving a World Series ring, which is yet another perk of Brent's affiliation with the Astros.

"The Houston Astros organization provides rings for the players and employees," Brent said. "I have two rings I've received through my employment with the Astros — the 2004 All-Star Game ring and the 2005 National League pennant ring. In April, we are due to receive the 2017 World Series championship ring. Having three rings is very special to me because I have three boys who will each receive one someday."

Another perk of being an Astros employee is witnessing firsthand the way the organization gives back to the community. Although the team played many games away from Houston in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, the players helped with relief efforts and wore jerseys emblazoned with the logo "H Strong" in tribute to the city and its people.

"Although the team had been on the road for an extended period of time, players and other members of the Astros organization volunteered at the George R. Brown Convention Center on a rare day off to help uplift the evacuees staying there," Brent said. "They visited with evacuees in a showing of solidarity and helped raise millions of dollars toward recovery efforts."

Decades have passed since Brent was a young boy sitting with his Uncle Jeff in the Astrodome watching the Astros. Those inexpensive seats they occupied during the 1970s have graduated to stadium seating along the first base line where the duo celebrated the Houston Astros' first World Series win. ★

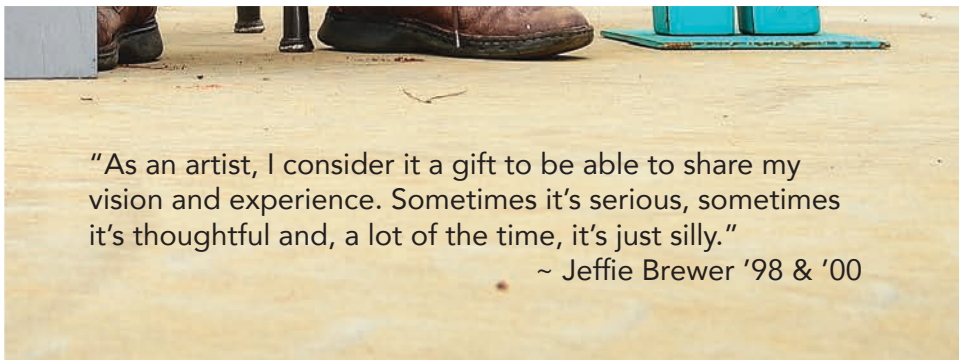
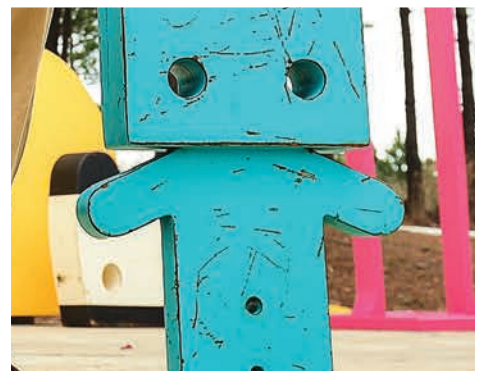


Brent Broussard in the Houston Astros dugout at Minute Maid Park / Photo by Hardy Meredith

Brent Broussard and his uncle, Jeff Broussard, at Dodger Stadium celebrating the Houston Astros' first World Series win / Photo courtesy of Jeff Broussard

Houston Astros' 2017 World Series Commissioner's Trophy / Photo courtesy of Astros Media Relations





"As an artist, I consider it a gift to be able to share my vision and experience. Sometimes it's serious, sometimes it's thoughtful and, a lot of the time, it's just silly."

~ Jeffie Brewer '98 & '00

SCULPTING AN ARTIST

PASTEL DRAWINGS TRANSFORM
INTO MASSIVE STEEL SCULPTURES

STORY BY ROBBIE GOODRICH / PHOTOS BY HARDY MEREDITH

VISITING THE WEBSITE of SFA artist and educator Jeffery Brewer '98 & '00 takes viewers on a whimsical adventure that barely touches the tip of the iceberg of his playful (and somewhat mischievous) imagination and brilliant talent.

"We are given a brief amount of time together," he writes on his home page. "As an artist, I consider it a gift to be able to share my vision and experience. Sometimes it's serious, sometimes it's thoughtful and, a lot of the time, it's just silly."

He is married to Angie, whom he credits with saving him from "impending doom." Brewer goes on to explain that his interests include "teaching, golf, dogs, plants, the letter z, singularity, a 10-foot putt, fresh figs, harmony, understanding, tulips, the tango, cut grass, the color teal, clouds, rust stains on concrete, small violent birds, the realization of exactly how fast time goes by, the number 7, 'politricks,' cows, short walks, good stories, using the word 'sans' and lying in the sun."

... yea, that's Jeffie.

And if you've driven through Boerne, Texas, and seen the giant purple bull sculpture sitting in front of the Boerne water tower on Highway 46, or visited the University of Mississippi Museum in Oxford, Mississippi, and encountered a large orange fox out front, or strolled along Poydras Street in New Orleans and came upon a big pink bunny ... that's Jeffie, too.

Assistant professor of sculpture and 3-D design in the School of Art, Brewer works in two- and three-dimensional art — his favorite medium: pastels. "I can work fast and intuitively, quickly building a drawing," he said.

From the drawings come the colorful and massive steel sculptures. "The drawings are free and joy-filled play," he said.

"Steel is up there, but steel is hard work, and we have a love-hate relationship with hard work."

Brewer earned a Master of Fine Arts in sculpture and metals and a Master of Arts in sculpture and painting from SFA, and he also holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in drawing, printmaking and jewelry making. He has taught a variety of undergraduate and graduate-level art classes, from sculpture to typography to expressive drawing.

Brewer was the owner of Gorilla Graphics, a graphic design and sign production company, from 1994 to 1996, and he was an illustrator/designer for the Nacogdoches advertising firm Point A Media Inc., working alongside his wife, from 1999 to 2010. In addition

to his teaching career, Brewer is the founder and president of Orange Cat Inc., a design and fabrication company, which he opened in 2002. He also designed, fabricated and built his own home north of Nacogdoches.

Since his first exhibition in 1998, his work has appeared in both solo and group shows across America, Canada, Europe, ➔

"I'VE ALWAYS BEEN
AN ARTIST ... NEVER
THOUGHT I WOULD
BE ANYTHING ELSE."

~ JEFFIE BREWER

RIGHT: Artist Jeffie Brewer works on a dog sculpture that will be installed this spring at the Ruff Range Dog Park in Frisco.

TOP: Southlake junior Shelby Locklin discusses her work with Brewer during a sculpture class.

BOTTOM: Brewer designed, fabricated and built his home near Central Heights in northern Nacogdoches County.



Mexico and Asia. He has works in public and private collections throughout the U.S.

Describing himself as “the son of eccentric junkyard owners,” Jeffie, as friends know him, grew up in a small, rural East Texas town where he learned as a child to “spot beauty in the mundane.” He developed a variety of industrial skills and discovered he had a knack for drawing — early revelations he said influenced his artistic trajectory.

“I’ve always been an artist ... never thought I would be anything else,” he said. “I’ve been making art from the start and will probably go out doing it.”

When asked to describe his art and its influences, Brewer referenced his artist statement:

"I MAKE THINGS.

"I SHOW PEOPLE HOW TO MAKE THINGS.

**"I HAVE AN INSATIABLE DESIRE TO CREATE, TO
EXPLORE, TO UNDERSTAND.**

"I WORK WITH MY HANDS.

"I WORK WITH MY HEAD."

“My work’s intention is to provide just enough information, allowing for a narrative without delving into total non-representationalism,” Brewer states. “Leaving room for interpretation, as well as a little mystery,

I hope, adds to the viewing experience. My work in graphic design and general fascination with pop culture are heavy influences.”

He further explains those influences change daily.

“I’ll hear a song, see a bird, eat a taco, see a flash of color, read a book, hear the news or have a great conversation with an old friend — anything really,” he said. “I think it’s the artist’s job to filter the minutiae of the day-to-day and present it back to the world in a way that’s more beautiful, painful, poignant, thoughtful and just clearer or more honest.”

Brewer has public projects scheduled through 2019, and the work he supplies galleries continues to attract buyers.

“I love what I’m doing, and I guess people do, too,” he said. “I have a very specific skill set and a love for art that borders on neurotic. I love the expressive spirit, creativity and beauty, and I love when others understand it the way I do. It’s a journey as a human to get to that point, and I try to guide people there by my work, actions and passion for art.

“I have had some amazing mentors through the years; some shared information and confidence, and others shared criticism and conflict. I don’t like to call myself a teacher; I just want the world to have better art.”

He describes each day as an adventure.

“I teach, so I’m floating back and forth all the time,” he said. “On the non-teaching days, I have the best intentions to hit the studio early and draw a bit, then get my assistant going once he arrives, then on to welding and grinding or bending. If it’s too hot or cold in the afternoon, I do computer design or proposals. On teaching days, I sneak in work at school or sometimes draw alongside students. I do half days at the university two days a week, so it’s a delicate dance. I think it’s great for my students to see that I’m an active, working artist.”

ROAD TRIP!

A FEW OF JEFFIE BREWER'S OUTDOOR SCULPTURES

Visit sfasu.edu/sawdust to view a map of Brewer's past, present and future outdoor sculpture locations.



1. BUNNY

Poydras Corridor
Sculpture Exhibition
New Orleans, Louisiana

2. REDBIRD

Art on Henderson
Dallas, Texas

3. KING CROW

Art Tracks
Palestine, Texas

4. POP

GVG Contemporary
Santa Fe, New Mexico

5. BULL

Boerne Art Al Fresco
Boerne, Texas

6. PITY THE MONSTERS

Rosemary Beach
Sculpture Exhibition
Rosemary Beach, Florida

Photos courtesy of Jeffie Brewer

In summing up his career thus far, Brewer said commercial success, fame and fortune “seem like the right answers.” But more than that, he’s had fun.

“I’ve led a creative life, and I’ve shared that life through teaching for 20 years. That seems more sincere.”

When recently asked to share a formative experience before one of his shows opened in a Santa Fe gallery, Brewer related the following:

“I grew up in a smallish town in Texas, the son of a junk man. Across the highway from the junkyard was an old gas station. The gas station had candy. On occasion, I could coax money from my dad, who was affectionately known as ‘Crazy Ray,’ and I’d make the harrowing journey across the highway to the wax lips, Chick-O-Sticks or whatever weird 1970s candy was available.

“In this specific summer-day memory, Palestine, Texas, was as hot, dry and dusty as one can imagine. Comprising 99-percent sweet tooth, I could hear the siren song of Cokes and candies. After procuring money and a blessing to cross Highway 155, I embarked on my quest.

“As I stared across the dusty highway, dark clouds filled the sky, and it started to rain. I could see the line of rain come into view, engulf the station and then stop midway between me and the candy. The rain lasted just a moment and then just stopped, leaving a perfect line between the store and me. I was transfixed. Where I was going was washed clean and new; where I stood — dusty and unchanged.

“I pinpoint this moment as maybe my first aesthetic experience,” he said. “I was overwhelmed with emotion and wonder. Every time I recount this story, it gets me. I try to see beauty. It’s my job.” ★



Colorful anodized bunnies that are included in the installation “reflections on pride, ego and public demand” rest on a table in Brewer’s home studio.

Words of Wisdom

Scholarship, mentorship program prepares graduates for media careers

STORY BY
JOANNA ARMSTRONG



Photo courtesy of Nytesia Ross

NYTESIA ROSS '17 has always been a storyteller, but it wasn't until college that she knew she would make storytelling her career.

A poetry assignment in seventh grade sparked Ross' love for writing and, in turn, led to a desire to address social issues with spoken word.

"After that assignment, I started writing poetry more frequently and later began reciting it," Ross said. "This continued into college where I was introduced to the world of spoken word. It became a love of mine, which led me to the Kennedy Center stage in Washington, D.C., where I recited a piece I wrote titled 'Teach Me' about the high school drop-out crisis."

At SFA, Ross worked in the Office of Multicultural Affairs where the importance placed on diversity and listening to different perspectives shifted her storytelling style toward newscasting.

"Through these experiences and opportunities, I saw how necessary and important a person's story is and how telling one's story can be a catalyst for change," Ross said. "I later found that poetry is not the only way stories can be told. They also can be told through news and sports. When I interned for KLTV in Tyler during the summer of 2016, I saw how telling a person's story made an impact on people's lives the way poetry does, and I was inspired."

In fall 2016, she received the first Raycom Media scholarship and received it every subsequent semester until graduation. Through the program, students are paired with a professional at KLTV or KTRE who acts as a mentor. The mentor regularly interacts with the student, providing job experience and giving him or her an opportunity to shadow and gain exposure to the field. The program was started with the goal of preparing students for their first after-college job, according to Pat Stacey, vice president and general manager of KLTV and KTRE.

"As an industry, we regularly see graduates enter the workforce only to discover they are not fully prepared on what to expect in that first job," Stacey said. "They have the technical skills and are well-prepared from their university experience, but there are other components that occasionally surprise them."

Brad Streit, Raycom Media group vice president, said the program overcomes this issue by exposing the students to the "culture of the TV station and their area of interest," while they learn through the firsthand experiences of their mentor. Not only do students become accustomed to the day-to-day tasks involved with their future careers, but they also are introduced to the practical aspects that go along with it.

"This relationship gets the student thinking beyond the immediate goal of graduating and challenges them to consider what positions they will need to start in, where geographically they might go for that job and what skills they will need to exceed performance expectations," Stacey said.

Ross spent her last three semesters at SFA being mentored by Anissa Centers, award-winning news anchor for KLTV. Centers has anchored for news stations across the Southeast and served as a correspondent for CNN, interviewing high-profile public figures such as former President George W. Bush and first lady Laura Bush.

"Who can say that they've been mentored by an Emmy Award-winning anchor?" Ross asked. "I don't know many, but I can say I have, and that is something I do not take for granted."

Throughout her time in the program, Ross and Centers met to talk about goals and plans. When they couldn't meet, they would talk on the phone about what Ross was learning in the classroom and how she was developing her craft.

Faculty Advising

"Who can say that they've been mentored by an Emmy Award-winning anchor? I don't know many, but I can say I have, and that is something I do not take for granted."

~ Nytesia Ross '17

"The program allows us to most effectively blend the educational world that SFA provides with the work environment at our stations," Streit said. "In some ways it is not only educational for the student, but it also is educational for us, too."

Ross said the program provided her with more than just educational benefits.

"One of the biggest blessings throughout my experience with the Raycom Media scholarship/mentorship program is the relationship I established with Ms. Centers," Ross said. "She taught me the value of fostering relationships with individuals in my desired field and the passion that is required in order to do an exceptional job."

Working with Centers at KLTN gave Ross the opportunity to form relationships with the people at Raycom and the station that would eventually become her employer after graduation.

"Being able to shadow and work directly with those who have already made strides in the industry was the opportunity of a lifetime," Ross said.

Ross credits her success to both Raycom and the mass communication department at SFA.

"The mass communication department at SFA, as well as working live productions on ESPN3, prepared me for my job," Ross said. "I am not only familiar with fast-paced environments, but I also understand the importance of being fluent in every aspect of storytelling, from camera operating to reporting and all the way to producing." ★

'SPRING CLEANING' YOUR BODY: Five simple things you can do to revitalize

BY DR. DAWNELLA M. RUST

Professor of Kinesiology and Health Science
James I. Perkins College of Education



IT'S SPRING, A time for renewal. As the days get longer, many people start spring cleaning to refresh their homes. Have you ever considered "spring cleaning" your body? Spring is the perfect time to rejuvenate our bodies. Here are five simple things you can do.

1. **BREATHE.** Did you know proper deep breathing could lower your heart rate and blood pressure, increase blood oxygen levels, promote clearer thinking, increase metabolism, relieve stress and improve circulation? Frequently stop for a moment and focus on your breathing. Inhale slowly through your nose as much as possible, expanding your rib cage with your breaths. Exhale slowly, as well.
2. **MOVE.** The health benefits of physical activity are hard to ignore. It's not necessary to spend hours at the gym to reap the benefits of exercise. In fact, there are myriad activities you can do to burn calories. For example, take a walk, vacuum, rake or mow the lawn. The options are almost endless.
3. **EAT CLEAN.** Eliminating processed foods plays a huge part in clean eating. Embrace whole foods like vegetables, fruits, grains and proteins. Limit your sugar and salt intake. Pay attention to your portion sizes. Remember to drink water, and try not to eat anything after 8 p.m.
4. **SHOW GRATITUDE.** In addition to physically taking care of our bodies, it's important to stay psychologically strong, too. One way to accomplish this is by showing gratitude. People who are grateful tend to be happier, healthier and more fulfilled. Being grateful can help people cope with stress, and it also may have a beneficial effect on your health.
5. **THINK POSITIVE.** Our emotions tend to affect our long-term well-being. Research shows that experiencing positive emotions at a 3-to-1 ratio with negative ones leads to a tipping point beyond which we naturally become more resilient to adversity. Take time to notice the good things in your life. ★



TUNED IN

GOLDEN AGE
OF RADIO
LEADS TO
DREAM CAREER,
FRIENDSHIP

STORY BY
ROBBIE GOODRICH

PHOTOS BY
HARDY MEREDITH





THE WORD “DESTINY” SEEMS TO COME INTO PLAY IN THE LIFE OF DONNIE PITCHFORD '83.

Little did the “Lum and Abner” cartoonist of today know as a young child in Memphis during the 1960s or as an SFA student in the early 1980s that a series of events would lead him to the multiple artistic endeavors he now enjoys.

Producing weekly “Lum and Abner” cartoons and recording audio versions of each, freelancing as an editorial cartoonist, illustrating children’s books, collaborating on comic books, helping design veterans’ memorial statues, producing a documentary and becoming a sought-after public speaker on all these topics — this is Pitchford’s life today.

It started with a deep interest in television animation and comic books, followed by his announcement to his family at age 5 that he was “gonna be a cartoonist.” Combine the influence of the rural comedy television genre of the 1960s and his love of “Old Time Radio” with an introduction in 1980 to the original “Lum and Abner” radio show, thanks to a now-retired SFA communication professor, and you have the makings of a cartoonist, although he was “sidetracked” by a broadcasting teaching career for a few decades.



Born in Jacksonville, Texas, Pitchford knew at an early age what he wanted to become as soon as he saw animation on television around 1960.

"I never missed the prime-time weekly series 'The Flintstones,' and I appreciated the voices and music as much as the animation," Pitchford said. "I was given a comic book version of 'The Flintstones,' and that fascinated me, as well. Disney, Walter Lantz, Warner Brothers, Hanna-Barbera, Terrytoons and, a little later, characters like Popeye, Gumby and others caught my attention on television. The Sunday newspaper comics were very important to me."

He wrote to prominent cartoonists of the time, including George Wildman of "Popeye" comic book fame, who was the only cartoonist to write back. That connection led to a 45-year friendship until Wildman's death in 2016. Another more recent mentor is Hy Eisman, who at 91 is still working and drawing today's "Popeye" Sunday newspaper strip.

After the family moved to Memphis in 1963, a young Pitchford started drawing his own characters, which he didn't know at the time but now realizes were somewhat similar to the style of "Lum and Abner."

"I was basing them more on strips like 'Snuffy Smith' and rural comedy genre on television like 'The Real McCoys,' 'The Andy Griffith Show,' 'The Beverly Hillbillies,'" he said. "My dad often thought my efforts were silly and probably hoped I'd grow out of this phase. My mother was always supportive. At times, my dad would reconsider, but as high school came along, we had some major 'discussions' about the reality of my goals. I believe he felt I'd never make it in the industry. And I didn't during his lifetime."

While attending high school in Longview, Pitchford worked as a freelance artist for the Weiber-Reynolds Co. He also worked in his family's silkscreen business while in high school and as a printer and artist for a Longview commercial printing company between and during college semesters and other jobs.

He received an associate degree in commercial art from Kilgore College before earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts in secondary art education at SFA, followed by a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies from The University of Texas at Tyler.

Although Pitchford had been interested in nostalgic films and music as a child, it was SFA's Dr. Joe Oliver who introduced him to the 15-minute "Lum and Abner" radio show when the communication (radio-TV) professor aired an episode on Halloween night in 1980 when Pitchford was an SFA student.

Pitchford often tuned in to the still fairly new KSAU campus radio station. Oliver was trying to build an audience for KSAU, and airing Old Time Radio shows was one of his ideas to get attention and garner listeners.

Pitchford remembered his father telling him about the "Lum and Abner" radio show in the mid-1960s when they were having lunch together at a Lum's Restaurant in Memphis. The elder Pitchford had listened to the show while growing up in Arkansas.

Although Pitchford had become fascinated with radio's Golden Age while still in high school, the chance to hear classic programs on the campus radio station was "a bonus to brighten the tedious days and nights."

"I'd tune in to KSAU-FM and listen to 'The Jack Benny Program,' 'Suspense,' 'Inner Sanctum,' 'Fibber McGee and Molly,' and one radio show that would soon become an important part of my life, 'Lum and Abner,'" Pitchford said.

Oliver's voice seemed familiar to Pitchford, but he attributed it to his assumption that all radio announcers "learn to sound that way."

During the next summer, a Gilmer, Texas, radio station started airing "Lum and Abner" daily. Pitchford would set a timer to record it and soon became hooked on that style of "down-home humor and the warmth of the characters, which were (for the most part) all played by two talented men who had grown up in Mena, Arkansas," Pitchford said.



ABOVE: Donnie Pitchford, left, and Dr. Joe Oliver, retired SFA communication (radio-TV) professor, reminisce about the "Lum and Abner" radio shows Oliver aired on KSAU when Pitchford was a student at SFA.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: Rural radio stations that could not receive a live feed often relied on transcriptions to air the "Lum and Abner" radio shows. This transcription dates to around 1935.

OPPOSITE PAGE, MIDDLE: Pitchford's home office where he draws the "Lum and Abner" cartoons. To view the comic strip archives and listen to audio versions, visit lumandabnersociety.org/Comic-Strip-Home.

OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM: The cassette on which Pitchford recorded the "Lum and Abner" Halloween show he heard on KSAU when he was an SFA student in 1980.

After landing his first teaching job at Hawkins High School in 1983, Pitchford taught art and graphic arts classes and served as the sponsor of the yearbook and school newsletter.

A year later, Pitchford was a founding officer of a radio historical and educational organization, the National Lum and Abner Society.

"We published a bimonthly newsletter from 1984 to 2007 and held annual conventions in Mena, Arkansas, where we brought in actors, announcers, writers, producers and family members associated with Lum (Chester Lauck) and Abner (Norris Goff). We had film showings, radio script performances, etc. and worked with the Lum and Abner Museum, which is located not far away in the 'real' community of Pine Ridge, renamed for the radio show's location," Pitchford said.

Working at Carthage High School from 1985 to 2010, Pitchford taught broadcast journalism and video technology and was media director for more than 20 years, all the while working with the National Lum and Abner Society and its conventions. He also was an adjunct college instructor for a time.

As the NLAS grew, the organization eventually garnered Oliver as a member. Pitchford wrote Oliver, introducing himself and telling him of the two years he had eagerly awaited each edition of his KSAU broadcasts. Pitchford told Oliver how he had first heard a 15-minute "Lum and Abner" segment on KSAU and filled him in regarding his involvement in the NLAS. Rather than sending a written reply, Oliver called Pitchford.

"I soon learned why 'that voice' had been so familiar," Pitchford said. "Turns out, I'd heard it in the 1960s when Dr. Oliver was an announcer for WREC Radio in Memphis, as well as WREC-TV. It was his voice that announced the late-night 'Award Theatre' on Channel 3 where I was ➔

introduced to the classic series of 20th Century Fox Charlie Chan films.”

Within months, the two men met in person.

From 1995 to 2010, Pitchford’s Carthage High School television students broadcast “The Golden Age of Radio,” and, after Oliver and Pitchford finally got to know each other, Oliver was always willing to evaluate the work of Pitchford’s students, write critiques, compose recommendation letters and work with the students.

“Many of my students created video productions that won state championships,” Pitchford said. “Some of my graduates became students in Dr. Oliver’s SFA classes, moving on to careers in broadcasting, cinematography and education.”

Friendship and a mutual appreciation of radio history between the two men eventually led Pitchford last fall to turn Oliver’s 1972 radio program “WREC ... at 50” into an internet video documentary. In “WREC ... at 50,” Oliver wrote and produced the story of radio pioneer Hoyt B. Wooten, who hand-built his first transmitter in 1922 and started a broadcast empire in Memphis, Tennessee, where Oliver worked for a time. The documentary can be viewed on YouTube.

In 2010, Pitchford’s life was about to take a full-circle turn. He began working with Argo Press, producing cover/miscellaneous art and writing articles for Charlton Spotlight magazine. He also was interviewed by the online newspaper FirstArkansasNews about his knowledge of “Lum and Abner” and the society.

After retiring from education that year, he had an idea of proposing a Sunday-style comic strip for FirstArkansasNews. After working out the details and acquiring the necessary rights, the “Lum and Abner” comic strip and an accompanying audio segment were launched in June 2011. Pitchford had finally become the cartoonist he’d dreamed about as a boy.

When he reflects on his time at SFA and the influences on his life, Pitchford can’t help but think of Oliver and other SFA professors who made deep impressions on him.



“Lum and Abner” ® TM the estate of Chester H. Lauck Jr. © 2018 the Estate of Chester H. Lauck Jr. and Donnie Pitchford.

“The art courses were invaluable, particularly life drawing under Jon Wink, watercolor and ad design with Jim Snyder, sculpture with Piero Fenci, and painting under Bert Rees,” he said.

“Even though I was an art education major, I had a deep interest and love in broadcast,” Pitchford said. “Had I known I’d end up teaching it, I’d have made certain to take classes in that department. Instead, I tuned in to KSAU where I heard the voice of Dr. Oliver. His broadcasts inspired me.”

Today, Pitchford has his own active “Lum and Abner” following on Facebook, as well as in print and on the airwaves. “I’ve had readers ranging in age from their teens to much older than me. Many are folks who are unhappy with much of what today’s radio and television offer and prefer a nostalgic experience.”

The Arkansas newspaper audience comprises readers who live in the area Lauck and Goff came from.

“My hope is to continue producing the comic strip and audio as long as I am able,” Pitchford said. “I’d like to place it in more newspapers, which, of course, would mean more income, but also more exposure. I’d like to keep those classic characters, created by Lauck and Goff for radio, alive for the future.” ★

From the Association

“During the past several months, alumni and university administration have diligently worked to create an enhanced structure that stimulates and promotes synergy among all concerned for the greater good of SFA.”



I AM EXCITED to report that your alumni team has been working hard to create an improved dynamic to better connect with you — our alumni and stakeholders.

During the past several months, alumni and university administration have diligently worked to create an enhanced structure that stimulates and promotes synergy among all concerned for the greater good of SFA. In short, your alumni association staff members should be able to focus on alumni engagement efforts, and the university will take on the responsibilities that are more closely related to the management of scholarship records.

What does this mean, and why is it important?

Well, I hope it means we will be able to have more meaningful programming and better alumni engagement efforts in the cities where we have the largest alumni populations. Right now, regional engagement focus will be in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston and East Texas areas. This is just the beginning of this effort. Please keep in mind that the Hill Country and other important areas are on our radar.

We hope to not only host events in these regions, but we also want to have meaningful engagement that goes beyond just the connection at the event. To me, meaningful engagement means that alumni ambassadors will help us follow up with alumni event participants. It also means that it will be easier to connect with us and with other alumni using social media and our website. Meaningful engagement means a better-connected alumni association.

In addition, the new synergy that has developed throughout this process has been amazing. During my time volunteering for the SFA Alumni Association, I have never seen this level of energy, connections and collective efforts among the various SFA stakeholders. This concept might seem foreign to some alumni. SFA is SFA, right? That is right. However, SFA comprises various departments, and the alumni association itself is technically considered a separate entity. This is all to say that, although SFA is SFA, there are different parts and functions within it, and the greatest accomplishment in my time, with the help of my predecessors and successors, is that we are working as one more than ever before.

I would like to challenge you to find out more by reaching out to me or another member of the team. I'd also like to challenge you to get involved and help. It is an exciting time to be involved.

In previous letters, I focused quite a bit on Lumberjack pride. Nothing brings me more Lumberjack pride than what I have discussed in this letter. We are working hard, together, for the greater good of SFA. ★

Axe 'em, Jacks!

David Madrid '02 – Bossier City, Louisiana
President, SFA Alumni Association

SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

David Madrid '02, Bossier City, Louisiana
president

Bob Francis '78, Bullard
president-elect

Mike Harbordt '63, Nacogdoches
past president

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ALUMNI ASSOCIATION STAFF

Craig Turnage '00 & '05
executive director of alumni relations

Jennifer Sowell
assistant to the executive director

Heather Hawkins '00
assistant director of alumni relations

Samantha Mora '08
director of events and engagement

Alicia Roland Chatman '16
gifts and records specialist

Amie Ford '09 & '11
scholarship coordinator

Derek Snyder '01
communications and marketing
coordinator

Anne Scamardo
accounting assistant



W

HEN CORPUS CHRISTI

native Joe McComb '70 arrived at SFA in 1966, it was his first time in Nacogdoches. "I thought Corpus Christi was hot, but I hadn't realized the wind didn't make it through those pine trees."

Now mayor of Corpus Christi, McComb looks back on his days at SFA and credits his time in Nacogdoches with reinforcing his commitment to a life of service to others.

"SFA instilled in me, especially through my involvement with the Baptist Student Ministry, to look for opportunities to help others," he recalled. "I participated in mission trips and other activities that helped me realize the importance of doing things for other people, not so much for myself."

After earning his business degree, McComb returned to his hometown to work in the business his father had established in 1940.

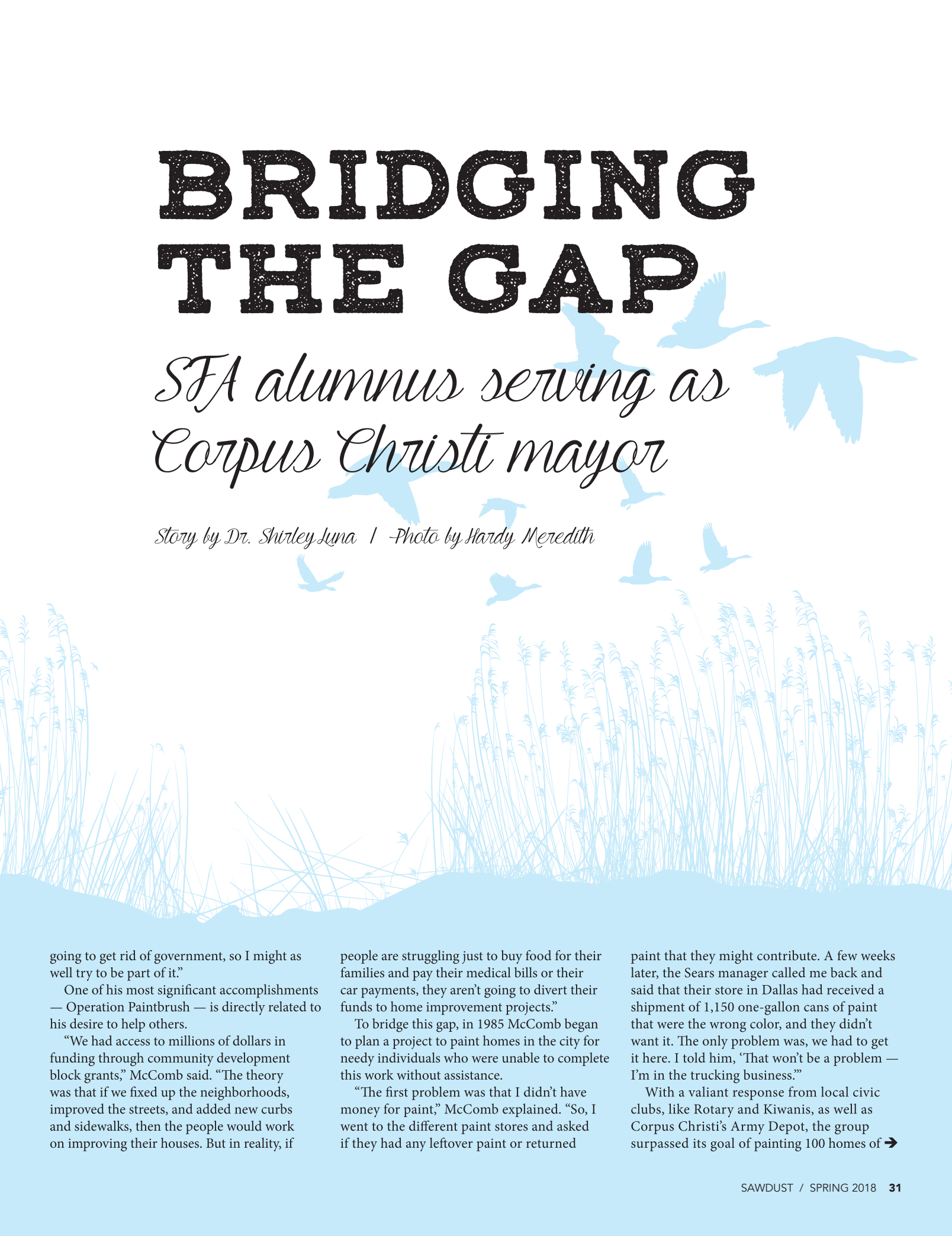
"My father died when I was in fourth grade," he said. "My mom was a school teacher, and

she literally walked out of the classroom and into the moving business the day my dad died. So, I always assumed I would help her with the family business after college."

McComb served on the Corpus Christi City Council for eight years and on the Nueces County Commission for 12 years. In May 2017, his extensive political experience and strong community ties led to his election as mayor.

"I like helping people and finding solutions to problems," he said. "I knew we weren't ever

BRIDGING THE GAP



*SFA alumnus serving as
Corpus Christi mayor*

Story by Dr. Shirley Luna / Photo by Hardy Meredith

going to get rid of government, so I might as well try to be part of it.”

One of his most significant accomplishments — Operation Paintbrush — is directly related to his desire to help others.

“We had access to millions of dollars in funding through community development block grants,” McComb said. “The theory was that if we fixed up the neighborhoods, improved the streets, and added new curbs and sidewalks, then the people would work on improving their houses. But in reality, if

people are struggling just to buy food for their families and pay their medical bills or their car payments, they aren’t going to divert their funds to home improvement projects.”

To bridge this gap, in 1985 McComb began to plan a project to paint homes in the city for needy individuals who were unable to complete this work without assistance.

“The first problem was that I didn’t have money for paint,” McComb explained. “So, I went to the different paint stores and asked if they had any leftover paint or returned

paint that they might contribute. A few weeks later, the Sears manager called me back and said that their store in Dallas had received a shipment of 1,150 one-gallon cans of paint that were the wrong color, and they didn’t want it. The only problem was, we had to get it here. I told him, “That won’t be a problem — I’m in the trucking business.”

With a valiant response from local civic clubs, like Rotary and Kiwanis, as well as Corpus Christi’s Army Depot, the group surpassed its goal of painting 100 homes of ➔

“As a native of Corpus Christi, I have heard folks say for years that ‘one of these days’ Corpus Christi is going to **EXPERIENCE GROWTH** like never before. I believe we are now living in ‘these days,’ and I couldn’t be happier seeing and being a part of it.” ~ Joe McComb ‘70



Surrounded by his family, including wife, Mary '70, Joe McComb takes the oath of office as Corpus Christi mayor in May 2017. District Court Judge Sandra Watts administered the oath of office. / Photos courtesy of Corpus Christi Caller-Times



Mayor Joe McComb updated media outlets throughout the nation as Hurricane Harvey approached the Texas Coast in August 2017, making landfall in Rockport, about 30 miles northeast of Corpus Christi.

low-income, elderly and/or disabled residents that weekend.

“People really responded,” McComb recalled. “Grocery stores donated soda and water. Whataburger donated coupons for free hamburgers. At the end of the day, we all met at the park, and one of the local barbecue places cooked for everyone.”

By the time the next spring rolled around and the event was nothing more than a fond memory for McComb, he began receiving phone calls from individuals and entities inquiring about a repeat project.

“I thought we were done,” he said. “I really hadn’t planned on making it an annual event, but there wasn’t any reason not to. We wound up doing it for 20 years and painted more than 1,800 homes in the Coastal Bend at no cost to the homeowners or taxpayers. It made an impact on all of us — homeowners and volunteers alike.”

Despite his good deeds, life dealt McComb and his family an excruciating blow in 2015 when the house in Wimberley where his son’s family was spending Memorial Day weekend was swept away during a flash flood of the Blanco River. Laura, McComb’s daughter-in-law, and his grandchildren — 6-year-old Andrew and 4-year-old Leighton — perished.

“The river rose 45 feet in two hours. It was basically a wall of water that swept the house into the river,” McComb said. “The house crashed into a bridge downstream and broke apart.”

McComb’s son Jonathan escaped the river six miles past the bridge, climbing an embankment despite a broken sternum, broken ribs and a punctured lung.

McComb said his memories of the days following the tragedy are blurred, but he credits his lifetime of faith with surviving the heartbreak. “You can’t survive something like that without faith,” he said. “Trusting in God doesn’t mean you are exempt from tragedy, but I don’t know how people pick up the pieces and move forward without it.”

Those memories were with McComb when, as mayor of the city, he was called upon to make decisions regarding a mandatory evacuation of Corpus Christi before Hurricane Harvey. While McComb encouraged individuals in low-lying, flood-prone areas to evacuate, he stopped short of issuing a mandatory evacuation.

“My primary responsibility is to keep people safe, and that’s one I take seriously,” he said. “I know how devastating it is to lose someone in a flood. But when storms approach, police and emergency workers shouldn’t be distracted trying to goad residents who refuse to leave low-lying locations. You also have to take into consideration the dangers that people will face on traffic-jammed interstates, especially in bad weather situations. It can be a real tug between your heart and your head; there just are no easy answers.”

Easy answers aren’t expected when it comes to leading a city that, in the past several years, has become the nation’s leading oil exporter. In December 2015, the federal government lifted a 40-year ban on the export of American-produced crude oil. Geographically situated to accept the substantial amounts of oil being produced in the Eagle Ford shale and Permian Basin, the Port of Corpus Christi was able to directly benefit from the lifting of this ban.

“The city meets government regulations for air quality, and because of the port’s infrastructure, it was able to accept the increased ship tanker traffic required to get the oil products to overseas markets,” McComb said.

The Port of Corpus Christi is now the No. 1 export port in the country, handling more than 61 percent of all the oil exported from the U.S. To accommodate the larger ships that will come into the port’s inner harbor, the iconic Harbor Bridge is being replaced with the longest cable-stayed bridge in the Americas at an estimated cost of more than \$950 million.

“As a native of Corpus Christi, I have heard folks say for years that ‘one of these days’ Corpus Christi is going to experience growth like never before,” McComb said. “I believe we are now living in ‘these days,’ and I couldn’t be happier seeing and being a part of it.” ★

MR & MISS SFA



Lawrence 'Mac' Moore
Stan McKewen Mr. SFA
Award recipient



Stephanie Gray
Arnodean Covin Miss SFA
Award recipient

SFA Alumni Association names Mr. and Miss SFA

THE SFA ALUMNI Association announced Lawrence “Mac” Moore of Heath and Stephanie Gray of Waxahachie have been selected as recipients of the 2018 Mr. and Miss SFA awards.

The Mr. SFA Award was established in honor of the late Stan McKewen, a 1934 SFA graduate. The Arnodean Covin Miss SFA Award honors the late alumna who was named Miss SFA in 1940, 1941 and 1942.

A 2013 graduate of Rockwall-Heath High School, Moore, who received the Stan McKewen Mr. SFA Award, is a senior finance major and the son of Larry and Rachel Moore.

“Lawrence has truly shown that he cares for others more than himself through his participation in organizations and community events,” said Saville Harris, coordinator of student engagement at SFA. “He makes you want to be a better you with his positive outlook and willingness to help others.”

Moore serves as a member of the Mast Student Investment Roundtable,

president of the SFA Inline Hockey Club and president of the fraternity Tau Kappa Epsilon.

Additionally, Moore has volunteered with The BIG Event and assists with his fraternity’s community activities, including St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital fundraisers and visiting patients in Nacogdoches nursing homes.

“I’ve learned the great value of friendship and brotherhood, what it means to have pride in your school and how to find value in even the smallest things,” Moore said.

Gray, recipient of the Arnodean Covin Miss SFA Award, is a 2013 graduate of Avalon High School. She is a senior hospitality major and the daughter of Steven Davis and Stacy Wilson.

“I strive for excellence in every aspect of my life at SFA and apply the SFA Way to all involvement in my life,” Gray said.

Gray is active in many community and SFA activities, including volunteering with the Boys and Girls Club, the Nacogdoches

Convention and Visitors Bureau, SFA Big Jacks, Omicron Delta Kappa leadership honor society and the Volleyball Club.

“I am impressed with Stephanie because of her active involvement in our fundraising project as the chair of the logistics committee,” said Dr. Gina Fe Causin, assistant professor of hospitality administration. “Her involvement demonstrates her dynamic personality, leadership, communication and organizational skills. All these characteristics will help her become a role model for the hospitality administration students and within the industry.”

SFA’s Alumni Association awards the Mr. and Miss SFA titles annually to exemplary students who will represent and promote the university. Recipients are selected based on their scholarship, participation and leadership in academic and co-curricular activities, and citizenship, service and loyalty to the university. A committee of faculty and staff, community leaders and alumni makes the selections. ★

Scholarships



Molly Francis Foster Fashion Merchandising Scholarship

THE MOLLY FRANCIS Foster Fashion Merchandising Scholarship supports any SFA student majoring in fashion merchandising.

The scholarship was established by Sue Francis to honor the memory of her daughter, Molly, who passed away on March 29, 2016.

Foster was born and spent her childhood in Dallas. Her family later moved to Athens where she graduated from Athens High School in 1986. She attended SFA

and graduated from the university in 1994 with a Bachelor of Science in fashion merchandising.

Her career included positions with various retailers, including Lane Bryant and Factory Connection. She also worked at her family's gift shop, Waldenwood Antiques and Gifts, in Athens. Foster was a creative person and enjoyed art, antiques, furniture refinishing and fashion design. She enjoyed traveling and cooking. ★

Scholarships Help Make Dreams Come True

HOW TO ENDOW A SCHOLARSHIP:

A minimum of \$20,000 is required to endow a scholarship, which may be accomplished during a five-year period. Scholarships are endowed by cash, gifts, corporate matching gifts, gifts of stock, bonds, life insurance, memorial contributions and wills.

Your gift to support SFA students secures educational opportunities for generations of future Lumberjacks. Contact us to create your legacy today.

- ❶ **Make the decision to help.** Future SFA alumni need your financial assistance. Plan your contribution.
- ❷ **Name your scholarship.** You may name your scholarship after yourself or in memory or honor of someone.
- ❸ **Determine eligibility criteria.** You may include college major or GPA or restrict the scholarship to certain types of recipients.

SFASU Foundation Inc.
P.O. Box 6092, SFA Station
Nacogdoches, Texas 75962

Phone: (936) 468-5406 / Toll Free: (800) 319-9517
Email: givetosfa@sfasu.edu / Website: sfasu.edu/giving

Life Members

The SFA Alumni Association thanks the following alumni who recently became life members.

- 8232. Katie L. DeLoach '07, Texarkana
- 8233. Dr. Steven J. Overturf '04, Nacogdoches
- 8234. Dillon R. Rodriguez '17, Jacksonville
- 8235. Chastiti N. Horne '93, Houston
- 8236. Alhajie K. Dumbuya '16, Waco
- 8237. Jason C. Boso '96, Dallas
- 8238. Brad Fox, Friend, Nacogdoches
- 8239. Wendy Fox, Friend, Nacogdoches
- 8240. Sandra C. Schneider '71, Houston
- 8241. Stacey McLeod Brewer '99, The Hills
- 8242. William D. Odom '17, Nacogdoches
- 8243. Dr. Marcus L. Sims II '04, Missouri City
- 8244. Kimberly A. Sims '04, Missouri City
- 8245. Sarah Robinson, Current Student, Sarasota, Florida
- 8246. Jenna N. Perry '17, Crockett
- 8247. Janet Christine Schroeder '81, Kingsport, Tennessee
- 8248. Mark A. Rauschuber '84, Sanford, Michigan
- 8249. Jeanetta Stripling '77, Houston
- 8250. David Fahle, Friend, Houston
- 8251. Jeti L. Fahle '78, Houston
- 8252. William G. Miller III, Friend, Nacogdoches
- 8253. Cindy Carrillo '17, Royse City
- 8254. Martin Diaz-Margoliner '17, Nacogdoches

Alumni Calendar /

Visit sfaalumni.com/events for the most recent information.
Times and dates are subject to change.

MARCH

23-25

Delta Zeta Sisterhood Weekend
Nacogdoches

APRIL

6

Alumni Association Board Meeting
10:30 a.m.
Pearman Alumni Center
300 Vista Drive
Nacogdoches

SFA Sportsman Social

5 to 8 p.m.
Meadow Ridge Archery & Gun
Nacogdoches

10

Lumberjack Professional Network Lunch
Noon
The Grove in Tyler

13-14

Sigma Tau Gamma Alumni Weekend and Golf Tournament
Nacogdoches

20-21

Robert D. Dickerson Memorial Golf Tournament
Nacogdoches

20-22

Kappa Alpha Psi Alumni Founder's Weekend
Tau Kappa Epsilon Alumni Reunion
Theta Chi Alumni Weekend
Nacogdoches

21

Spring Football Game
Homer Bryce Stadium
Afterward, showing "Star Wars: The Last Jedi"

23

Archie McDonald Speaker Series with Dr. Jennifer Arnold
7:30 p.m.
Baker Pattillo Student Center, Grand Ballroom
Nacogdoches

MAY

1

Senior Send-Off
5:30 to 7 p.m.
Banita Creek Hall
Nacogdoches

4

Big Dip Ring Ceremony
Baker Pattillo Student Center, Grand Ballroom
9:30 a.m. – College of Education, College of Fine Arts
2 p.m. – College of Business, College of Liberal and Applied Arts, College of Forestry and Agriculture, College of Sciences and Mathematics

5

Bud Light Red Dirt BBQ and Music Festival
Noon to 11:30 p.m.
Downtown Tyler

Alumni Member Day at SFA Baseball

Ladyjacks: Noon
Lumberjacks: 2 p.m.
Jaycees Field
Nacogdoches

12

SFA Commencement Ceremonies
Johnson Coliseum
Nacogdoches

JUNE

8

Alumni Association Board Meeting
10:30 a.m.
Pearman Alumni Center
300 Vista Drive
Nacogdoches

9

University Night at Texas Rangers
Houston Astros vs. Texas Rangers
6:15 p.m.
Globe Life Park
Arlington

JULY

14

University Night at Houston Astros
Detroit Tigers vs. Houston Astros
3:10 p.m.
Minute Maid Park
Houston

31

SFA Ag Teacher Alumni Dinner
Lubbock

AUGUST

11

SFA Commencement Ceremonies
Johnson Coliseum
Nacogdoches

SEPTEMBER

1

SFA Football vs. Mississippi State University
Starkville, Mississippi

7

Alumni Association Board Meeting
Pearman Alumni Center
300 Vista Drive
Nacogdoches

Alumni Awards

Reception: 6 p.m.
Dinner: 7 p.m.
The Fredonia Hotel
Nacogdoches

8

Lumberjack Marching Band and Twirl-O-Jacks Reunion
Nacogdoches

Alumni Corner Tailgate

3 p.m.
Corner of Hayter and Raguet streets

SFA Football vs. Tarleton State University

6 p.m.
Homer Bryce Stadium





Despite being past peak season, the green columns of hop plants at Polk-Sharp Farm filled the balmy fall air with a mild citrus scent that quickly amplified as John Elkins '11 & '14 gingerly plucked a flower from a plant twining well above his head and pulled it apart with his fingers.

"Do you see these little yellow spots at the base?" Elkins asked while pointing to pinpricks of color at the base of the flower's bracts. "Those are lupulin glands containing the aroma-producing oils."

For beer brewers and enthusiasts alike, the sharp, slightly bitter smell is unmistakable. Various combinations of hops, grain, yeast and water have been used for millennia to create the alcoholic beverage that remains ubiquitous to this day.

Elkins said he initially didn't plan to grow hops on the roughly 200-acre family farm in San Augustine County that he manages today, but an article he read in "The Old Farmers Almanac" piqued his interest. ➔

STORY BY SARAH FULLER / PHOTOS BY HARDY MEREDITH

"I actually asked Dr. Leon Young his opinion about growing the crop," Elkins said, referring to the late Dr. Leon Young, former SFA professor of agriculture. "We were going to conduct some trials out here, but he passed away before we could get started."

Despite the loss of his mentor and friend in December 2016, Elkins moved forward with his first attempt, which he admits was a shaky start.

"I made a bunch of small mistakes along the way that added up to one big failure," Elkins said. "I started with 100 hop plants and had five still alive at the end of the year."

While some may have interpreted this as a sign to pursue another crop, Elkins was unfazed.

"You just have to be able to change," he said. "That's the thing about being a farmer — every day is different. If you can't adapt, you fail."

Armed with an electric cooler in hand, Elkins then set out for North Carolina to obtain his next set of rhizomes, the rootstock from which hop plants grow. Roughly one year later, the once thumb-sized rhizomes had taken root and produced Elkins' first successful harvest.

According to the Brewers Association, the nonprofit trade association dedicated to small and independent American brewers, Texas ranks eighth in the nation for its number of craft breweries. The oldest of these Texas craft breweries is Houston's Saint Arnold Brewing Company.

When Elkins learned that the brewery also hosts a farmers market, he seized the opportunity.

"John approached me at the farmers market and actually had a container full of his hops," said Colin Klingemann, lead brewer responsible for special projects at Saint Arnold Brewing Company. "Me being the guy who's always looking for local and fresh ingredients, I was immediately on board."

Klingemann said he and Elkins then spent the next several hours engaged in a conversation about hops and new hops products produced in the Yakima Valley region of Washington state, the nation's leading producer of hops.

Because the majority of hops used in brewing is pelletized rather than fresh, Klingemann said this was his first opportunity to handle fresh cascade hops, the variety grown by Elkins and used in a number of the brewery's beers.

"I learned a lot about fresh hops conducting the 2016 hops selection for Saint Arnold in Germany and the Czech Republic," Klingemann said. "When John brought me his hops, the only word that came to mind is 'juicy' — they had this really peachy juiciness."

After the initial meeting, representatives from Saint Arnold made the two-and-a-half hour drive from Houston to San Augustine to carefully select each hop from the vine.

Ultimately, 10 pounds of Elkins' best hops were collected and used to brew Fresh Hop Elissa IPA, a limited-edition beer available to brewery visitors.

"THAT'S THE THING
ABOUT BEING A
FARMER — EVERY
DAY IS DIFFERENT.
IF YOU CAN'T
ADAPT, YOU FAIL."
~ JOHN ELKINS '11 & '14

LEFT: John Elkins

RIGHT: Ten pounds of Elkins' best hops were collected and used to brew Fresh Hop Elissa IPA, a limited-edition beer available to visitors at Saint Arnold Brewing Company's Houston location.



While Elkins did taste the final product, he said he doesn't drink any more. He is far more interested in the science and environmental nuances that shape the flavor and quality of his crop, rather than imbibing in the final-brewed product itself.

He maintains an exhaustive record of soil composition, topography and water requirements within his growing area and regularly uses SFA's Soil, Plant and Water Analysis Laboratory for insight into the invisible factors like micronutrients that determine plant growth, production and taste.

"That's one experiment on that side," he said, motioning to a section of a row. "The soil is different within a span of feet."

With his first successful harvest complete, Elkins, who specialized in agricultural engineering technology at SFA, is looking ahead to next season and researching ways to improve the efficiency of subsequent harvests, as well as the potential agricultural applications of hops that dry on the vine and are unsuitable for brewing.

"My brother, Benjamin, who also is an SFA alumnus, is an engineer, and with our mechanical backgrounds we should be able to make a cheaper automated picker than commercially available that can harvest the hops on the full-height trellis without cutting them down," Elkins said. "Then I can have multiple harvests in a year."

Multiple harvests from the Polk-Sharp Farm are an exciting prospect for Klingemann.

"It's a really cool opportunity, and I think the big thing for us is supporting local agriculture," Klingemann said. "I hope that we can move forward with this relationship and allow John to grow his business even larger so other breweries in the state can purchase from him."

In addition to hops, representatives from Saint Arnold also harvested 50 pounds of pears from a tree on Elkins' property to incorporate into another limited-edition beer available at the brewery.

The land tended by Elkins is closing in on its 125th year as a state-certified working farm.

Although the crops have changed during the past century, the family's love of farming the land has remained consistent throughout generations.

"My business card says 'old roots, new beginnings,'" Elkins said. "If you cut a rhizome and give it to someone else, that person technically doesn't know how old the plant is because, while the rhizome produces new growth, the rhizome itself could have been harvested from a much older plant."

Elkins said that is how he views his new venture. From more than a century of deeply established roots at the Polk-Sharp Farm, brand new growth has risen. ★

"WHEN JOHN BROUGHT ME HIS HOPS, THE ONLY WORD THAT CAME TO MIND IS 'JUICY' — THEY HAD THIS REALLY PEACHY JUICINESS."

~ COLIN KLINGEMANN

LEAD BREWER RESPONSIBLE FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS AT SAINT ARNOLD BREWING COMPANY



LEFT: The land tended by Elkins is closing in on its 125th year as a state-certified working farm.

RIGHT: Colin Klingemann, lead brewer responsible for special projects at Saint Arnold Brewing Company

Class Notes

1950s

Former Whitehouse Wildcats basketball coach **C.L. NIX '56** received a plaque and key to the arena during a ceremony recognizing the renaming of Whitehouse

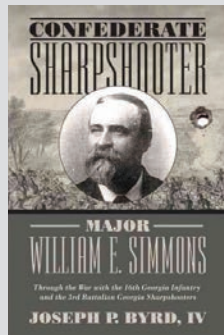


Photo by Chelsea Purgahn, Tyler Morning Telegraph

High School's arena to the C.L. Nix Wildcat Arena. The ceremony took place Jan. 19 on the 40th anniversary of the Wildcats' 2A basketball state championship in 1978. During his career, Nix compiled a record of 715-232. Nix's Whitehouse teams won 18 district titles and made seven appearances in regional tournaments.

1960s

JOSEPH P. BYRD IV '67 wrote "Confederate Sharpshooter," a military biography of Maj. William E. Simmons, who was a rebel infantryman and sharpshooter in Gen. Lafayette McLaw's division in the Army of Northern Virginia. Byrd is Simmons' great-great nephew.



Three years after graduating from Emory College, Simmons joined the first company in his home county and received his commission. He was later promoted to captain in the elite Third Battalion Georgia Sharpshooters of Wofford's Brigade. In 1864, he became acting commander of the brigade's sharpshooter battalion.

The book traces Simmons' family heritage and footsteps from childhood to Emory College, through many challenging war encounters, his capture and imprisonment at Fort Delaware, and a lifetime of service to his state and community that lasted until the 1930s.

Byrd provides maps, letters, photographs and a roster of soldiers compiled from service records and 25 other sources.

The National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics announced that **STEVE MCCARTY '65 & '70** has been selected into the NACDA Hall of Fame. McCarty will be enshrined during NACDA's 53rd Annual Convention June 28 through July 1 in Washington, D.C.



The NACDA was founded in 1965. It is the largest association of collegiate athletic administrators and boasts a membership of more than 12,500 individuals and more than 1,600 institutions throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico.

McCarty worked as a coach and teacher in Beaumont, Longview and Orange before returning to Nacogdoches in 1981 to serve as the athletics director and head football coach for Nacogdoches High School. In 1984, he assumed the role of associate athletics director for marketing at SFA. In 1990, he was promoted to the university's athletics director, a position he held until his retirement in 2005.

In 2009, McCarty was appointed by Gov. Rick Perry to serve on SFA's Board of Regents. From 2009-12, he served as chairman of both the Athletes Attendance Committee and the Building and Grounds Committee. In 2012, he was appointed vice chairman of the board, and, in 2013, he was named chairman of the Board of Regents, serving two terms. In July 2014, McCarty was named athletic director emeritus of SFA.

Keith Allred '60 of Lufkin won third place in the Texas State Genealogical Society's 2017 Writing Awards Contest in the quarterly category. Allred is newsletter editor for the Angelina County Genealogical Society.

John Vaught '69 of Denver, Colorado, received the 2017 Colorado Governor's Service Award for outstanding veteran volunteer. Vaught is a partner at the national litigation boutique Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell and the president-elect of the Colorado Bar Association.

1970s

Arnie Burke '72 of Rowlett was inducted into the United States Specialty Sports Association Hall of Fame in November during the association's 50th anniversary celebration. Burke has been involved with USSSA as a player, coach and director since 1980.

Dr. Horace D. Stearman '73 & '87 retired from his position as assistant vice president for accreditation, planning and policy at the University of North Texas as Dallas.



➔ **Dr. Ron Clinton '76** of Gilmer was appointed president of Northeast Texas Community College.

Class Notes

→ **Dr. Robert Littlejohn '79** was appointed head of The Covenant School of Dallas.



← **Debra S. Munsell '79** of Missouri City was selected to lead Mississippi State University-Meridian's Master of Physician Assistant Studies program.



1990s



Cliff Shackelford '90 & '94 of Nacogdoches has co-hosted and co-produced a live radio show called "Bird Calls" for four years on the National Public Radio's Red River Radio station based in Shreveport, Louisiana. In spring

2017, he had his first on-air guest, **SFA biology major Kelli Bashaw**, discuss what's involved in obtaining a science degree and answer callers' questions about her major. Podcasts from past shows can be found online on redriverradio.org.

Jonas E. Schwartz '91 of Austin was reappointed by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to the Texas State Independent Living Council. Schwartz is a program manager for the vocational rehabilitation program at the Texas Workforce Commission.

Neita Fran Ward '91 of Tyler was guest speaker at McMillan Memorial Library's Book Talk in Overton. Ward is an employee at Valerosa Designs and Gallery in Tyler.

Ronald Barlow '92 of Pineland was named the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's agriculture and national resources agent for Sabine County.

David Kassaw '92 was promoted from corporal detective to sergeant by the Palestine Police Department.

Gary Malaer '92 of Victoria was named CEO of DeTar Healthcare System.

Kristy Curry '94 of West Lafayette, Indiana, is in her seventh year as Purdue University women's basketball head coach.

Michael Briski '97 was featured in an episode of the HGTV series "House Hunters International."

Eva Thomas '97 of Mount Vernon was named executive vice president and chief compliance and audit officer of Pilgrim Bank.

2000s

KARA SEWELL '05

left WXIX-TV Fox 19 in Cincinnati, Ohio, in January to become the News 8 Daybreak co-anchor at WFAA Channel 8 in Dallas — the No. 5 TV market in the nation. A Houston native, Sewell started her career at KOSA-TV in Midland-Odessa in West Texas after interning at KTRK-TV in Houston.



1980s

Nancy Kershaw '81 of Tillamook, Oregon, was recognized in December for her 30 years as the family and community health and 4-H extension agent for Tillamook County.

Nell Fortner '87 of Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, will be inducted into the Texas Sports Hall of Fame in Waco in April. Fortner was a women's college basketball coach and led the 2000 Olympics women's basketball team to a gold medal.

Jason Petersen '88 of Hallsville received the 30-year service award from Austin Bank for his work with the company. Petersen is the bank's executive vice president/regional president for Gregg County.

Dr. Eric Wright '88 of Fredericksburg was named Hays Consolidated ISD superintendent in January.

CHUCK TOMBERLAIN '84 (pictured, center) and his son **COLE TOMBERLAIN '10**, (pictured, right) both of Longview, were honored by the Boy Scouts for their "lifetime" of community service.



Photo by Les Hassell, Longview News-Journal

Chuck received the Distinguished Citizen Good Turn Award, and Cole was the inaugural honoree for the Horizon Award.

Chuck has been involved with Junior Achievement, taught Sunday school classes at First Baptist Church and has served as president of the Spring Hill Athletic Boosters Club and the local chapter of the SFA Alumni Association.

Cole is a founding board member of the Young Professionals of Longview, a founder of the annual Bourbon & Bowties fundraiser for Longview World of Wonders, a Junior Achievement instructor and, along with his father, a member of the SFA Alumni Golf Tournament Committee.

Text courtesy of Megan Hix, Longview News-Journal

Class Notes

Dustin Harrell '01 of Crowley, Louisiana, was named research coordinator of the Louisiana State University H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station.

Todd Anthony '02 of San Antonio was named vice president of corporate development for First Majestic Silver Corp., a Canadian silver mining company.



← **Erin Wolf '02** of Princeton, New Jersey, was appointed the inaugural associate director of international travel and safety at Princeton University.

→ **Kristin Knox-Paradis '03 & '07** of Edmond, Oklahoma,

joined Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Anderson Properties office as a residential real estate sales agent.



← **Taryn Chambers Wells '03** of Lumberton won the A.E. Alton Mott Mosley Educational Award at the Greater Texarkana Branch of the NAACP's 2017 Freedom Fund Awards banquet.

→ In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, attorney **Nick Pesina '04** of Tyler spoke at Tyler Junior College's inaugural Distinguished Lecture Series.



Jamie Haskins '12 of Pasadena won a Ruby Award from the American Society of Interior Designers – Texas Gulf Coast Chapter in the category Emerging Professional: Best of Residential.



← **Catherine King '13** of Katy married Saurabh Patel in September in Houston.

John Hughes '15 and **Sarah Volkman '15** of Houston were married in Lufkin and now reside in Houston.

→ **Stephanie Johnson '17** received the Texas Council of Professors

of Educational Administration's Outstanding Dissertation Award, which recognizes an exceptional doctoral-level dissertation that expands the knowledge of educational administration at postsecondary or K-20 levels.



2010s

ELIZABETH GEESLIN '12 authored "The Dhakris: Awakening."

The story follows Jessica, the main character, on her quest to learn the truth about what happened to her sister, who seemingly vanished into thin air three years before. The journey sends her down a path into other dimensions, the supernatural and the ultimate betrayal. This is Geeslin's first book in "The Dhakris" series.

The second novel is expected in October 2018. Geeslin's parents, grandparents, aunt, uncle and cousin are all SFA alumni, as well.



← **Dina Hegseth '10** of Kingwood became a Realtor® in January at Keller Williams Heritage in San Antonio.

Zevin Spears '11 of Washington, D.C., joined the event management department at the Calvin L. Rampton Salt Palace Convention Center.

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In Memoriam

DR. ROBERT "BOB" BAKER



Dr. Robert "Bob" Baker of Bryan passed away Dec. 11. Baker joined the SFA faculty in 1956 as an assistant professor of forestry. He rose through the ranks to associate professor in 1959 and to full professor in 1970.

Baker taught courses in aerial photograph interpretation and remote sensing at SFA. From 1970 to '74, he had a joint appointment with SFA and Texas A&M University.

Baker was a strong supporter of and contributor to Texas forest history, and he authored numerous scientific and technical articles. His résumé contained 25 pages of published articles, reports, short courses, testimonials on forestry issues and consulting assignments. In the early 1980s, he collaborated with Robert S. Maxwell at SFA to co-author the historical book "The Sawdust Empire: The Texas Lumber Industry, 1830 to 1940."

DR. ROBERT R. FLEET



Dr. Robert R. Fleet, former SFA professor and rugby coach, passed away Dec. 4. Fleet spent approximately 40 years teaching in various departments and coaching rugby at SFA.

He authored and co-authored nearly 44 scientific articles that have been cited more than 700 times. Fleet enjoyed his family, friends and telling stories.

JACK MARTIN LEDBETTER



Jack Martin Ledbetter, donor and friend of SFA, passed away Jan. 31. Ledbetter was accepted into the Air Corps in 1942 and became a private. He trained at Sheppard Field near Wichita Falls. Ledbetter graduated top of his class and became an aviation cadet. He attended Yale University and studied

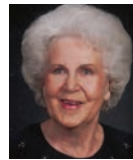
aviation engineering. He later became the first engineering officer for groups assigned to service P-59 jet fighters.

After his military service, he ran his family's electric sign company. Under Ledbetter's leadership, the company grew substantially. He later sold it and retired. Ledbetter enjoyed racing aircraft. He

competed in and won many national championships and served as a training pilot.

In 2006, Ledbetter moved to Nacogdoches and became active in the community serving on numerous boards, including the SFA Finance Department Board and the SFA Administrative Committee. He was a member of the SFA College of Fine Arts Dean's Circle and a Nacogdoches Memorial Hospital board member.

JIMMIE S. SHAW



Jimmie S. Shaw, who worked in the university's post office for 17 years, passed away Nov. 3.

Shaw lived in Fort Worth during World War II and helped build airplanes at Consolidated Vultee. Her area of expertise was electrical wiring on the bottom

panel of the nose fuselage on B-24 bombers. Shaw was a true Rosie the Riveter and was recognized by the National WWII Museum in Anaheim, California.

Shaw retired from SFA in 1984. She remained active in the community, attending SFA basketball and football games, as well as volunteering at First Methodist Church and for the Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau.

JAMES "JIM" SIMMONS



James "Jim" Simmons of Livingston passed away Jan. 2. Simmons proudly served in the U.S. Air Force overseas. Following his return to the United States, he attended SFA where he played football for the Lumberjacks and earned a bachelor's degree in physical education in 1955.

During his time playing for the Lumberjacks, Simmons was elected to second-team All Conference and second-team All Texas. Simmons began his coaching career in Beaumont and went on to serve as head coach at Beaumont High School, Diboll High School and Jasper High School before retiring after coaching more than 12 years. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame at SFA and also at Diboll.

In Memoriam

Karen H. Agnew '80 of Troup, Nov. 25
James Andrusick '96 of Nacogdoches, Nov. 29
Harvey H. Bagley Jr. '76 of Garland, Jan. 3
Wanda K. Baker '81 of Diboll, Nov. 4
Sheila Kay Clary Barnes '84 of Nederland, Jan. 15
Robert W. Bell '60 of Lufkin, Nov. 5
Dr. Stephen C. Bennett '78 of New Braunfels, Dec. 11
William L. Bickham '72 & '83 of Tyler, Oct. 13
Louise M. Blanks '67 of Dallas, Dec. 27
Vanette S. Boshears '67 of Tyler, Jan. 11
Alma L. Bridges '56 of Waco, Dec. 21
John D. Bright '66 of Tyler, Dec. 25
Charles A. Capel '71 of Garrison, Jan. 1
Eddie Chalmers '68 of Angleton, Jan. 2
Kent S. Cochran '82 of Linden, Jan. 6
Evelyn M. Cofer '43 of Nacogdoches, Oct. 26
Bobby "Bob" Douglas Coker '60 of Sachse, Jan. 6
Robert R. Davis '58 & '62 of Henderson, Jan. 1
Wayne Howard Denney '71 of Wichita Falls, Nov. 14
Jimmie M. Dickens '68 of Livingston, Nov. 22
Nelda K. Dickerson '91 of Lufkin, Jan. 17
Dorothy L. Dorsett '64 of Pflugerville, Nov. 5
Thomas Carroll Edmonds '57 of Ardmore, Oklahoma, Oct. 10
Jean H. English '52 of Lufkin, Jan. 8
Linda Jacob Evans '69 of Austin, Nov. 9
Joe Farmer '60 & '64 of Hillsboro, Dec. 5
Lyndon "Lynn" B. Faulkner '43 of San Antonio, Oct. 28
Carol A. Felix '76 of Houston, Nov. 11
Mary F. Fickett '40 of Nacogdoches, Nov. 10
Hilda E. Findley '56 & '66 of Warren, Jan. 9
Christine Crouch Franks '47 of Katy, Oct. 14
Michelle J. Funston '96 of Galveston, Dec. 24
Paul W. Gertz '72 of Beaumont, Oct. 21
Dr. Dixon Golden '49 of Carthage, Dec. 1
Phyllis Gulley '69 of Zavalla, Jan. 13
Katherine Hall '75 of Dallas, Dec. 31
Betty L. Halstead '60 of San Antonio, Dec. 20
Johnny "Hawk" Hawkins '65 of Lufkin, Oct. 14
Rick Huddleston '05 of Lufkin, Nov. 28
Regenta B. Jenkins '40 of Brenham, Jan. 19
Daniel "Dan" Lee Johnson '05 of Apple Springs, Jan. 8
David Lloyd Johnson Sr. '59 & '61 of Hardin, July 11

Kevin F. Kelley '84 of Lufkin, Oct. 31
Jeffery Kincy '84 of Longview, Oct. 10
Rodney D. Kolac '70 of Tyler, Jan. 7
Grady S. Kyle '50 & '58 of Beckville, Jan. 8
Frances A. Lippard '54 of Nacogdoches, Sept. 30
Cynthia A. Lynch '81 of Quinlan, Dec. 30
Betty Keyser Manning '80 of Nacogdoches, Sept. 13
James Leon Manning '61 & '63 of Lufkin, June 27
John H. Matthews '74 of Jasper, Aug. 13
Rena B. McGaughey '67 & '72 of Bullard, Dec. 19
Frances McGilvra '89 of Diboll, Jan. 4
Leslie A. Miller '86 of Spring, Jan. 20
Frank A. Mitchell '72 of Nacogdoches, Nov. 27
Thomas Z. Parrish '41 of Waco, Jan. 15
Kathryn A. Price '93 of Nacogdoches, Oct. 18
Dr. James E. Redfield Sr. '50 of Nacogdoches, Dec. 27
Robert P. Rinehart '68 of Anchorage, Alaska, Oct. 20
Aillene Roberson '66 of Carthage, Oct. 1
Wilbert E. Rollins Sr. '81 of Longview, Nov. 23
Emma L. Ryan '63 of Douglass, Jan. 16
Rena B. Simpkins '60 of Bryan, Jan. 4
Joseph P. Smith '52 of Marshall, Sept. 23
Rex Earl Staes '70 of Pasadena, July 26
John Bowman Tanner '89 of Rowlett, Aug. 10
William Tyler '75 of Fresno, July 3
Larry E. Warner Sr. '66 of Dallas, Sept. 18
Bobby G. Warr '82 & '85 of Center, Jan. 6
Ericka Wilcox '98 of Stockbridge, Massachusetts, Oct. 15
Linda S. Williams '69 of Henderson, Jan. 3
Ted W. Wilson '82 of Austin, Nov. 17
David "Bud" A. Woodell '50 of Jasper, Jan. 22
John W. Wylie '77 of Kilgore, Oct. 24



SFA students

William G. Hollingsworth, Feb. 14
Shelda Sanders Hutchinson of Marshall, Oct. 25
Yessenia Ramirez of Pasadena, Feb. 10
Erin Valenta of Allen, Jan. 26



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3:10 p.m.



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SFA alumni David Madrid '02 and Bob Francis '78 receive their SFA Rings during the spring 2017 Big Dip Ceremony. ↓



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