

# Sawdust

WINTER 2018

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



## Accounting for Success

Dollar General chairman discusses  
his rise in the corporate world



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Great leaders need great mentors! Stephen F. Austin State University's Rusche College of Business in partnership with the SFA Alumni Association has launched the **Lumberjack Professional Network**. This free, interactive social media experience gives alumni and friends of the college the opportunity to mentor business students, provide internships and increase networking connections.

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### **Launching Partnerships**

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To learn more, email Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the college, at [bispingto@sfasu.edu](mailto:bispingto@sfasu.edu).



# President's Letter

"As we look back at the accomplishments from the past year, we also are looking forward to more excitement on the horizon."



**WHENEVER AND WHEREVER** the story of SFA is shared with future generations of Lumberjacks, 2018 will undoubtedly be remembered as a historic year

for our alma mater. We ended the spring semester with a record-breaking number of graduates — 1,426 to be exact. In July, we held the grand opening of the beautiful and technologically advanced \$46.4 million Ed and Gwen Cole STEM Building, which welcomed students on the first day of fall classes. Just 12 days later, the university recorded the largest headcount in SFA history with 13,144 students enrolled in classes, an increase from the previous fall of more than 4 percent. Our growing enrollment is the result of countless large and small efforts initiated across campus by members of the faculty, staff and administration — often working hand-in-hand with alumni — in support of our goal to provide transformative experiences to an ever-growing number of Lumberjacks.

The exciting enrollment news was still sinking in when, on Sept. 18, our alumni joined with current students, faculty and staff, Nacogdoches community residents, and local and state leaders to celebrate SFA's 95th anniversary. Among the honored guests was our oldest living SFA alumna, 99-year-old Esthermay Johnston of Austin. I'm proud to say my grandson, 5-year-old Jackson Baker Brown, also was recognized as SFA's youngest alum. He is a lifetime member of the SFA Alumni Association and a recent graduate of the SFA Early Childhood Lab. Other highlights of the anniversary included the release of a special 95th anniversary video and a pledge by current SFA students and faculty and staff to perform a combined 95,000 hours of community service this school year in honor of this important milestone.

As we look back at the accomplishments from the past year, we also are looking forward to more excitement on the horizon. During an October meeting, the SFA Board of Regents voted to advance an expansive and progressive plan to complete approximately \$116 million in new construction projects that will be taking shape as we approach SFA's centennial anniversary. These will include a long-awaited fine arts expansion, a centralized welcome center and additional renovation to provide a one-stop shop for student support services, a new first-year residence hall, a new or renovated dining hall and a new basketball performance facility that will positively impact our ability to recruit top-notch athletes for the basketball program.

I hope these recent milestones and bold future plans serve to bolster the pride you have in SFA and that you will take the opportunity as the calendar turns to 2019 to renew your commitment to supporting your alma mater however you can. Wear your purple unabashedly, encourage the young people in your life to visit SFA during their college search, get plugged into on-campus and alumni programs, and establish or contribute to a scholarship that is near and dear to your heart. Your support will be as critical to SFA's future success as it has been during its first 95 years.

In closing, I would like to wish everyone in the Lumberjack family many blessings this holiday season and throughout the coming year. ★

Axe 'em, Jacks!

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



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# Sawdust

WINTER 2018 ★ Volume 45, No. 3

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**ON THE COVER:** Michael Calbert '84 spent the last three decades rising in the private equity world before retiring from Kohlberg Kravis Roberts and Co., one of the largest global investment firms, in 2014. Currently serving as chairman of the Dollar General board, Calbert discussed the ups and downs he has experienced in the business world. / Photo by Hardy Meredith '81

Sawdust is published three times a year by Stephen F. Austin State University and the SFA Alumni Association. Full subscriptions are included in SFA Alumni Association memberships. SFA alumni and friends receive complimentary issues twice a year.

# FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME

Kinesiology  
student  
serves  
as 2018  
Special  
Olympics  
official

Story by  
Kasi Dickerson '13 & '15

Photos courtesy of Special Olympics USA Games





**T**HE SONG “WARRIORS” streamed from the speakers as singer and musician Allen Stone took the stage. In a sea of excitement, thousands of athletes from across the nation waved streamers, danced and sang as they prepared to compete in the premier national sports competition that showcases the power and joy of sports at the highest level — the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games.

During the opening ceremony, Dustin Sturdivant, an SFA senior kinesiology major, stood on the sidelines of Husky Stadium in Seattle, Washington, and paused to let the reality of the moment sink in. He was one of only four National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association members in the nation selected to serve as a unified flag football official for the games.

In July, more than 4,000 athletes, their coaches, and thousands of fans and volunteers participated in the games, which are held every four years. This year’s event was even more special — it marked the 50th anniversary of the Special Olympics movement.

The event showcased the awe-inspiring athleticism of its participants, while also modeling the ideals of inclusion. Athletes competed in 14 categories: athletics, basketball, bocce, bowling, flag football, golf, gymnastics, powerlifting, soccer, softball, stand-up paddle board, swimming, tennis and volleyball.

For the first time in the event’s history NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Recreation, an organization that works within higher education to advocate for the advancement of recreation, sports and wellness nationwide, partnered with ➔

Special Olympics to give college students an opportunity to serve as game officials. Sturdivant said it was an honor being among the inaugural group for this experience.

"It's exhilarating because you know you are a part of it," Sturdivant said. "When you are officiating, it's not about you. You're involved in something much bigger. The competition almost seems secondary, as you get to witness the pure joy of the athletes who are participating. It's special in every way."

Sports have always played a major role in Sturdivant's life. Growing up in Lumberton, he played soccer and football and was goalkeeper for his high school soccer team.

"I've always loved studying the rules for everything," he said. "Even as a high school soccer player, my coach asked me and a teammate to learn the rules so if players had questions, we could help."

Sturdivant initially enrolled at SFA as an education major. However, working for SFA's Campus Recreation Department during his freshman year was a game changer.

"I fell in love with the family environment," he said. "I got the opportunity to do something I love and work alongside people who also share my passion for sports. In many ways, it's not like work at all."

Sturdivant started at Campus Recreation as a soccer official before advancing to his current job as the competitive sports program assistant. In this role, he serves as an official for various SFA intramural sports, while also helping train officials, schedule and hire employees, and manage the program's summer camps.

His supervisor, Christopher Morriss, coordinator for intramural sports and camps, describes Sturdivant as a "go-getter" and a person who always helps the staff stay on or ahead of schedule.



**“It broadened my outlook on life. ... They are not letting anything hold them back. It was incredible to watch.”**

**DUSTIN STURDIVANT**

"Dustin has grown tremendously while at SFA," Morriss said. "He has attended community, state and national events and represented SFA so well. He has been an excellent ambassador for the university and our program."

As a multisport official, Sturdivant travels throughout the region and state working tournaments and games.

"I'm one of the few people who likes getting screamed at by coaches because it keeps me on top of my game," Sturdivant laughed.

As a NIRSA member, Sturdivant has officiated for many tournaments and received several All-Tournament honors for his work. During his second NIRSA flag football national championship tournament in 2017, he was named a top 10 official and received All-American Honors. It was during that tournament he learned of the opportunity to serve as an official at the Special Olympics.

Officiating the Special Olympics seemed like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Sturdivant. However, since the application was open to thousands nationwide, he thought his chances of being selected were slim.

"When you know there are only four positions available, you understand the odds of being chosen are not in your favor," Sturdivant said. "I had kind of put it out of my mind. About three months later, I received an email congratulating me. I was shocked."

During the weeks leading up to the games, Sturdivant and the other selected flag football officials held weekly phone conferences to network. For many of them, this was a new type of event with different rules.

In unified flag football, Special Olympic athletes team up with traditional participants called unified partners.

"It was cool to see the partners work with the athletes. The athletes run the show and call the plays," Sturdivant said. "I enjoyed seeing the sheer excitement on the athletes' faces; they were so happy to be there."

Daily from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sturdivant officiated numerous games. "This is the only time I've officiated and been the recipient of a high-five after I called a penalty," he smiled. "It was great. No one got mad. It was probably the biggest crowd and the happiest environment I've seen."

When he wasn't officiating, Sturdivant was able to act as a spectator. He remembers watching a game in which the underdog scored in the last few minutes to win. Both as an official and fan, Sturdivant said he was impressed with the level of sportsmanship and learned a lot from this experience.

"It broadened my outlook on life. Some people are put in different situations," Sturdivant said. "The athletes can make the best of their lives and compete at the highest level doing something they love. They are not letting anything hold them back. It was incredible to watch." ★

# Vista Viewpoint / By Dr. Keith Hubbard



## DR. KEITH HUBBARD

Professor, Department of  
Mathematics and Statistics

College of Sciences and Mathematics

Principal Investigator, SMART Texas

Project Director, Talented Teachers in  
Training for Texas

## SPLITTING MY UNIVERSITY

education between  
Indiana, New Jersey  
and California, I  
was ready to move  
anywhere to find the  
right position. SFA  
was one interview of  
15 I had lined up in  
January 2005. The

SFA interview committee members were warm and attuned to the reality that universities serve real students with real needs and diverse interests.

I still remember Dr. Debbie Pace, SFA associate dean of the College of Sciences and Mathematics (then an assistant department chair), asking if I had questions at the end of the interview. I asked what department culture was like. She leaned forward and simply said, "We're like a family."

I was sold. One month later, I turned down offers in Maryland and Israel, and I told my family I was moving to Nacogdoches.

The SFA family welcomed me with open arms. From cookouts to kayak trips, to 10-hour road trips to mathematics conferences (on a bus with 15 faculty members and approximately 30 students), we shared life and the academic adventure of teaching and learning mathematics. I won't ever be able to repay the professional, yet profoundly personal, mentoring I received from my SFA colleagues.

Five years into my time at SFA, I was included in writing the Talented Teachers in Training for Texas grant, a multimillion dollar project that has helped recruit and train dozens of science, technology, engineering and mathematics teachers. I believe it is not an overstatement to say that this project has changed many of those teachers' lives. It also changed mine.

Being the project director for this grant has allowed me to invest in SFA students, and it is as close as I've come to being able to repay the "family investment" of those SFA math professors who mentored me.

Exciting experiences, such as taking students who have never flown before to national mathematics teaching conferences in Denver and Boston, and less exciting ones, like coaching young people through the grueling preparation for final exams, have allowed faculty members to engage these students. So far, we have a 100-percent graduation and teacher certification rate for those students who participated in the T4 grant. It is important to note that students outside the T4 mentoring program who plan to major in math and certify to teach at the same time have a 20-percent chance of success — a shocking difference!

What accounts for this variance? To me, the difference is family, and that is what SFA does like no other university. During the past 13 years, I've visited students in the hospital, served as best man at a student's wedding and everything in between. Through the SMART Texas grant, another National Science Foundation-funded project, I have been able to award scholarships to freshmen who never thought college was doable — whose parents thought it "just cost too much." Later, I've beamed as those same parents expressed joy and pride at their daughter or son overcoming the challenges and succeeding in college.

It is an exquisite privilege to serve SFA students, but sometimes, as an educator, it can be challenging to remember that. I am grateful I still have colleagues who, like a family, remind me of what is important. I am richly blessed to be a faculty member in the SFA Department of Mathematics and Statistics. ★

*[Talented Teachers in Training I and II (NSF1136416, NSF1556983) and SMART Texas, formally Science and Mathematics Attraction, Retention and Training for Texas (NSF1557295) are funded by the National Science Foundation. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.]*





# A SPACE TO LEARN

## *Athletic training graduate student interns at NASA's RehabWorks*

Story and photos by Kasi Dickerson '13 & '15

**E**NTERING THE DOUBLE doors of the Neil Armstrong Operations and Checkout Building on NASA's 144,000-acre property at Kennedy Space Center in Florida, Nicole Cardenas is immediately greeted by the NASA logo etched into the entrance's tile floor.

Nearby, a model of the Orion spacecraft, which is designed for deep-space exploration, intrigues visitors. Not far away, the spacesuit Neil Armstrong wore in 1969 when he became the first man to walk on the moon and famously took a "giant leap for mankind" is on display and reminds guests of that historic moment.

This summer Cardenas, an SFA athletic training graduate student, made a giant leap of her own when she interned at RehabWorks, the athletic training clinic at NASA's Kennedy Space Center.

"It was such an amazing opportunity," Cardenas said. "I not only saw some of the space program's historic treasures, like Neil Armstrong's spacesuit, but I also heard stories

from incredible people who all contribute to the space program and put so much time and effort into the future of space exploration."

### **LANDING THE INTERNSHIP**

Cardenas has always desired to help people, and becoming an athletic trainer seemed like the perfect profession in which to achieve her goal.

After earning her bachelor's degree, Cardenas visited SFA and fell in love with the beautiful campus. A deeper look into the graduate athletic training program convinced her to apply. The university's two-year intensive program meshes academic and clinical work. Program faculty members strive to teach students that they should "dare to reach beyond their boundaries."

"When I researched the program, I discovered a great opportunity — a university where I felt I could receive the education I was hoping to find, as well as a place ➔



that could open doors and help me figure out where I wanted to go in my career,” Cardenas said.

An internet search led Cardenas to the internship at NASA. After a discussion with Dr. Linda Bobo, director of SFA’s graduate athletic training program, the duo polished and submitted Cardenas’ résumé and waited for a response. She interviewed via Skype a few weeks later.

“I have followed NASA for the past couple of years, and I was gifted a telescope for Christmas last year, so I was almost speechless when I received the call that I was chosen to participate in the program,” Cardenas said.

According to Bobo, she was overjoyed to have an athletic training graduate student secure an internship with NASA.

“It was a personal and professional bucket-list goal of mine for a graduate student in our program to achieve this internship,” Bobo said. “NASA is a high-profile, nontraditional clinical setting. The clientele and work environment make it particularly unique for athletic trainers.”

Mary Kirkland, a licensed athletic trainer and athletic training supervisor for RehabWorks, started the clinic 21 years ago to promote free employee wellness and healthy living to all NASA employees, including astronauts, researchers and scientists.

Since its inception, the clinic has offered an internship program. According to Kirkland, more than 100 university students from across the nation have interned at the clinic. Each school is represented with its logo on a banner that hangs inside the facility. As the first Lumberjack to serve in the program, Cardenas is responsible for the addition of SFA’s logo.

## TRAINING AT REHABWORKS

Cardenas’ day began with a 20-minute commute to the Kennedy Space Center from Port Saint John. Each morning, she would drive by the fuel

tank and rocket boosters on display at the visitor complex — a visual reminder that she was not in Nacogdoches anymore. After gaining clearance at the security checkpoint, she would make her way to the “O and C Building” to start prepping for the day’s patients.

As an intern, Cardenas worked daily with multiple patients. She conducted evaluations of musculoskeletal injuries, created rehab designs, closely interacted with clinicians, worked with a variety of therapeutic modalities, and completed daily charting and patient education.

She also helped the staff with a yoga class held at “Balance Zones” in various buildings at the space center. These zones are small areas where employees are encouraged to take a break and de-stress.

As a nontraditional clinical setting, Cardenas said the NASA facility helped diversify her training.

“Most athletic trainers work on the sidelines during sporting events and witness injuries when they occur,” Cardenas said. “However, the RehabWorks’ athletic trainers typically don’t witness the injuries happening. Therefore, we applied critical thinking and questioning to determine the issue’s source.”

Kirkland agrees the facility provides a unique opportunity for students to learn.

“You have to play sleuth and delve into the problem,” Kirkland said. “That’s one of the skills we teach the students. They really have to hone in on how to be a detective and question the patient and look at the issue from different angles to connect the dots.”

Throughout the summer, Cardenas worked closely with Kirkland and Ian Stites, intern coordinator and athletic trainer, which was the highlight of the internship.

“My most meaningful experience was learning from the excellent athletic trainers, each at a different point in their career,” Cardenas said. “They were all amazing and just great teachers to learn from. I am so lucky I got to be part of this amazing experience.” ★

# Athletics Highlights

## NEW ATHLETIC DIRECTOR AT THE HELM



**AFTER A THREE-YEAR** run as the athletic director at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tennessee, Ryan Ivey was introduced as SFA's new director of athletics in July.

At Austin Peay, Ivey helped amass more than \$6.5 million in gifts and donations to athletics, which provided funding for facility improvements and enhanced the department's operating budget.

## VOLLEYBALL TEAM DOMINATES THE COURT, NET

In the midst of one of its best seasons in program history, the SFA Ladyjack volleyball team won the Southland Conference regular season and reeled off a nation-leading 25 wins in a row (as of Sawdust publication date). That winning streak — the second-longest in the history of SFA's program — includes a perfect 15-0 record in Southland Conference action. SFA volleyball was the first NCAA Division I volleyball team to reach the 25-win mark this season. Junior Danae Daron became the first student-athlete in SFA history to be named SportsImports/American Volleyball Coaches Association NCAA Division I Player of the Week by AVCA.



## FORMER FOOTBALL PLAYER EXCELLING IN NFL

**FOLLOWING HIS SELECTION** by the Los Angeles Rams in the fourth round of the 2018 NFL Draft, it didn't take long for former Lumberjack John Franklin-Myers to make a name for himself. During his first six games in a Rams uniform, Franklin-Myers accumulated five tackles. It was his strip sack of Minnesota Vikings quarterback Kirk Cousins that helped preserve a 38-31 victory for the Rams on Sept. 27.

## RUNNER HAS REMARKABLE STORY



**THE AWE-INSPIRING STORY** of SFA freshman cross-country runner Awet Beraki was highlighted in SFA Athletics' "Behind the Axe" video series in September. Beraki, a native of Eritrea, Africa, was kidnapped in 2011, held captive and tortured for nearly a year before escaping and later fleeing to the U.S. to live with a foster family. Upon graduating from high school in Colorado, Beraki enrolled at SFA and is in the midst of his first season as a Lumberjack. To watch the "Behind the Axe" video featuring Beraki, go to [sfasu.edu/sawdust/awet](https://sfasu.edu/sawdust/awet).

## DUO BRINGS HOME GOLD MEDAL



**IN LATE JULY**, Lumberjack basketball seniors Shannon Bogues (left) and TJ Holyfield (right) embarked on a journey to São Paulo, Brazil, as part of a 96-member U.S. student-athlete

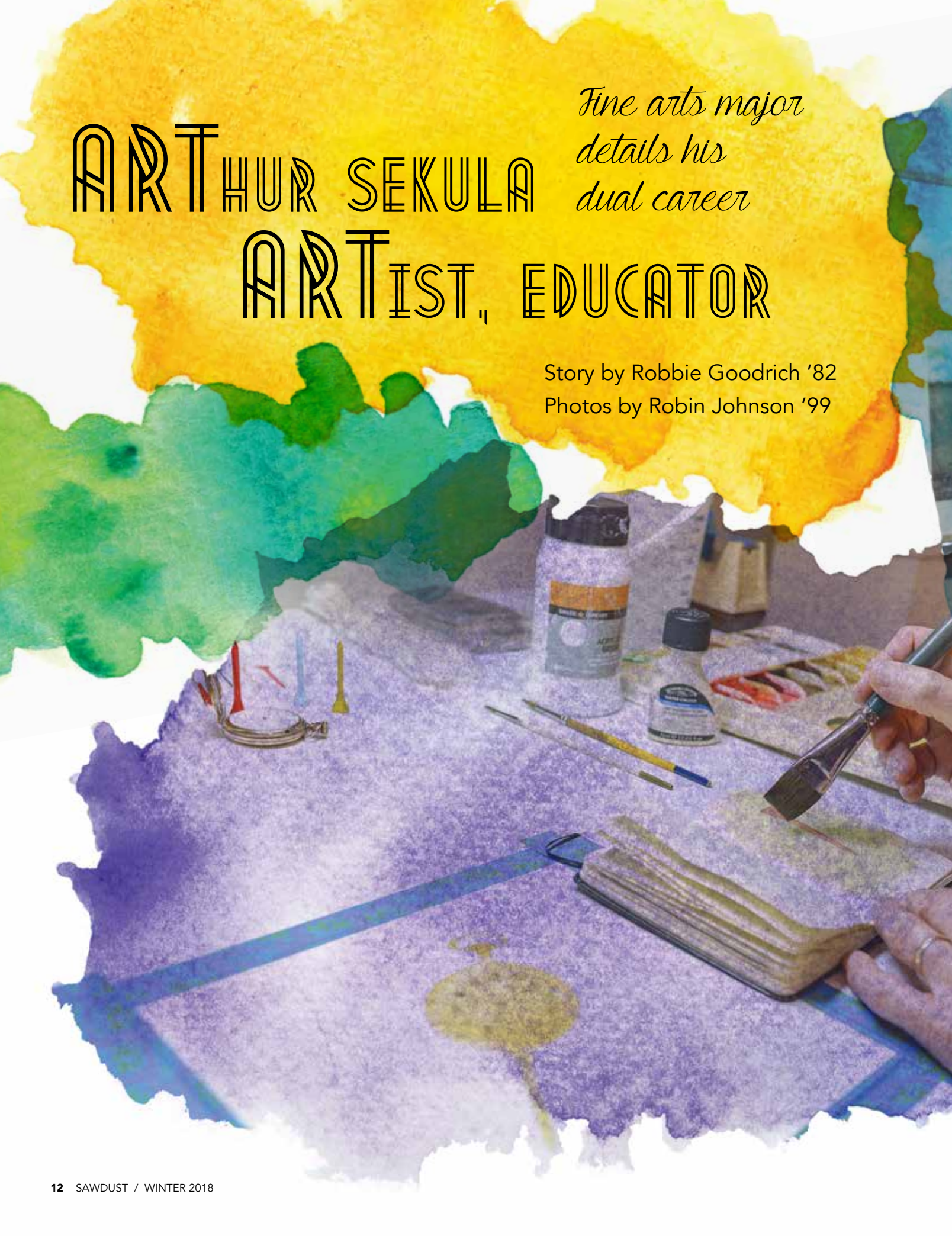
delegation to compete in the Fédération Internationale du Sport Universitaire America Games, which brings together student-athletes from 25 countries to compete in 26 different sports.

The Lumberjack pair helped the 10-man Athletes in Action USA men's basketball team capture a gold medal after victories against Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico.

"This (gold medal) is going on my wall," Holyfield said. "It represents all the hard work and what we went to Brazil to do. There are a lot of memories inside this one medal."

## DOZIER CONTINUES HIS CAREER WITH ROYALS

**HUNTER DOZIER**, FORMER Lumberjack baseball player and eighth overall selection in the 2013 MLB Draft, played first base for the Kansas City Royals during the vast majority of the 2018 season. Dozier took part in 102 of Kansas City's 162 regular season games and finished the year with a .229 batting average, .278 on-base percentage and .395 slugging percentage. Dozier hit 19 doubles, four triples and 11 homers through the 2018 campaign and drove in 34 runs. The most memorable of those hits was a walk-off homer in the Royals' 5-4 victory against the Cleveland Indians Aug. 24.



ARTHUR SEKULA

ARTIST, EDUCATOR

*Fine arts major  
details his  
dual career*

Story by Robbie Goodrich '82

Photos by Robin Johnson '99





**WARD-WINNING WATERCOLOR** artist Arthur Sekula '89 has a passion for creating paintings that evoke calm, solitude and strength.

"As far back as I can remember, I've been interested in art," Sekula said. "I always made stuff. During grade school, my interests were drawing, painting and sculpture."

Today, Sekula draws inspiration from his East Texas surroundings, from fence lines and hay fields to unusual doorways and windows.

"My creativity is inspired from just about anything," Sekula said. "But architecture and the East Texas surroundings are my main subjects."

Growing up in San Antonio, supportive teachers at St. Gerard Catholic School and family members encouraged him to pursue his dream of becoming a working artist. After graduating from

high school, his interest in art as a profession became apparent.

Sekula attended San Antonio College where he studied advertising design. In the late 1970s, he moved to East Texas to live with his sister and began working at Rusk State Hospital.

Initially, Sekula worked with geriatric and adolescent patients in Rusk State Hospital's Valley View Unit, teaching them arts and crafts. Eventually, he taught at the hospital's Skyview Unit, the area within the facility that houses patients with mental illnesses.

"We did painting, clay, all kinds of arts and crafts," Sekula said. "I would teach five to six patients at a time. The art classes kept them busy and helped break the monotony. It was a type of therapy for them." ➔

*"Loving Spoon," a watercolor painting by Sekula, proudly hangs in his family's kitchen.*



*"Seven Steps to Tree Line," a watercolor landscape painting, is displayed above Sekula's mantel.*



*MIDDLE: "Bonnetts Trail," a watercolor painting depicting bluebonnets in Ennis, was reproduced into 97 prints, which decorate several hotel rooms at the Courtyard Dallas Addison/Midway hotel.*

*BOTTOM: Arthur Sekula '89 and his wife, Susan '83, hold Kachina-style figurines, which Arthur crafted from clay several years ago. Susan's holds a flute and basket of cupcakes. Arthur's displays a paintbrush and palette.*

Soon, Sekula enrolled at SFA, working toward a Bachelor of Fine Arts. He recalls his SFA art teachers with fond memories and credits them with giving good and practical advice that still serves him well.

"Some of the art faculty members were and still are my heroes and mentors," Sekula said. "The late Dr. Diane Ford guided me to become an art teacher, and Piero Fenci, through his love of art and words of encouragement, lifted me to become the artist I am today."

Fenci, professor of ceramics, still teaches at SFA and remembers Sekula as an accomplished student and artist.

"Arthur stands out as one of the most dedicated and talented students I have mentored in 44 years of running the ceramics area at SFA," Fenci said. "He has devoted his life to teaching people how to express themselves artistically. He's so smart, thoughtful and professional in his dedication to exhibiting his art in regional and competitive shows. He's a teacher who has his hat in the competitive arena, practicing what he preaches."

After Sekula's graduation from SFA, he continued to work at Rusk State Hospital, teaching art until 1994. Although he changed his teaching location throughout the years to Jacksonville, Rusk, New Summerfield and now Tyler, teaching sixth- and seventh-grade art at Three Lakes Middle School, he has remained a devoted educator for more than 20 years.

"I think of myself as both artist and educator," Sekula said. "Looking back, I remember Dr. Ford reviewing my degree plan and saying, 'Arthur, you're going to need a job. Consider teaching art.' At that time, I thought there was no question about being an artist. But now I know what she was trying to say — it might be hard to make a living as an artist. I needed a backup plan, and teaching art has been a way to make a living and enjoy the creative process."

Although teaching takes up a great deal of his time, Sekula still manages to create artwork of his own, mostly watercolor landscapes and architectural paintings that have earned him accolades in contests and exhibitions. He also paints residential home portraits and has worked in ceramics and sculpture.

"I've been invited to regional, national and international exhibits," Sekula said. "The latest career highlight was being invited to exhibit at the Brownsville Museum of Fine Art, where I won first place in the water media division and the Octavia Arneson Award for best painting. I was invited back the next year and once again took home first place."

Some of his surreal landscapes were inspired by personal experiences from the past and present, he said.

*"Hedge Side" showcases tranquil colors of blue and gray.*



"My wife (Susan '83) not only gives me her love and support but also inspires me creatively."

One such idea from Susan that Sekula is currently working on is painting items in watercolor that involve visual puns.

"I'm currently working on a small watercolor of a pocket watch sitting on a golf tee," Sekula said. "The painting is titled 'Tee Time,' and it is just a fun picture. Although I work a lot in landscapes, I also like to experiment with surrealism and other types of painting styles."

Before he begins to paint, Sekula said he makes a detailed drawing, often using a grid to ensure the artwork will be produced to scale. He then works to fill in the spaces with paint.

"Painting in watercolor can be extremely difficult," Sekula said. "Acrylic and oil paints are much thicker and tend to hold their place when applied. However, watercolor tends to control you. It flows wherever it wants."

Bluebonnets are a favorite subject for Sekula to paint. Pointing to a picture hanging on his studio wall, Sekula detailed how he was contacted by a consulting company about purchasing several prints of the artwork.

"I was skeptical at first," Sekula said. "The consulting company contacted me on behalf of a client who wanted to use artwork from Texas artists in his hotels. The caller said they saw my artwork and wanted to use it. Specifically, they liked this painting of bluebonnets they saw on my website."

Sekula said after working for months on the contract, they later made an agreement where 97 prints would be made from the artwork to hang in hotel rooms.

"If you go online to the Courtyard Dallas Addition/Midway website, you'll see a photo of that painting hanging on one of the room's walls," Sekula said.

Although he spends much of his time in his own classroom teaching, Sekula said he often thinks back to his time at SFA and the wonderful memories he has of creating art alongside faculty members who left a lasting impression on him.

"Professor Fenci and I have become good friends," Sekula said. "Not long ago, I told him I would love to own one of his ceramic pieces. Shortly thereafter, he arrived at my house with one of his incredible leaf boxes. That piece is proudly displayed in my studio right next to my drawing table. It gives me inspiration and reminds me of my SFA roots."

To view more of Sekula's art, visit [arthursekula.com](http://arthursekula.com). ★

# Faculty Advising

## UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AND CREATIVE DISCOVERY OFFER MYRIAD BENEFITS

**BY DR. PAULINE M. SAMPSON**

Dean

Office of Research and Graduate Studies



**WHAT STANDS OUT** among your college memories? Is there one moment you will never forget? For me, one of those defining moments was when I was asked to join a research project conducted by a graduate student and faculty member. I was only 19 and an undergraduate student, and it made me feel valued when I was

asked to be part of this endeavor. I felt like a researcher. This experience eventually led me to believing I could complete a doctoral program and actually become a researcher.

SFA is pushing for a stronger undergraduate research and creative discovery initiative within all six of its colleges. We want undergraduate students to feel the same connection to SFA faculty members and their future professions as I felt as an undergraduate student. This undergraduate research and creative discovery initiative is a major component of SFA's strategic plan's focus on creating transformational learning experiences and fostering academic and co-curricular innovations. It connects with the strategic plan in several ways:

- The initiative works to attract and support high-quality faculty and staff. Faculty and staff who work directly as mentors with undergraduate students gain excitement that leads students to become part of their profession while also building a vibrant community for research and creative discovery.
- Students learn marketable job skills that connect them to their profession. These skills — communication, cooperation, problem-solving, decision-making, and research and discovery — are all important aptitudes learned while participating in research and creative discovery.
- Participation helps increase enrollment. Research shows that students who participate in undergraduate research have higher retention rates and GPAs.
- Our university culture is strengthened. Stakeholders see a strong university that connects with solving important needs in the community, state, nation and world. This leads to more students desiring to become Lumberjacks because of the attraction to contribute to society.
- These endeavors often increase donor funding to important projects. Undergraduate research and creative discovery projects that lead to something significant often pull at the heartstrings of donors.

If you would like to become involved and help promote undergraduate research and creative discovery at SFA, contact me at [sampsonp@sfasu.edu](mailto:sampsonp@sfasu.edu) or (936) 468-2237. ★

# Accounting for Success

Dollar General chairman discusses  
his rise in the corporate world

Story by Christine Broussard '10  
Photos by Hardy Meredith '81





**T**HE ROLLING LADDER looked like a good ladder, like you could jump on and wheel around the room in a frenzy or climb its steps to slowly peruse book titles. Although it stood immobile just behind Michael Calbert '84 as he sat in his wood-paneled office, the object commanded attention.

In fact, Calbert always wanted a rolling ladder, he confessed. And after years of rising through the private equity world, starting with minor accounting positions and ending in his appointment as lead director and chairman of the board of multiple corporations, he was able to include the ladder in the design of his Austin lake house.

It's hard to not see the ladder in Calbert's home office as a metaphor for all that he has accomplished in the world of business. Not only did he climb the "corporate ladder," but his successes in business positioned him to create a home — and a life — that fulfills his own dreams.

"I'm an oddball when it comes to private equity," Calbert said. "If you go down the list of partners at private equity firms, there are a handful of schools they attended — Harvard, Stanford, Princeton, etc.

But I've always believed everything would work out if I worked hard, was intellectually curious about everything, and maintained the highest integrity and best reputation."

And worked out it has. Months after graduating from SFA, Calbert landed a job at Arthur Andersen in Houston, one of the "big five" accounting companies in the country that provides auditing, tax and consulting services to large corporations. This began a string of professional successes that placed Calbert in chairman, board member and chief financial officer positions at some of the largest retailers in the country doing what he loves — "helping ordinary people do extraordinary things."

"The thing that's been most enjoyable is solving a problem that helps people, whether it's a management team struggling with a competitive issue or an accounts payable department that needs to be re-engineered for more efficiency," he said. "I love being able to unlock a problem that others haven't been able to unlock. I really love to see people trying to do a good job be successful." ➔

## LIFE IN THE PINEY WOODS

Born in Tyler and raised in Longview, Calbert journeyed to SFA by way of his older brother, Craig '82.

When he wasn't participating in activities organized by his fraternity, Sigma Chi, Calbert worked as a cashier at a Diamond Shamrock in Nacogdoches. Those two worlds collided one day when he met Barbara '84, his wife of more than 30 years.

"When I was pledging Sigma Chi, as part of the process they assign a

'big sister' to you (from a sister sorority). You have to try to guess who it is, so they try to throw you off," Calbert explained. "My 'big sister' was in the sorority with my now wife and had (Barbara) call me pretending to be my 'big sister.' Later, I figured out who my big sister was, and I didn't think much about it [the phone call].

"Well, one day, Barbara stopped to get gas, walked in, saw my name tag, and she said, 'Oh my gosh, you're the guy I called and told all those lies to.' And it was love at first sight."

Not sure what kind of professional life he wanted, Calbert hesitantly entered SFA as a music major. However, one accounting class got him interested in public accounting, and he quickly changed his major.

During his sophomore year, Calbert began a full-time position at Elliott Electric Supply in Nacogdoches, where he worked closely with owner Bill Elliott, who became a mentor. The position would become an early guide for his time in the business world.

"Mike was our credit manager when we had three stores," Elliott said. "He was professional and insightful beyond his years. We enjoyed talking about the business, and we both wanted to make a difference."

## LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF BUSINESS

Calbert began at the Houston office of Arthur Andersen in 1985, starting as an auditor and later working on projects that included profit enhancement and strategy operations.

"Accounting is like the language of business, so Arthur Andersen provided great training to learn this language and what financial statements are about. But

I always had this pull to understand more about how business operates," Calbert said.

Later, the firm picked up a San Antonio-based retailer, H-E-B, and Arthur Andersen placed Calbert on the team. He worked with Charles Butt, chairman and CEO of H-E-B, and the grandson of its founder, Florence Thornton Butt. Charles reminded him in a lot of ways of Elliott for both his business savvy and inquisitiveness.

"Everything Charles did in the 1980s was preparing the company to compete against Walmart," Calbert said, explaining that Walmart wasn't in the grocery business at the time. "He would think about strategic, important issues — issues he would have to deal with three or five years down the road."

H-E-B laid the groundwork for Calbert to spend the rest of his career in and around retail, he said. In 1994, a Houston-based partner of Arthur Andersen approached Calbert to assist in helping consult for another family-owned grocery retailer, Randalls. The company had purchased Tom Thumb and was struggling to integrate the two businesses into one.

"I was in my early 30s, and it was a position that was probably several years more advanced than my age, so it was attractive. I loved the family, and I loved this problem that we had to solve, and I thought I could be a part of solving it," Calbert said.

Ironically, the success of his former account, H-E-B, and that of Walmart complicated the integration of Randalls/Tom Thumb. The family eventually sold 80 percent of the company to the U.S.-based private equity firm Kohlberg Kravis Roberts and Co.

The purchase was Calbert's professional introduction to KKR, which asked him to move to California and join the firm to run its

"You have a lot of lucky and unlucky breaks. You find yourself in the right place at the right time, and you do your best to capitalize on it. ... I had several great mentors during my career. I tried to learn everything possible from each one."

- MICHAEL CALBERT '84



retail practice in 2000. The firm remains one of the largest in the country and has, during the past 20 years, grown from two offices in the U.S. to 21 offices in 15 countries.

"It's funny. My youngest son is a planner. He's in college, and he wants to plan exactly what he's doing the day after he graduates, but that's not the way life works," Calbert said. "You have a lot of lucky and unlucky breaks. You find yourself in the right place at the right time, and you do your best to capitalize on it. I never would have guessed when I was at Arthur Andersen that I would become CFO of Randalls or that I would have gone on to KKR, but it just happened that way. I had several great mentors during my career. I tried to learn everything possible from each one."

## DOLLAR GENERAL

KKR began working to purchase Dollar General in 2006 and reached a deal in the summer of 2007. At the time, Dollar General was a public company, meaning its shares were traded on the New York Stock Exchange. It had approximately 8,500 stores and 74,000 employees, "and the company was broken," Calbert said.

To Calbert, Dollar General wasn't just another acquisition — the company's culture stood out.

"I'm a believer in real missions," he said. "Dollar General's mission is to serve the underserved — to offer products at or below Walmart prices in neighborhoods where the single mom on a tight budget can walk down the street and get what she needs. Without us there, it will be much harder on her. That's a really strong mission."

Today, Dollar General has approximately 15,000 stores and nearly 140,000 employees, and KKR has managed to grow the company while keeping its culture and mission as strong as before.

When the news of Dollar General's purchase by KKR broke, Calbert was standing in the foyer of the company's headquarters speaking to approximately 4,000 employees, laying out the game plan and assuring them they would not lose their jobs. This practice of talking to employees in person was something Calbert said he did for every buyout.

"I believe you have to get the people part of business right, or you're not going to produce the profits you want," he explained. "It starts with the CEO, but it goes all the way down to the person working the cash register. They have to know who you are, what you're going to do and how it's going to impact them. Particularly in retail, it's all about people."

## CLOSING THAT CHAPTER

Back at his Lake Austin home, Calbert rose from his chair and walked over to the office bookshelves to explain how the various trinkets lining the shelves represent each transaction he's ever made.

Calbert retired from KKR in 2014, although he remains chairman of the Dollar General board and serves on three other corporate boards. He admits that, as an undergraduate at SFA working as a cashier for a gas station and studying accounting, he never imagined the life he has made for himself.



*Calbert discusses store operations with Patrick Tufte (left), manager of a Dollar General in south Austin, and Jeff Mooney (right), division vice president of Dollar General based in Austin.*

"I believe you have to get the people part of business right, or you're not going to produce the profits you want. It starts with the CEO, but it goes all the way down to the person working the cash register.

... it's all about people."

- MICHAEL CALBERT '84

"Regardless of where you're from, if you start with the belief that you can do anything, you're willing to put in the time and do the work, and you push to be intellectually curious about everything, you can be successful at whatever you do," he said.

Calbert takes a seat at his large, polished desk. It's clear that not just the rolling ladder but the whole of his executive office is a symbol of how much Calbert has accomplished in his personal and professional life since graduating from SFA. ★

# TRIPLE TH

## Three sisters play basketball for the Ladyjacks

IMANI JOHNSON / #32

Story by SFA Athletics  
Photos by Hardy Meredith '81



**I**T IS NOT unusual for siblings to excel at the same sport. It also is not uncommon for them to be recruited by the same college or university to participate in an athletic endeavor. What is unique is for three siblings to play the same sport simultaneously at the same university. This rare occurrence is underway at SFA, as the Johnson sisters from

Lee's Summit, Missouri, are all suited up for the 2018-19 Ladyjacks basketball team.

There are only two sets of three sisters playing together in Division I basketball this season. SFA's Johnson trio is among them. For Aaliyah and Aiyana, the opportunity to play with older sister, Imani, was an opportunity too good to pass up.

# IRREAT

AIYANA JOHNSON / #21

AALIYAH JOHNSON / #33



"I was fortunate to get to play with both of my sisters during high school," Aaliyah said. "However, since I was a few years younger than Imani, I just watched her and the team and did what they needed me to do. When I got to play with Aiyana, we were more equals on the court. I made great memories and enjoyed playing with both of them."

The journey to play basketball began at a young age for the siblings,

with Imani starting at age 5 and Aaliyah and Aiyana showing interest during kindergarten. As the years passed and their passion for basketball grew, so did the sisters, with Imani reaching 6 feet tall, Aaliyah 6 feet 2 inches tall and Aiyana, the youngest, 6 feet 3 inches tall.

All three sisters played basketball at Lee's Summit North High School, a powerhouse program in Missouri. Each sister dominated the court →



## SISTERS THROUGH THE YEARS:

*TOP: Aaliyah, Imani and Aiyana*

*LEFT: Imani, Aiyana and Aaliyah*

*MIDDLE: Aiyana, Aaliyah and Imani in Lee's Summit, Missouri*

*RIGHT: Imani, Aiyana and Aaliyah*



during her time there, with the trio earning recognition on most of the program's top 10 career statistical leaderboards.

"Aiyana is the most athletic of the trio," said Mark Kellogg, Ladyjacks head coach. "She's had the opportunity to watch and learn from her sisters. She definitely looks to them as mentors; however, she has a chance to leave her own mark on our program. Aiyana is extremely skilled, versatile and will be able to play multiple positions for us at some point. The sky is the limit for her."

After graduation and being named her high school's leading scorer, Imani played basketball at Southeast Missouri State University. She played two seasons for the Redhawks before looking for a change of scenery.

"I was excited to have the opportunity to come to SFA and play for the Ladyjacks," Imani said. "It felt like a good fit for me, and I was impressed with Coach Kellogg and the team. It was the type of program I felt I could find my place."

Imani, a senior forward, is in her second season with the Ladyjacks.

"After I got to SFA and started attending classes and being part of the team, I told my sisters how much I liked it here," Imani said. "That kind of piqued their interest in possibly coming to SFA, too."

Noting their own impressive lists of high school basketball accolades, Kellogg and his assistant coaches eventually recruited sophomore center Aaliyah to the squad, followed by forward and center Aiyana, who is in her first season with the Ladyjacks.

"Having all three Johnson sisters in our program is extremely rare at this level," Kellogg said. "When we signed Imani as a transfer, we knew it was a talented family, but we certainly didn't know it would end up with all three of them here at SFA. Not only is the situation unique, but they all play a little differently on the court, as well."

With abundant athletic talent among the siblings, one might expect that the sisters come from a long line of basketball players, but that is not the case. They are the first in their immediate family to play college basketball.



IMANI



AALIYAH



AIYANA

**HEIGHT:** 6'  
**CLASS:** SENIOR  
**HOMETOWN:** LEE'S SUMMIT,  
MISSOURI

Ladyjack Basketball

- Southland Conference Newcomer of the Year 2017-18
- Southland Conference All-Tournament Team 2017-18

Lee's Summit North High School

- Broke school's career scoring records with 1,677 career points and 16.6 points per contest
- Set school's career records with 37 double-doubles and 566 made free throws
- Four-year first all-conference and all-district selection

**HEIGHT:** 6' 2"  
**CLASS:** SOPHOMORE  
**HOMETOWN:** LEE'S SUMMIT,  
MISSOURI

Ladyjack Basketball

- Appeared in 23 games as a freshman and averaged 2.4 points per game

Lee's Summit North High School

- Missouri Basketball Coaches Association All-District Team in 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17
- Scored 1,119 points during prep career, ranking fifth all-time at Lee's Summit North
- Ranks fifth in career free throws (278), second in blocks (121), ninth in assists (185) and eighth in rebounds (591)

**HEIGHT:** 6' 3"  
**CLASS:** FRESHMAN  
**HOMETOWN:** LEE'S SUMMIT,  
MISSOURI

Lee's Summit North High School

- Missouri Basketball Coaches Association All-State Team in 2017-18
- Missouri Basketball Coaches Association All-District Team in 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18
- Kansas City Examiner All-Area First Team
- Kansas City Examiner Player of the Year in 2017-18
- Kansas City Star All-Metro First Team in 2017-18
- Ranks third all-time in points at Lee's Summit North with 1,391 points

"I started out playing for the Amateur Athletic Union in third grade," Imani said. "It was really competitive and forced me to get better. My sisters grew up watching me play, and so they kind of understood the intensity that was needed to play at that level. When they made their own way onto competitive teams, they were able to apply that knowledge and grow as players."

The trio's commitment to basketball and playing for SFA has spurred some enthusiasm from other members of the Johnson family, including mother Carri, father Amos III and brother Amos IV, who relocated to Houston to be closer to Imani, Aaliyah and Aiyana and be fixtures at the Ladyjack games.

"Our family 100 percent supports us," Aiyana said. "They're all in and backing us as we do the best we can for each other and our teammates. I know that me and my sisters will be each other's biggest fans during the games — yelling at each other from the bench. It will

be really special to have my parents and brother there, too, and hear their voices from the stands."

In addition to the support of their family, the sisters are making lasting friendships and a positive impression on their teammates.

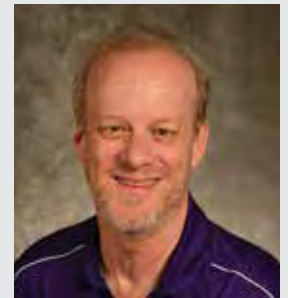
"They have good chemistry," said freshman guard Brii Mitchell.

"Imani can do everything. She's vocal and uplifting. Aaliyah is positive. She's always finding the silver lining in every situation. Aiyana is a strong person and has a little bit of both her sisters in her, which is only going to help her grow as a player."

The Ladyjacks are picked by the Southland Conference Preseason Poll to finish in second place, but whatever happens on the court this season, one thing is clear — it will be a very special time for the Johnson sisters.

"This is the type of experience that stays with you for life," Imani said. "I know all three of us will think back to this time and remember how special it was. It is something we will talk about over and over again." ★

# Work Space / Inside Dr. Ken Collier's Office



**DR. KEN COLLIER**  
Professor of  
Political Science  
College of Liberal and  
Applied Arts

1. Collier said one of the advantages of writing books about the presidency is it provides an excuse to visit presidential libraries. Collier purchased this signed print of the White House during a trip to the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri.
2. Mr. Meeseeks, from the "Rick and Morty" television show, greets students who visit Collier's office and helps them feel more comfortable.
3. Collier said, like all good Americans, he has a signed picture of Adam West as Batman hanging on his office wall. According to Collier, West was the best Batman ever, and he doesn't see any point in discussing it.
4. Since 1972, Collier has been collecting political campaign buttons. Some of the additions to his collection have come from students who worked on various campaigns.
5. Two framed baseball cards are displayed on Collier's desk. When he was a child, Houston Astro's third baseman Bob Aspromonte was Collier's favorite player. Collier said he later had the privilege to work with former Minnesota Twins second baseman Bobby Randall at the University of Kansas.
6. Occupying a prominent place on Collier's desk is a National Service Medal, which was gifted to Collier by a former student. Collier said several of his former students have enlisted in the military, and the medal serves as a reminder of those students and their sacrifices.
7. During the 1950s and 60s, the Marx toy company produced miniature plastic presidential figures, as well as a model of the White House. This boxed set, in pristine condition, has been part of Collier's collection of presidential memorabilia for many years.
8. Visiting with former students and discussing topics they learned in his classes that they have found most useful in life is a favorite way for Collier to recharge his batteries. Every summer, he enjoys catching up with former students while attending Texas Rangers baseball games. A few former students gifted Collier this Rangers rubber duck, which he keeps as a reminder of those trips to Arlington.
9. In 1976, "Schoolhouse Rock," an animated musical educational short films programming series, which covered topics ranging from government to grammar, aired a segment that featured the song "I'm Just a Bill." The song was about how a bill becomes a law. The figure on Collier's desk is a representation of the animated figure that was featured in the segment.
10. Collier's mother recently found a pair of cowboy boots that he wore as a child and gave them to him. Collier said he keeps them in his office to remind him of growing up in East Texas and spending summers on the family ranch in Grand Saline.
11. Collier acquired this Michael Jordan poster while he worked for the University of Kansas' athletics department during a career change. The poster depicts Jordan reflecting upon all the shots he missed and the times he failed and how those difficult times led to success. Collier said the poster reminds him and his students that failures are common, and setbacks are only temporary.
12. An avid sports fan, Collier said he's always excited to receive any type of sports collectible. The Phillie Phanatic, the mascot for the Philadelphia Phillies baseball team, and Kiwi, the mascot for the New Zealand national rugby league team, were given to him by two former students.

# 'Jacks of All Trades / With Malcolm LaVergne '97

## LUMBERJACKS MAKE GREAT LAWYERS

'97 alumnus practices law  
in Las Vegas

Story by Dr. Shirley Luna '85, '06 & '14

Photo by Hardy Meredith '81

**WHILE GROWING UP** in Houston, Malcolm LaVergne thought attending law school might not be in the cards for his future. But for the '97 SFA alumnus, now practicing law in Las Vegas, all it took was hard work, initiative and perhaps just a little Lumberjack luck.

"In high school, people would say to me, 'You would make a great lawyer.' But no one in my family was an attorney, so it seemed to me to be a pipe dream," LaVergne said.

That sentiment changed the day LaVergne set foot on the SFA campus and fortuitously met Dr. Don Gregory (professor of political science, now retired).

"Dr. Gregory was the prelaw club advisor, Law School Admission Test coach and the moot court sponsor. He said to me, 'You need to do X, Y and Z, and you can write your own ticket to law school.' So I did X, Y and Z, and I went to Cornell Law School," LaVergne said.

LaVergne attended community college before coming to SFA and earned about 40 credit hours. After finishing the community college curriculum, he took a break from school.

"I worked as a volunteer firefighter, as a security officer, and I drove an ambulance. I had been out of school for a while doing the proverbial, 'figuring it out,' when my mom told me, 'the longer you stay out, the more distant it's going to be,'" LaVergne said.

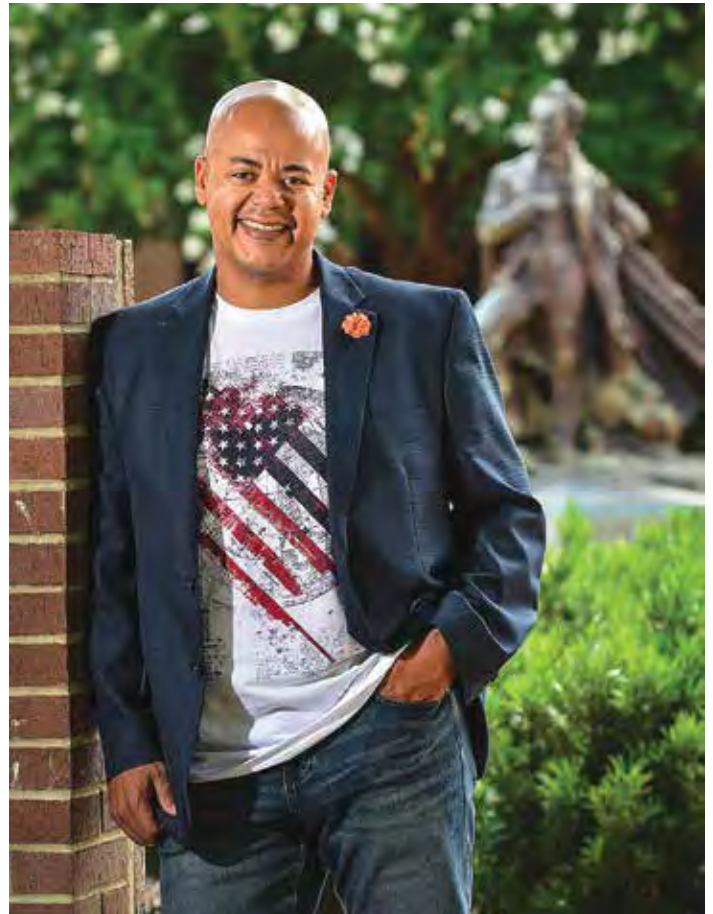
His mother's comments prompted a visit to the SFA campus and the chance meeting with Gregory. A few semesters later, LaVergne graduated summa cum laude from SFA and headed to Cornell, where he graduated in 2000.

While at SFA, LaVergne continued to work as an ambulance driver and also worked as a technician at a local psychiatric hospital. But he considers his work as a volunteer firefighter the most rewarding part-time work, and he worked in that capacity in New York while practicing law.

"As a firefighter, even on a volunteer basis, you learn discipline and skills performance, and one night a week was devoted to training. You learn to deal with people in high-stress situations and how not to lose your cool," LaVergne said. "But all of the jobs I worked were honorable jobs that taught different lessons about managing people and managing expectations; it was a great learning experience."

Following law school, LaVergne practiced law in New York and Texas before moving to Las Vegas. "I was still trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my legal career, and I visited a colleague in Las Vegas who is 10 years older than me and very successful," LaVergne explained. "I moved there in May 2006 and passed the bar in July 2006."

LaVergne's clients have included some highly recognizable names, including O.J. Simpson and Floyd Mayweather Sr., but LaVergne said providing legal counsel to assist people is a rewarding career, regardless of the celebrity status of your client.



"Years ago, I assisted a family who had moved to the United States from the Philippines to run an assisted-living facility, but there was a disagreement among their partners," LaVergne recalled. "One partner threatened to shut the entire facility down. That would have been tragic for the family, because they held investment visas that were tied to the existence of the facility. If it had closed, they would have been forced to leave the country in disgrace."

LaVergne was able to secure an injunction to prevent the closure, and the facility remained open. He is still in touch with the family and frequently visits with them.

"It is very fulfilling to be able to make a difference like that," he said. "Their two daughters were 8 and 10 years old at the time, and one is in college now. The other just graduated from college, and I joined the family for a celebration of her acceptance into medical school."

LaVergne recently returned to Nacogdoches to speak to high school students attending SFA's annual Pre-Law Academy. According to Dr. Donald Gooch, SFA associate professor of government and academy organizer, the input of practicing professionals provides lessons that will serve camp participants well in whatever careers they choose.

"The high school students who attend the academy are aspiring future leaders in our community. The lessons they learn here, from legal theoreticians and practitioners with decades of experience in law, have a profound and lasting impact on our students," Gooch said. "We are grateful to the visiting leaders who help us give our students a breadth and depth of knowledge and experience in the law and legal profession and make the academy a unique and edifying experience." ★



## *Aged to Perfection*

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# From the Association

"I want to thank the SFA alumni staff, board and committee members, ambassadors, and alumni and friends for believing in and supporting me as association president."



**IT IS HARD** to believe it has been two years since I began serving as president of the SFA Alumni Association. When I began my term, I had no idea what was ahead. I recall being told by a predecessor that

I likely would have a large number of goals to achieve, but I would be surprised at how quickly the first year would fly by. She was right! As I compose this letter, I am just days away from leading my final board meeting and participating in Homecoming as association president.

While some of my initial goals may not have been accomplished, I am proud of the board's achievements. It all began a couple of association presidents before me, as they set out with the common vision to create synergy and work as a more unified team than ever before. Prior to this commitment, efforts were positive and fruitful, but lacked unity. I admire the leadership across SFA for making bold moves to ensure that the university and alumni work together. It is worth it for the greater good of SFA.

The university and alumni leadership have one vision and one plan, which is aligned to engage and support alumni, increase

enrollment, create an amazing experience for SFA students, and support our faculty and staff. I am excited to see the further developments of this unified effort.

I want to thank the SFA Alumni Association staff, board and committee members, ambassadors, and alumni and friends for believing in and supporting me as association president. I also want to thank the alumni presidents before me, who worked so hard to achieve more than we ever could imagine. I also want to recognize the university's leadership for being patient and easy to work alongside. Finally, I must thank my family for supporting me throughout this venture.

Thanks for allowing me to lead this amazing association! ★

Axe 'em, Jacks!

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

Homecoming 2018



## SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

Bob Francis '78, Bullard  
president

Charlotte Ashcraft '80, Nacogdoches  
president-elect

David Madrid '02, Bossier City, Louisiana  
past president

Mike Harbordt '63, Nacogdoches  
director emeritus

## ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BOARD

Tony Both '98, Katy

Larry Brooks '01, Houston

Reuben Brown '07, Grand Prairie

Jeremy Cleverly '98, Mansfield

Brian Dawson '03, Conroe

James Drennan '73, Pittsburg

Mark Friedman '91, Allen

Sam Khoury '97, Longview

Steve McCarty '65 & '70, Alto

Jaclyn Partin '08 & '14, Nacogdoches

Alex Ranc '11 & '13, Nacogdoches

Ted Smith '07, Nacogdoches

Erika Tolar '02, Spring

Bob Williams '70, Dallas

Julie Woods '99, Longview

## ALUMNI ASSOCIATION STAFF

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

Amber Lindsay  
assistant to the executive director

Heather Hawkins '00  
associate director of alumni relations

Samantha Mora '08  
director of events and engagement

Alicia Roland Chatman '16  
gifts and records coordinator

Amie Ford '09 & '11  
coordinator of events and engagement

Derek Snyder '01  
coordinator of communications  
and sponsorships

Anne Scamardo  
accounting assistant

Bob Sitton '60  
director emeritus

## CONTACT

Sawdust  
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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.

# 'JACK TALK

Facebook - SFASU  
Instagram - SFA\_JACKS

Twitter - @SFASU  
Pinterest - SFALUMBERJACKS

Use #AxeEm or #SFAJackTalk on social media.



Not really sure which one is better? @astros or @sfasu? #NeverSettle #axeem

@\_MELIALFONZO / TWITTER



Jackhammer. #thisismyaxe #silhouette #art

MEAGHAN\_PAIGE97 / INSTAGRAM

Now it feels like fall.  
#axeem

@LUMBERJACKFANS / TWITTER



Representing at college day for our alma mater.

@MRSCOLELEARNS / TWITTER



Awesome night with my amazing team, students and parents at Meet the Teacher. Always great to build relationships. @LAFO\_FWISD @SFASU

@EBONEELYNN / TWITTER



Happy Homecoming at SFA! #blueheeler #sfa #dogmom #axeem

CASTIEL\_THEHEELER / INSTAGRAM

I got engaged by Steen Hall and the Ag Pond. Oct. 23 was our 26th wedding anniversary. My husband was going to Sam Houston State University at the time, and his nickname for SFA was "So Far Away." I guess it wasn't far away after all since he came almost every weekend.

SUSAN FREEMAN / FACEBOOK



Pick up the October issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine, and you'll see a familiar face — SFA's Dr. Chris Schalk! Learn how he is using @inaturalist to prevent #wildlife mortality across the state.

@ATCOFA / TWITTER

#SFA #littles Axe 'em, Jacks!

AUDREA TARKINGTON VANS CODER / FACEBOOK



# Scholarships

## Christine Crain Delta Delta Delta Scholarship

**CHRISTINE CRAIN OF** Nacogdoches (seated in red shirt) served as the first advisor of the SFA Delta Delta Delta Chapter from 1972-87. After Crain's retirement, members of Tri Delta established a scholarship in her honor to benefit a fellow sorority member. On Sept. 17, 2018, several Tri Delta sorority alumnae returned to the Tri Delta house in Nacogdoches to recognize and award the scholarship to its first recipient, nursing student Grace Krull of Allen, and celebrate this milestone with Crain. ★



## Justin Taylor Lenderman Memorial Scholarship



**JUSTIN TAYLOR LENDERMAN** was born in Nacogdoches on March 11, 1994, and passed away in Jacksonville on Feb. 12, 2016,

from injuries suffered in an all-terrain vehicle accident. Justin, the son of Ray Lenderman and Stacy Scott Lindsey, attended Angelina College and later followed in

the footsteps of his mother; grandmother, Kathryn Applewhite Scott; and aunt, Shana Scott; by enrolling at SFA.

At the time of his death, Justin lacked just six months from graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in criminal justice. His family accepted Justin's SFA diploma during the May 2016 graduation ceremony. Justin loved God, his family and friends, and he was an avid outdoorsman. His dream was to become a Texas game warden. ★

## Kevin Kelley 'Purple Pipes' Memorial Scholarship



**THE KEVIN KELLEY** "Purple Pipes" Memorial Scholarship was established by his family and friends

to recognize an outstanding SFA student who displays true dedication to the success of the Lumberjack Marching Band.

Kelley, a 1984 SFA graduate, loved being a band member, and he also was proud of the nickname "Purple Pipes" he earned during his longstanding role as the Lumberjack Marching Band announcer. Kelley passed away on Oct. 31, 2017.

The scholarship's first recipient, Jeremiah Armstrong, a junior music education major from West Columbia, was recognized Sept. 8 at Homer Bryce Stadium with several members of the band in attendance. ★

## Ways to Support SFA

Make a gift today and have an immediate impact on SFA students and programs. Your gift helps create educational opportunities for current and future Lumberjacks and can support academic and athletic programs, research initiatives, and scholarships in perpetuity.

If you are interested in creating a scholarship, call the Stephen F. Austin State University Foundation or the SFA Office of Development at (936) 468-5406, or send an email to [givetosfa@sfasu.edu](mailto:givetosfa@sfasu.edu). Staff members in the SFA Office of Development will be glad to discuss the ways you can make a positive impact on SFA students.

Visit our website at [sfasu.edu/give](http://sfasu.edu/give).

## Life Members

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

- 8278. Sarah L. Sargent '11, Lufkin
- 8279. Pamela J. Edwards '72, Lake Charles, Louisiana
- 8280. Blake C. Lunday '17, Midlothian
- 8281. Amanda C. Johnson '17, Richardson
- 8282. Diego A. Cruz '17, Houston
- 8283. Roger D. Dees '91, Nacogdoches
- 8284. Larissa L. Philpot '03 & '06, Nacogdoches
- 8286. Matthew B. Johnson '15, Nacogdoches
- 8287. Brittany A. Koone '05, Augusta, Georgia
- 8288. Mary Ann Derby, Friend, Nacogdoches
- 8289. William Bradley McWhorter '90 & '18, Nacogdoches

# 2018 SFA HOMECOMING





# SFA 95 YRS

## THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS FOR SUPPORTING THE SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION.

Liberty Mutual Insurance  
The Fredonia Hotel  
Barnes & Noble Bookstore  
ShopSFA.com  
University Rental  
Suddenlink  
Southside Bank  
SFA Lettermen's Association  
Nacogdoches Pediatric Dentistry

## HOMECOMING WINNERS

### ALUMNI ASSOCIATION GOLF TOURNAMENT Gross Winners

(two teams tied for first place):  
Larry Hargett, Rudy Waters,  
Ken Rollins and Chad Spearman  
and  
Lance Villareal, Justin Farrar  
and Ryan Tamez

### SFA RECREATION CENTER HOMECOMING 5K

Overall Female: Brittany Innis  
Overall Male: Ben Murphy

### ALUMNI ASSOCIATION STOREFRONT DECORATIONS

First Place: Goodwill on Main  
Second Place: Fredonia Vintage House  
Third Place: CBH Insurance

### TRADITIONS COUNCIL SFA PARADE FLOAT

Grand Champion: Delta Delta Delta  
and Pi Kappa Alpha  
Lumberjack Spirit: Purple Haze Association

### TRADITIONS COUNCIL NON-SFA PARADE FLOAT

Yellow House Christian Student Center



# STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI AWARDS

Alumni Award recipients were honored Sept. 7 during the annual awards banquet.

Each recipient is pictured with Dr. Baker Pattillo (left), SFA president, and Bob Francis (right), president of the SFA Alumni Association.



## Outstanding Young Alumna Award

**KRYSTAL RICHARDSON LUCERO '05** is a senior interior designer with Edwards + Mulhausen Interior Design in Austin. She has served in leadership roles with the International Interior Design Association, the Texas/Oklahoma Regional Student Conference and Austin City Center.

While an SFA student, Lucero participated in numerous university activities and organizations. She was involved in the student chapter of the American Society of Interior Designers, and she served as a human sciences ambassador, representing SFA's design program. She was an Orientation leader, SFA 101 student instructor, Jack Camp counselor and student body vice president in 2004.

Today, Lucero remains highly involved in SFA, serving as a member of the Interior Design Advisory Board for 10 years. As an SFA advocate, she also serves as co-chair of the Austin SFA Alumni Chapter and is a life member of the SFA Alumni Association.



## Outstanding Young Alumnus Award

**BLAKE WILCOX '02** is a licensed Texas real estate broker specializing in residential home sales in Montgomery, The Woodlands, Tomball, Houston, Houston Heights and other areas surrounding Houston and Montgomery County. He is the recipient of the 2015, 2016 and 2017 Best Realtor Award, and he received the Five Star Real Estate Agent Award for Customer Service, and a Top Realtor Award for Woodforest Development.

Wilcox is a member of the Houston Association of Realtors, Texas Association of Realtors, National Association of Realtors and The Woodlands Area Chamber of Commerce. In addition, he is involved in his community and enjoys giving back by helping with local events and fundraising opportunities. He and his wife, Emily, formed the charity Give Thanks, which helps feed families through the StoneBridge Food Pantry.



## Lumberjack Pride Award

**ERIKA BAZALDUA '14** has spent much of her life involved in radio/TV. At the age of 11, she began her career in mass communication serving as a "kidcaster" for Radio Disney — a position she held until her high school graduation. Today, Bazaldua is a main anchor on KLTN's "Good Morning East Texas," which broadcasts from Tyler.

Bazaldua credits her time at SFA with helping hone the skills she would later leverage to work in television. She said her experience as a Jack Walker (student tour guide) was pivotal, as it put her in front of prospective students and their families.

Bazaldua continues to support SFA. She often is seen on air wearing SFA purple and highlighting information about her alma mater whenever she gets the opportunity. As a familiar face to many in the East Texas region, Bazaldua's positive influence has helped promote the university and the myriad definitive reasons to attend SFA.



## Distinguished Professor Award

**DR. CHRISTOPHER E. COMER** came to SFA in 2005 as an assistant professor of wildlife management. He was later promoted to associate professor and named full professor in 2015. During his tenure at SFA, he procured more than \$3.6 million in external funds for research from a diverse set of public and private partners.

Comer's research emphases include rare bats, black bears, wild turkey, songbirds, predator ecology and white-tailed deer.

His awards include the 2011 Teaching Excellence Award for the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, the 2012 Educator of the Year award for the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society, co-recipient of the Distinguished Grant Award for a senior faculty member at SFA in 2014, 2016 and 2017, and the SFA Faculty Achievement Award for Research in 2015.

# DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENTS



**CAPT. LARRY W. BAILEY '62** joined the U.S. Navy after his SFA graduation and later became a member of the SEALs — the U.S. Navy's primary special operations force.

In 1964, Bailey joined SEAL Team Two. He led combat and intelligence operating patrols in Vietnam and a mobile training team in Cartagena, Colombia, where his team trained Colombia's first SEAL-equivalent unit. He subsequently held various staff and command assignments in the United States and around the world.

Bailey's military service medals include a Bronze Star, Legion of Merit, Defense Superior Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal and two Meritorious Service Medals.

In 1977, Bailey graduated from Armed Forces Staff College and, in 1980, he earned a master's degree in education from East Carolina University.

After retiring from the Navy in 1990, Bailey became program director for the American Defense Institute in Washington, D.C., a patriotic nonprofit foundation.



**MICHAEL S. TAFF '84**, a certified public accountant, has more than 30 years of financial and global industry experience. He is the former executive vice president and chief financial officer for Chicago Bridge & Iron Company. He also has served as senior vice president and CFO of Flowserve Corporation; and senior vice president and CFO at McDermott International Inc. and The Babcock & Wilcox Co.

Taff has held various financial leadership roles at HMT Inc., Philip Services Corp. and British Petroleum Oil Co. For nine years, he worked in public accounting at Price Waterhouse. In November 2016, Taff was selected to be a panelist for the Rusche College of Business Leadership Summit.

With a career spanning 40 years as a registered and licensed dietitian, **DR. MARLA D. MURPHY'S '73** (middle right) influence on patients, students, coworkers and the community has been immeasurable.

She has served in leadership roles with medical centers and universities throughout Texas and California, including as the director of nutrition services for Cook Children's Medical Center in Fort Worth, director of the dietetic internship for Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, assistant professor in the School of Nutrition at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth and clinical dietitian for the Cooper Clinic Aerobics Center in Dallas.

She and her husband, Bill, met at SFA and continue to attend SFA events. The couple supports the university and its students through the Dr. Marla D. and William A. Murphy Scholarship, which benefits students in the Rusche College of Business.

After graduating from SFA, **WILLIAM A. (BILL) MURPHY '73** (middle left) began his career at Texas Instruments Supply Company, serving as senior buyer while working his way up to regional manager.

In 1985, he joined Pioneer Standard Electronics Inc. of Cleveland, Ohio, becoming area vice president for the Central and Southwest United States and Canada. From 1995-97, he worked for Bell Microproducts as the senior vice president of U.S. industrial sales based in San Jose, California.



In 1998, Bill joined TTI Inc. in Fort Worth and served as vice president for global strategic accounts and contract manufacturing. After the acquisition of TTI and its subsidiaries by Berkshire Hathaway Inc., Bill moved to Mouser Electronics Inc. in Mansfield to become vice president of global product support and information. He retired after 43 years in the electronics distribution industry in 2016 after serving as global vice president of human resources.

Bill and his wife, Marla, are life members of the SFA Alumni Association.

# Alumni Calendar /

Visit [sfaalumni.com/events](http://sfaalumni.com/events) for the most recent information.  
Times and dates are subject to change.

## DECEMBER

4

### Senior Send-Off

5:30 to 7 p.m.  
Banita Creek Hall  
Nacogdoches

8

### SFA Gala

Baker Pattillo Student Center, Grand Ballroom  
Nacogdoches

11

### Axe Throwing Christmas Social

5:45 to 8:30 p.m.  
Urban Axes  
812 Airport Blvd.  
Austin

12

### Axe Throwing Christmas Social

5:45 to 8 p.m.  
Class Axe  
1203 E. Commerce St.  
San Antonio

### Axe Throwing Christmas Social

5:45 to 8 p.m.  
Fort Worth Axe Factory  
220 S. Sylvania Ave., Suite 110  
Fort Worth

13

### Axe Throwing Christmas Social

5:45 to 7:30 p.m.  
Houston Axe Throwing  
6734 Larkwood Drive, Suite B  
Houston

### Axe Throwing Christmas Social

5 to 7:30 p.m.  
Bad Axe Throwing  
5438 E. Grand Ave.  
Dallas

15

### Commencement Ceremonies

9:30 a.m. Colleges of Education and Fine Arts  
2 p.m. Colleges of Business, Forestry and  
Agriculture, Liberal and Applied Arts, Sciences  
and Mathematics  
Johnson Coliseum  
Nacogdoches

18

### SFA Basketball vs. Baylor University

7:30 p.m.  
Waco  
Fan Bus and Pregame Event

30

### SFA Basketball vs. University of Alabama

5 p.m.  
Johnson Coliseum  
Nacogdoches

## JANUARY

12

### Alumni Member Day @ SFA Basketball

SFA vs. Northwestern State University  
Women's Game 2 p.m.  
Men's Game 4:30 p.m.  
Johnson Coliseum  
Nacogdoches

## FEBRUARY

2

### SFA Basketball vs. Sam Houston State University

Women's Game 3 p.m.  
Men's Game 7 p.m.  
Huntsville  
Fan Bus

4

### SFA Wind Ensemble Concert

McKinney High School  
1400 E. Wilson Creek Parkway  
McKinney

16

### SFA Basketball vs. Northwestern State University

Women's Game 1 p.m.  
Men's Game 3:30 p.m.  
Natchitoches, Louisiana  
Fan Bus and Pregame Event

19-20

### SFA Days in Austin

22

### SFA Sportsman Social

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



## MARCH

4-6

### SFA Ring Week

Pearman Alumni Center  
Nacogdoches

9

### Mr. and Miss SFA

Reception: 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.  
(Murray Shaw Room)  
Presentation: Halftime during the Lumberjack  
basketball game  
Johnson Coliseum  
Nacogdoches

13-17

### Southland Conference Basketball Tournament

Leonard E. Merrell Center  
Katy

16-22

### SFA Travel Group to Iceland

22-23

### Southern Forestry Conclave at Louisiana State University



## SFA Gardens' kiwifruit crop yields impressive harvest

Story by Sarah Fuller '08 & '13 / Photos by Robin Johnson '99

**THIS SUMMER, RESEARCHERS** at SFA Gardens reaped the sweet rewards of their ongoing investigation into the feasibility of adding kiwifruit to the state's long list of agricultural commodities.

Since the initial crop produced in 2014 — the state's first-ever successful kiwifruit harvest — the expanding plot of golden kiwifruit, located on the SFA campus, has produced more than 1,500 pounds of the small, tender-fleshed fruit.

"We collected 750 pounds this year," said Dr. David Creech, SFA professor emeritus of agriculture and director of SFA Gardens. "The harvest came a little early this year, likely due to the intense heat."

While kiwifruit is eaten when tender, Creech explained it is harvested while still firm. To know when the crop is ready for harvest, the sugar content of the fruit is regularly monitored.

"We check the sugar content with a refractometer, which is a hand-held tool," Creech said. "You cut the fruit in half and place some juice on the tool, and when the sugars hit a brix measurement of 10 to 12 you're ready to harvest."

In 2011, Dr. Jay Spiers, associate professor of horticulture at Auburn University and a longtime friend of Creech, provided SFA with the initial 30 vines.

These fruits do not share the appearance of the typical fuzzy-skinned, green-fleshed kiwifruits commonly found at

supermarkets. These varieties, known as golden kiwis, have a smooth, edible skin and golden-colored flesh.

"When we first grew kiwis in 2011, we really didn't know a thing about them because no one had ever fruited them in Texas," Creech said. "When we fruited them in 2014 on young vines, some of my agriculture buddies thought it was a fluke, but then we had a big crop in 2015, which opened some eyes."

Since that initial harvest, Creech's knowledge of the kiwifruit industry has continued to expand.

This past spring, he spent two weeks in New Zealand, one of the world's leading producers of kiwifruit, visiting orchards with a group of interested Texas investors. In 2017, he traveled to Changsha, China, to study the work of Yanoon BioTech Company's kiwifruit breeding program. Creech also spent a week in California's kiwifruit-growing regions.

"The golden kiwifruits are grown in California, but success has proven to be difficult due to the low humidity and high sunlight pressures placed upon this thin-skinned fruit," Creech said. "The higher humidity of the Gulf Coast South, less intense sunlight and wind pressures are favorable to golden kiwifruit culture."

Creech said commercial fields can produce up to 50,000 pounds of kiwifruit per acre, which requires substantial

infrastructure investment in the form of support systems and trellises for the vines.

"It's a real high-technology crop," Creech said. "You have a male and female plant, and it has to be the right male in terms of the time of pollen shed and stigma receptivity."

Creech said many farmers in New Zealand are transitioning to all female kiwifruit orchards and implementing artificial pollination using pollen collected from all-male kiwifruit orchards. These cautionary steps are taken because even if the female plants are fertilized, the success and size of the fruit relies on the amount of pollen transferred, and natural pollinators are not always reliable if weather is inclement during the blooming period.

"When you have that kind of investment, you need to ensure good pollination," Creech said.

In addition to the trial plots at SFA, new plots are being installed in Northeast Texas and Northwest Houston to determine if certain areas of the state are more conducive to plant growth.

"It's a long-term project, like so many new crops," Creech said. "So far, we're encouraged, and we do think there is some opportunity. We have a long way to go to fully understand the technology needed to produce the kind of yields and production they get in New Zealand and California." ★

# Class Notes

## 1960s

**Gwen Taylor Stewart '69** of Boerne was inducted into the Center High School Alumni Hall of Fame. Stewart had a 27-year career with Shell Oil, where she served in various capacities, including general manager, president and CEO, and vice president at various Shell locations.

→ The St. Mary's University Law Alumni Association honored **John Vaught '69** of Denver as a distinguished law graduate. Vaught is senior counsel at Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell in Colorado.



## 1970s

New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez appointed **Jim Paxon '71** of Santa Fe, New Mexico, to the First District of the Sierra County Commission.

**Sherry Baker '74** was hired as principal of Lake Travis Middle School.

→ **Eric Renth '75** of Spring Branch flew with the U.S. Navy Blue Angels Flight Demonstration Squadron in its Marine Corps C-130 Transport.



**Ron Kesterson '76** of Houston retired after a successful career with the international law firm Baker Botts.

**Anna Michele Bobadilla '77** of Grand Prairie was the 2018 Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Medallion of Excellence honoree. She also was featured in Forbes magazine and on the National Chi Omega Facebook page.



← **Patricia Taylor Wells '77** of Tyler received two awards in the 2018 Best of Texas Book Awards. She received first place in the Family Life Fiction category for her novel "The Eyes of the Doe" and first place in the Realistic Fiction category for her short story "Final Curtain," which was published in "Short Stories by Texas Authors" in October. The Best of Texas Book Awards is sponsored by the Texas Authors Association.

**Dr. Paul Beran '78 & '80** of Fort Smith, Arkansas, was named CEO and executive director for South Dakota Board of Regents.

**Brad Streit '79** of Tyler was named Pioneer of the Year by the Texas Association of Broadcasters.

## 1980s

**Tina Alexander-Sellers '80** of Lufkin was named the new leader of CHI St. Luke's Health-Memorial's marketing and communications department.

**Suzii Paynter '80** of Austin retired from her position as executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

The Texas Higher Education Commission appointed **Howard Cox '81** of Alto to the English Field of Study Committee. Cox is chair of the Department of Language Arts and Education at Angelina College in Lufkin.

PNC Bank appointed **Thomas Byargeon '82** of Houston as leader of the bank's energy group.

**Patrick Cheedie '84** of Frisco joined Red Roof Inns as franchise development director in the Rocky Mountain states of New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Idaho and Montana.

**Jason Anderson '85** of Dallas was elected as first vice chair of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

**Dr. Paul Betts '86** of Austin was named senior epidemiologist for the tuberculosis and Hansen's disease branch of the Texas Department of State Health Services.



**Brad Ludford '87** of Golden, Colorado, was hired as the new chief financial officer of Bozeman Health.

→ **David Russell '87, '88 & '01** of Nacogdoches was named superintendent of Central Heights Independent School District.

## 1990s

**Will Lucas '92** of Center was one of three individuals appointed by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to the state's finance commission. The commission is the governing body of the state's banking, savings and loan, and consumer credit agencies.

Friendswood Independent School District named **Betsy Conn '93** teacher of the year.

**Claudann Jones '93** was named Smith County Extension Agent for Family and Community Health.

→ **Kristi Barnes '94** of Nacogdoches is celebrating her 20th year as a Texas Realtor.

**Carla Dupree '95** was appointed principal of Texas High School.



# Class Notes

**Gene F. Thompson III '96** of Katy was named chief operating officer of InterLinc Mortgage Services.

➔ **Dr. Larry Hygh '97 & '99** of Pasadena, California, was hired as senior communications manager of the Black AIDS Institute in Los Angeles.



## 2010s

➔ **Alexandra Grist '10** of Fort Worth was named Champion Home Exteriors' regional event manager for the Western United States.



← **Alex Ranc '11 & '13** of Nacogdoches received the Angelina College Promising Faculty Award in August.

Manufacture Alabama selected **Jason B. Crager '12** of Keller, who serves as director of Lockheed Martin's Pike County Operations, to the company's Board of Directors.

➔ **Karina Erickson '14** of Lago Vista was named press secretary for the Texas General Land Office with Commissioner George P. Bush.



**Nick Jackson '14** of Plano joined the Plano East Senior High School football coaching staff.

← **Julia Lanham '14** and **Jordan Grimm '14** of West married in June.

**Felicia Mark '14** of Nacogdoches was named Fredonia Elementary School teacher of the year.

**Michael Swann '15** of Plano co-founded an Esports franchise, RGB Esports.

**Bastian York '17** of Austin was chosen to be the media representative for AmeriCorps' National Civilian Community Corps branch.

## 2000s

➔ **Kevin W. Ross '00** was awarded the state Career and Technological Education administrator of the year award for his work in the Bryan Independent School District.



**Paul Gould '01** joined the Jacksonville High School football coaching staff.



← **Dr. Jennifer Edwards '02 & '03** of Granbury and Carthage was promoted to professor of communication at Tarleton State University.

**Danny Whisenant '02 & '04** was named Lufkin Middle School principal.

**Lance Hays '04** of Nacogdoches was inducted into the Royse City Independent School District Athletic Hall of Fame.



**Jenny Wegley '05** is vice president of horticulture at the Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden.

➔ **Matt Hardman '06** of Fort Worth joined the University of North Texas College of Music as director of communications, marketing and public relations.

➔ **Matt Kuban '08** and his wife, **Pamela '09**, of Pflugerville announced the birth of their second child, Stella Grace, in September.



← **Brian Sullivan '09** and wife, **Violet**, of Austin announced the birth of their daughter, Garner Marie.

## Share your Lumberjack story!

Visit [sfasu.edu/sawdust](http://sfasu.edu/sawdust) to send your class notes and wedding or birth announcements to the SFA Alumni Association.

[sfasu.edu/sawdust](http://sfasu.edu/sawdust)

# In Memoriam

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## DR. RONNIE G. BARRA



Dr. Ronnie G. Barra, retired kinesiology and health science professor, passed away July 23 in Nacogdoches. Barra received his master's degree from SFA in 1964 and taught at the university for 46 years. He also served in the U.S. Marine Corps. As a professor, Barra formed lasting connections with many students and colleagues. He was a founding father of the Noon Ball Association, a basketball game for faculty members that started in the 1970s and is still held every Monday, Wednesday and Friday on campus. Even after his SFA retirement, Barra continued to be a participant in the games.

## DR. FRANK L. BRISTER JR.



Dr. Frank L. Brister Jr., former SFA professor of speech-language pathology, passed away Oct. 8. Brister served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1959 to 1965. He later moved to Nacogdoches to teach at the university and served as director of audiological services. Brister was a lifelong Rotarian, serving as Rotary Club of Nacogdoches president from 1998-99 and as secretary from 2000-18. He was the longest-serving club secretary. The club named him secretary emeritus in 2018.

## ROY E. BUSH



Born in Amarillo, Roy E. Bush, who passed away Aug. 13, grew up in Childress. He excelled in track and football, earning All-District in 1947-48. Bush received football scholarships from Tulane University, Trinity University and Texas A&M University. He also played football at the United States Military Academy. Bush later enrolled at SFA, where he received his bachelor's degree in mathematics in 1957.

After serving his country in the U.S. Navy, Bush joined Conoco Egypt as a vice president, managing drilling operations in Louisiana, Egypt and Italy.

## DR. JOHN P. DECKER



Dr. John P. Decker, professor emeritus of physics and astronomy, passed away Aug. 11. Decker served in the U.S. Army during World War II in Southern France and later during the occupation of Germany. After the war, he returned to college and completed his education.

Decker moved to Nacogdoches in 1965, where he served as chairman of SFA's physics department until his retirement. During his time as department chairman, Decker assisted in the design of the Miller Science Building. He also worked to help establish the astronomy program at SFA. He was instrumental in obtaining a large amount of government surplus equipment for the department, which was used by students and faculty members in research labs and classrooms.

## HERMAN "MOE" LITTON



Former Lumberjack football letterman Herman "Moe" Litton passed away Oct. 14.

Litton joined the U.S. Navy during World War II at the age of 17 and served on the USS Brush in the Pacific. After returning home from the war, Litton attended SFA, where he played football. He received his bachelor's degree in 1954 and master's degree in 1956.

Litton enjoyed a long career in coaching and athletic training. In 1999, he was inducted into the Southeast Texas Coaches Hall of Honor, and in 2012, he was honored as a Distinguished Alumnus from SFA.

## DEWAIN RAY ROBBERSON



Dewain Ray Robberson, retired manager of building trades and mechanical maintenance for SFA's physical plant, passed away July 28.

Robberson, who served in the U.S. Navy, received his bachelor's degree from SFA in 2016. He was employed by the university for more than 15 years, earning numerous awards, including the prestigious President's Award. In spring 2015, Robberson was honored as the Mystery Dipper during SFA's Big Dip Ceremony and received an SFA ring with "Mentor for Life" inscribed inside. In addition, he established the Lumberjack for Life Award, which recognizes an SFA graduate or student by presenting him or her with a class ring.

Robberson was a proud member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union.

## JOE ORVILLE TODD



Joe Orville Todd, who graduated from SFA in 1947, passed away Aug. 12. Todd transferred to SFA in fall 1941 to run track. When the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred, Todd immediately enlisted to serve in the military.

Todd was a staff sergeant and forward observer with his unit, receiving a Bronze Star, two Oak Leaf Clusters and numerous citations. He was selected from the 913th Field Artillery Battalion as its most outstanding enlisted man, seeing more front-line action in Italy than any other individual in the battalion. After the war ended, Todd returned to SFA in 1946 to complete his education.

Todd served as president of both the senior class and the Sawyers Social Club. He was named senior class favorite and was active in athletics. He later enjoyed a long career with Henderson Clay Products.

Todd was honored as SFA's Outstanding Alumnus in 1981, and he served for many years on the SFA Alumni Association Board of Directors.

# In Memoriam

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Virginia C. Adams of Jasper, donor and friend of SFA, Sept. 7

Bernard Benson Athey Jr. '53 of Dallas, Jan. 6

Fritz Alexander Beckworth '15 of Duncanville, June 29, 2017

Rhonda J. Billiot '89 of Nacogdoches, July 19

Penny Borges '74 of Austin, June 22

James W. Brake '53 of Nacogdoches, July 12

Atholene S. Brewster '74 of Houston, July 26

Susan K. Bryan '72 of Lufkin, Aug. 20

Noamie R. Byrum '68 & '70 of Zionsville, Indiana, Sept. 4

Nina E. Cole '04 of Fort Worth, July 29

Anna Lee Sterling Cooley '70 & '73 of Kilgore, July 28

Lynn Cooper '74 of Carthage, June 2

Nena M. Davis '50 of Kirbyville, July 11

Robert W. Dunlap '72 & '83 of Glenpool, Oklahoma, July 25

William D. Flores '54 of Las Cruces, New Mexico, June 27

Wyannie C. Flowers '61 of Sammamish, Washington, Aug. 17

Donald R. Floyd '82 of Bay City, July 9

Clarence Eugene Fountain '83 of Longview, Sept. 21

Susan Fountain '06 of Center, June 8

Mark D. Garfield '73 of Houston, Aug. 9

Phil Goodrum Jr. '72 of Nacogdoches, Aug. 31

Lloyd B. Goolsby '59 & '66 of Timpson, June 8

Bettye I. Hall '70 & '77 of Henderson, June 5

Ima Christine Eaves Honeycutt '57 of Crockett, Jan. 1, 2015

David A. Hughes of Bella Vista, Arkansas, former SFA coach, Aug. 12

Ronald D. Johns '63 of Gilmer, Sept. 17

Christopher Alan Legg '82 of Katy, Aug. 24

Patricia Ann Little of Whitesboro, donor and friend of SFA, June 10

Audrey Faye Ballow Mackey '55 & '59 of Gladewater, July 25

Charlotte McClanahan '55 of Waco, July 30

Raymond G. McCormack '67 of Austin, July 7

Phillip E. Morris '63 of Lufkin, Aug. 18

Larry D. Morrison '69 of Nacogdoches, July 12

Jesse Lee Franklin Nickerson III '71 of Paris, July 19

Frances Davis Peavy '39 & '60 of Lufkin, June 26

Gerald Pickett '58 of Kingwood, Jan. 3

Jennifer E. Randolph '92 of Henderson, Aug. 28

Abigail Emily Rivera '12 of Midland, June 18

Cecil Jeri Roach of Bullard, former SFA student-athlete, July 19

Jan B. Scarborough '82 of Kingwood, June 29

Vici A. Sheaffer '90 of Corpus Christi, July 7

Judy K. Skelton '84 of Etoile, Sept. 4

Travis W. Slaughter '69 of Dallas, Sept. 9

Clyde Floyd Small '71 of Jacksonville, Aug. 22

Jan C. Stevens '88 of Houston, July 14

Joe B. Strong '50 of Nacogdoches, May 30

Kay B. Stuart '82 of Houston, Aug. 26

Adejumoke V. Sule '13 of Spring, June 2

Crystal C. Symmank '04 of Palestine, Aug. 1

Donna J. Templeton '76 of Midland, July 30

Daniel L. Thomas '88 of Houston, June 20

Barbara L. Thompson-Myles '78 of Galveston, Aug. 2

Sharabeth Upton '94 of Henderson, July 10

Jimmy D. Wells '74 of Nacogdoches, June 5



*SFA student*

Holley Anderson of Fort Worth, Oct. 30

SFA  

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YRS



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