

Sawdust

WINTER 2020

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



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President's Letter

"Our faculty members are truly making a difference in the lives of SFA students and for the university as a whole."



THE HOLIDAYS ARE upon us, and I am sure many of you will join me in wishing 2020 a hearty and fond farewell — what a year it has been! As we prepare for the start of a new year at SFA, we will once again

be offering a variety of learning opportunities and options that allow Lumberjacks to be physically distant and fight the spread of COVID-19. No matter which environment is chosen — on campus or away — it is now easier than ever to be a Lumberjack. Lumberjacks learn anywhere!

I am proud to report that our students, faculty and staff have been diligent about following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines during the fall, which helped keep our campus open. These guidelines will remain in effect this spring, and with ongoing persistence, our campus will remain open and continue serving students.

Although there was nationwide concern regarding potential decreases in higher education enrollment for fall 2020, I commend our faculty and staff for working intensely during the summer to plan and pull together opportunities for flexible learning. While our enrollment numbers were basically flat, our retention rates were the highest in university history. Our faculty members are truly making a difference in the lives of SFA students and for the university as a whole.

Looking ahead, we have much to celebrate, including two new academic programs at SFA and a partnership with the Texas A&M University System.

SFA's James I. Perkins College of Education is involved in two of these endeavors. First is the aviation sciences program, which will be offered in the School of Human Sciences. The classes will prepare students to take the Federal Aviation Administration's private pilot airplane

single engine land practical exam. It is on track for a soft launch in fall 2021 with eight courses being offered.

Second, a new partnership with the Texas A&M University System is on the horizon at A&M's RELIS Campus. SFA will offer the complete courses for its Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies with an EC-6 concentration beginning in fall 2021 on the campus, which provides a collaborative environment for multidisciplinary, multi-institutional teaching, research and workplace development.

This partnership is a good fit for SFA because it enables us to attract community college students and others from the Bryan-College Station area to SFA's renowned teaching program. The state needs teachers in several areas, so partnering with the Texas A&M University System's RELIS Academic Alliance will allow us to help public schools across the state fulfill the needs of their students.

The Department of Biology also is expanding its programs to include a forensics track, and courses in the program are now being offered. Working toward our goal of becoming the model of the new American university — one that is nimble, entrepreneurial, student-focused, regional and comprehensive — we must continue to be innovative in both course delivery and program options.

With Jan. 1, 2021, fast approaching, I want to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a prosperous, happy and most of all healthy new year.

Axe 'em, Jacks!

Dr. Scott Gordon
President
Stephen F. Austin State University



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STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

is a comprehensive institution dedicated to excellence in teaching, research, scholarship, creative work and service.

Through the personal attention of our faculty and staff, we engage our students in a learner-centered environment and offer opportunities to prepare for the challenges of living in the global community.





STUDENT EMERGENCY AID FUND

College is meant to be a challenge, but for many Lumberjacks, these challenges can include more than research papers and exams.

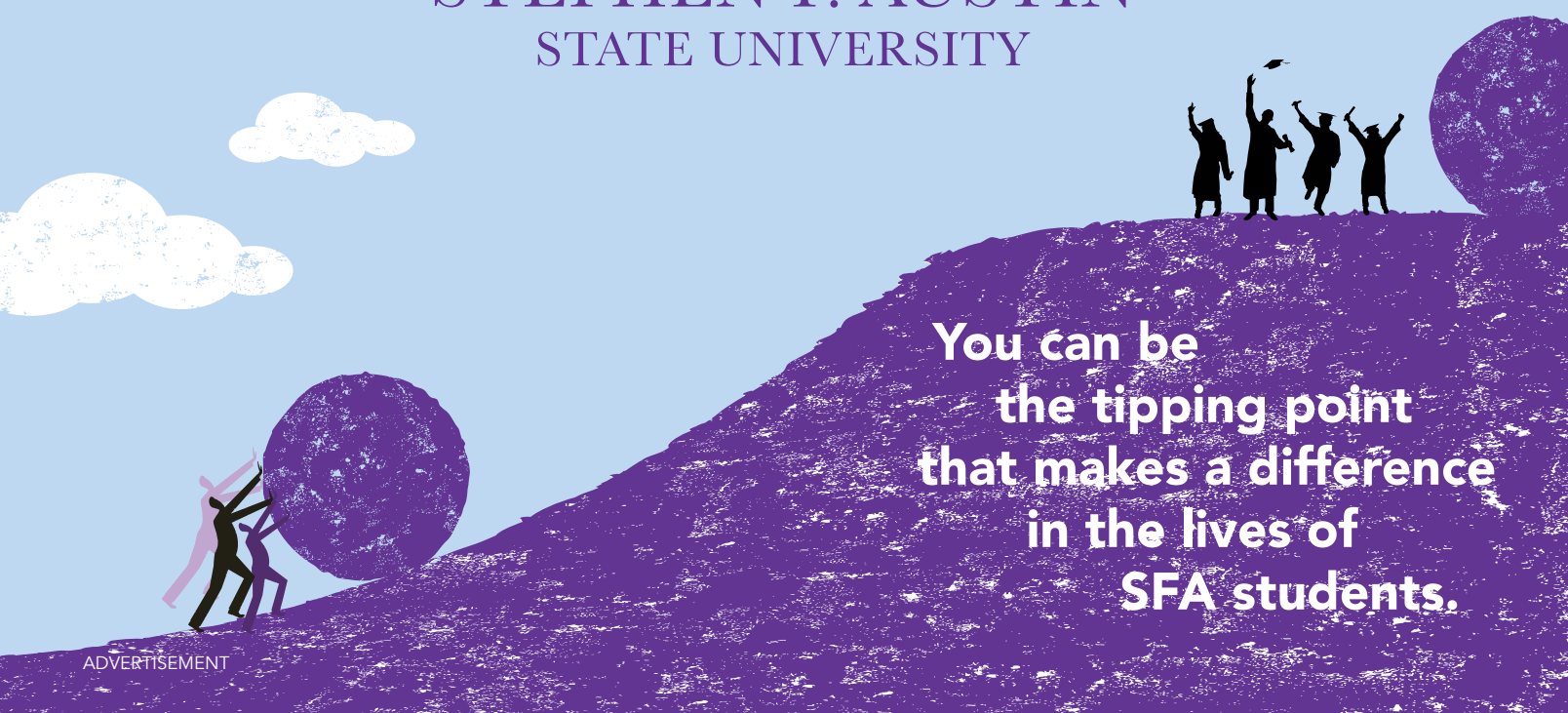
Many students are unable to pay their tuition balances and purchase books and supplies, thus putting their dream of a college education in jeopardy. Some students have no choice but to withdraw

from SFA even when they owe relatively small balances. COVID-19 has made these problems even more prevalent.

The Student Emergency Aid Fund at SFA helps students in need of one-time assistance due to a sudden financial need. Contributions of any amount are put directly to work to help our students achieve their goal of an SFA education.

To contribute, visit sfasu.edu/emergency-fund.

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN
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**You can be
the tipping point
that makes a difference
in the lives of
SFA students.**

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ON THE COVER:

Saville Harris '10 & '13 is well known around the SFA campus. He currently serves

as the assistant director of student engagement-Greek life, adjunct instructor of kinesiology and each holiday season, he dresses as Purple Santa to collect toys around campus for children. He also is a member of the Board of Directors for the National Association of Campus Activities. Outside the university, he operates his own barbecue business. Harris' list of accomplishments as an SFA student and staff member are incredibly impressive, including being named Mr. SFA in 2012 and a 2020 President's Award recipient. Read more about him and his love for SFA in this issue of Sawdust.

Photo by Hardy Meredith '81

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Sawdust

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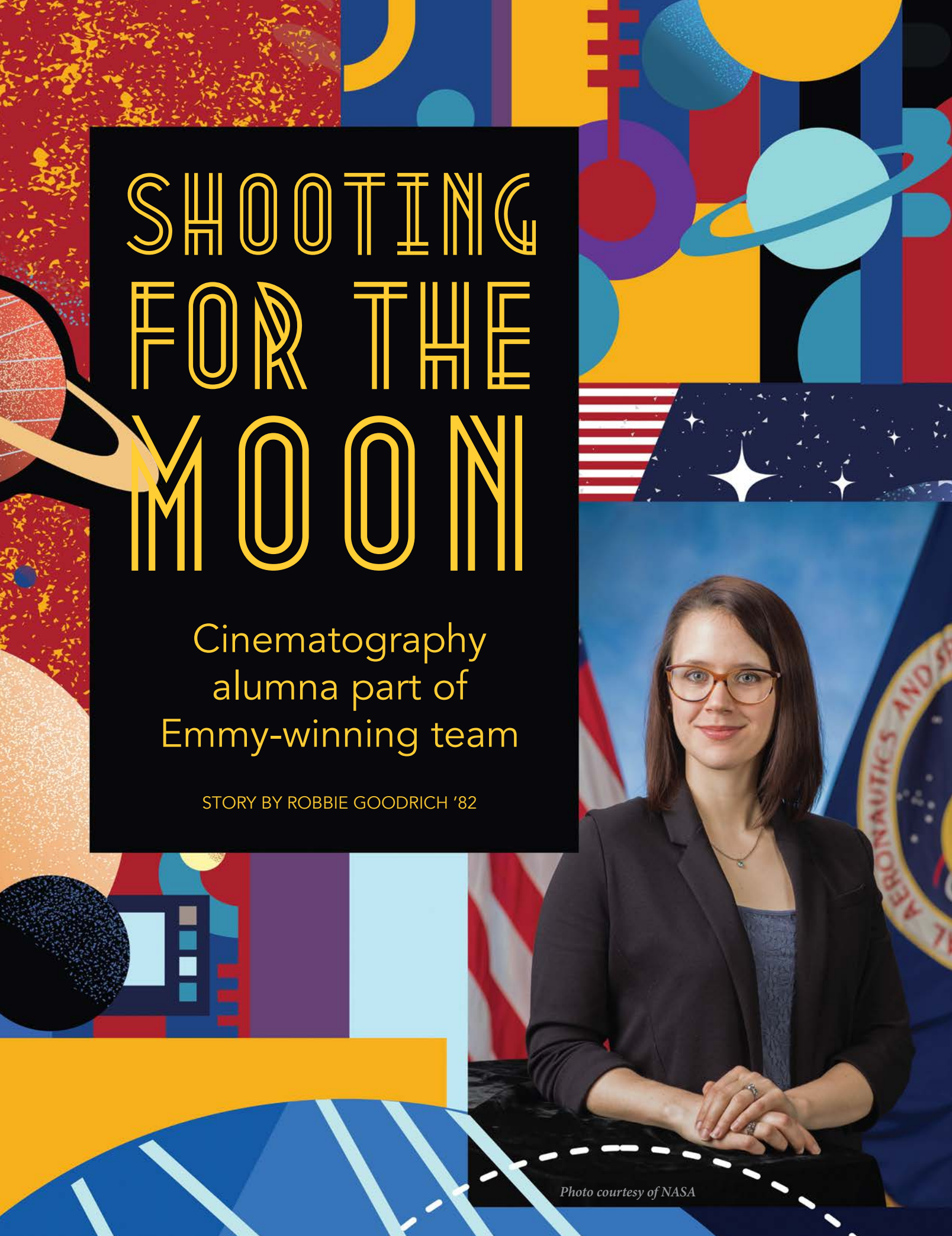
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SHOOTING FOR THE MOON

Cinematography
alumna part of
Emmy-winning team

STORY BY ROBBIE GOODRICH '82



Photo courtesy of NASA

"Our team takes part in the live coverage of all major mission operations, and one of those was the NASA SpaceX Demo-1 mission in March 2019."

SARAH VOLKMAN '15



ON SOME DAYS, it's hard for Sarah Volkman '15 to decide which part of her job she likes best.

Volkman, who received her bachelor's degree in cinematography from SFA, works for Analytical Mechanics Associates as part of the Johnson Space Center multimedia team, which contracts with NASA.

As one of four NASA-TV and video producers, she works alongside the Public Affairs Office at Johnson Space Center to support NASA Television and its multimedia needs.

Volkman produces "in-flight events" that connect media clients from around the world with astronauts living on board the International Space Station. She produces and directs briefings, news conferences, astronaut/scientist interviews, special-event broadcasts hosted by the Johnson Space Center, and coverage of live events at the International Space Station, including spacewalks and cargo deliveries.

She also travels to Russia to produce and direct live broadcasts for launches of astronauts from Kazakhstan to the space station.

"I always find it a little tricky to adequately explain all the different elements that fall under my job," Volkman said.

"I feel really lucky because my job includes so many different aspects, but it also allows me to serve as a video producer, which was always my first passion," she said. "I have several video assignments going at any given time, usually pertaining to whatever big events are gearing up."

Once in a while, Volkman said she also gets to fill in as on-screen host for some of the regular TV and video series, sometimes broadcasting live from Mission Control Houston.

"That is always a ton of nerve-wracking fun and another surreal thing I would never have guessed I'd get to do," she said.

Volkman was part of the video crew that earned an Emmy Award for Outstanding Interactive Program in 2019 for work on "NASA and SpaceX: The Interactive Demo-1 Launch." The win came from the coordinated effort between NASA and SpaceX, the private company founded by Tesla CEO Elon Musk, which brought the historic Demonstration Mission 1 to an audience of millions by combining NASA Television programming with online simulcasts, social media and in-person events.

"Our team takes part in the live coverage of all major mission operations, and one of those was the NASA SpaceX Demo-1 mission in March 2019," Volkman said. "Demonstration Mission 1 was an unmanned test flight and the first of two test flights for the SpaceX Crew Dragon. It was extra significant because this was the first human-rated spacecraft to launch from America since the last space shuttle launch in 2011."

The multimedia team worked with the SpaceX media team and other NASA teams on the launch and docking coverage of that journey to the International Space Station. The project included several hours of live broadcasting, incorporating anchors in a few different locations across the country and inserting extensive video and graphic elements. ➔

"We were so excited to learn the coverage had been nominated for and ended up winning the Emmy," she said. "I was one small part of the big teams that worked on this coverage, so it was very cool to be included in the honor, but I was extra excited for my colleagues who spearheaded the broadcasts. It involved months of complex problem-solving. It also included devising many new video routing and technical elements to effectively cover this special mission and to have the whole world be able to tune in and take part."

Volkman said her time at SFA helped prepare her for this exciting career, and she reflects on her SFA experience "all the time — it was really special for me," she said.

"My classes, even the ones that didn't directly serve my major, always had me encountering new ideas, inspiration and challenges, which really broke me out of my comfort zone," Volkman said. "My time in Nacogdoches taught me that a strong college experience could lead you down paths you may never have known existed but that could be so great for you. You don't necessarily have to stick to what you studied,

because you come away with so many new skills you could apply in different ways.

"In the film program, Professor (Bill) Arscott taught us a lot of technical things but also that a good attitude and dedication could help you go far in whatever direction you chose," she added. "This helped me during the difficult post-college period, navigating the job market and eventually getting my first job at a news station in Tyler, which was a totally different approach to media and storytelling than I was used to. At SFA, I got to be a part of making two feature films, in addition to dozens of short films, which gave me a ton of close-to-real-world video-making experience that I continue to fall back on all the time in my work."

With all the "wild" projects she has been a part of, Volkman's most memorable event was the Apollo 11 50th anniversary NASA hosted in July 2019. The two-hour live broadcast was supervised by NASA headquarters but involved many NASA centers, and Volkman was in charge of the Johnson Space Center activities.



1. In August 2020, Volkman serves as technical director for a portion of NASA's SpaceX DM-2 splashdown broadcast. Photo courtesy of Rodrigo Mireles

2. Volkman hosts the NASA TV show "SpaceCast Weekly" from Mission Control Houston. Photo courtesy of NASA

3. From outside the historic Apollo Mission Control Room, Volkman produces a portion of NASA's Apollo 11 50th anniversary broadcast "NASA's Giant Leaps: Past and Future" in July 2019. Photo courtesy of NASA

4. Volkman directs Apollo 11 and Apollo 13 Flight Director Gene Kranz, second from left, and Apollo astronaut Charlie Duke, left, for NASA's broadcast "NASA's Giant Leaps: Past and Future" inside the historic Apollo Mission Control Room. Photo courtesy of NASA

5. During a work trip in February 2018 to Moscow, Russia, Volkman poses in front of a rocket display. Photo courtesy of Sarah Volkman

6. Astronaut Suni Williams poses with Volkman in NASA's Neutral Buoyancy Lab. Volkman was producing coverage of a visit to the lab by U.S. Vice President Mike Pence. Photo courtesy of Sarah Volkman

"This put me in the historic Apollo Mission Control Room, directing Apollo 11 and Apollo 13 Flight Director Gene Kranz, Apollo astronaut Charlie Duke, who had walked on the moon during Apollo 16, and current astronaut Jessica Meir."

Most recently, Volkman produced and edited several videos that were featured across NASA's social media accounts leading up to the NASA SpaceX Demo-2 launch on May 30.

Volkman, along with her team, also won the NASA Silver Achievement Medal for coordinating an interview between U.S. Vice President Mike Pence and the International Space Station.

"We've also received recognition for a very popular astronaut-themed set of GIFs and Instagram stickers we made," she said, "which is just a really amusing thing to think about."

Volkman said she is thankful to work with supportive colleagues on both the multimedia side of her job and within the Public Affairs Office.

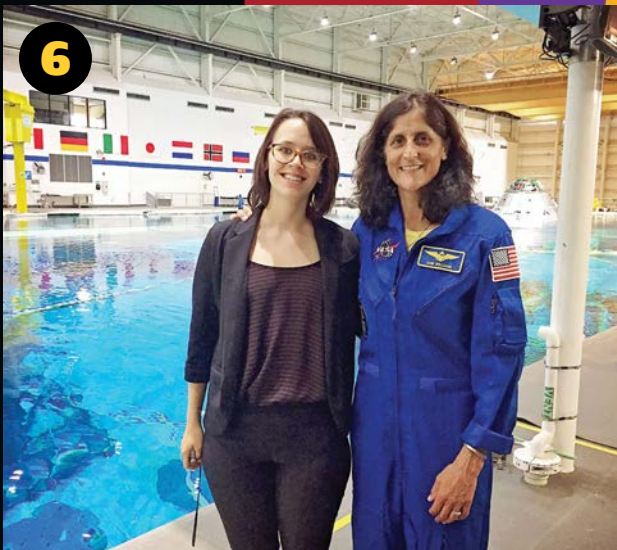
"I think that partially comes from the culture fostered by Johnson Space Center, but also because of the type of creativity and passion

that is ignited by being around and in the space industry," she said. "They make the job a lot of fun and are immensely helpful in the more challenging times. Live television is already a very unpredictable beast. Throw in space operations, and you can count on some pretty high-pressure, high-stress situations that make you super grateful for a great team."

Volkman said she is looking forward to covering the next moon landing in a few years. "That's something I can't imagine not working on," she said. Additional long-term plans include being open to whatever new opportunity she may stumble upon — or stumbles upon her.

Wherever she may land, Volkman said she is grateful her job perfectly pairs with what she's passionate about — filmmaking — with an opportunity to impact the world in a positive way.

"That has always been a big goal of mine," she said. "The fact this takes place within NASA, and I get to be inspired by some of the world's most intelligent and courageous people every day, is a gigantic cherry on top of the cake." ★





FORGING AHEAD



STUDENT WINS BLADESMITHING COMPETITION, RUNS OWN BUSINESS

STORY BY CHRISTINE BROUSSARD '10

PHOTOS BY ROBIN JOHNSON '99 & '19

EVEN WITH FOAM earplugs firmly in place, the rhythmic bang of Big Blue — a Blu Max 110 blacksmithing hammer — rattled eardrums at a 10-foot distance.

On a surprisingly cool morning for early September, Kevin Burgess, an SFA junior studying art metals, methodically paces back and forth between his home-built forge, Big Blue and a well-worn anvil that's been spray painted Lumberjack purple.

The doors to his Cushing workshop are wide open, letting in the morning light and a nice breeze — the latter a momentary respite in a space with instruments that can reach well over 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

Steel is Burgess' metal of choice. After waiting a few minutes for a piece in his homemade forge to heat up, he pinches it with blacksmith tongs and places it under Big Blue's powerful industrial hammer for about 10 seconds. This action removes a fair amount of the backbreaking work required to further shape the steel before he heads to the anvil for smaller, more precise wallops.

Bladesmithing requires a lot of patience. Five minutes softening steel in the forge often can mean only 10 to 15 hits at both the industrial hammer and his anvil before it's hardened again.

"The old saying is half of a blacksmith's life is spent waiting for the steel to heat up," he chortled.

Burgess has been bladesmithing for roughly six years.



"Realistically, more like four," he said, explaining, "You really start out not knowing anything," so naturally it takes a couple years to get good at the basics. That was certainly the case for him when at just 15 years old, he became a fairly avid watcher of YouTube bladesmithing videos.

"One YouTube channel, AWE Me, had a series called 'Man at Arms' where they would take different swords from anime and video games and then make them in real life," Burgess said. "Probably the one that really set off my fascination was when they made Sokka's meteor sword from 'Avatar.' It was a really beautiful, simple, elegant piece. I thought, 'That's cool. I want to make a meteorite sword.'"

Curiosity quickly grew into devotion, and six years of hard work has already reaped impressive rewards, like being invited to compete against three other bladesmiths on the History Channel's show "Forged in Fire" — and winning.

"It was a little bit surreal for a while," he said. "I got into forging a year or two before 'Forged in Fire' first kicked off, so on the nights it aired, it was that night's ritual to watch. Now when I watch the show, it's nice to know that I can do those things I'm telling them to do." ➔



Kevin Burgess heats the steel inside his homemade forge.



He hammers the hot steel using the Blu Max 110, affectionately known as Big Blue.



Burgess beats the pliable steel with the help of a steel hammer and a cast iron anvil.

‘FORGED IN FIRE’

A few minutes into season 7, episode 19 of “Forged in Fire,” after host Wil Willis welcomes viewers, the episode’s four contestants make their way into the workshop from an off-screen room. Last in the lineup, Burgess stands unsmiling, anxiously waiting for his first of three blade challenges.

“I hope I get invited back just so I could smile a little bit more the second time,” he laughs. “I realized watching myself that I am stone-faced the entire time.”

Stone-faced though he may be, the seriousness of his expression is a well-suited match for the precision of his work. During the first full challenge, the camera rarely bothers to head his way because, well — there just wasn’t much drama unfolding.

“In the first round, I was just on autopilot, so the few times they did have the camera on me, they were like, ‘Hey, that kid’s steel isn’t moving at all. He’s good at what he’s doing,’” Burgess said.

Each “Forged in Fire” episode sees four bladesmiths compete in three elimination challenges for the chance to win a \$10,000 prize. The final blade often is the most complicated, with contestants sent home to produce a full blade and handle during a four-day period.

Burgess’ episode was filmed in August 2019 and aired

in January 2020. After breezing through the first two challenges, he and one other contestant were tasked with forging a pira — the historical weapon of choice for the Yacan tribe of the South Philippines. Stipulations required the blade be 21 to 23 inches long with a 5-inch handle wrap or collar.

It was the first challenge to present intense issues for Burgess. He spent nearly a full day forging his signature Damascus blade only to have it split in half and have to start over.

After regrouping, Burgess finished and flew back to the studio for the pira’s first of three slicing tests. Not only did his blade pass with flying colors, but the judges declined to test the other contestant’s blade for fear of visibly faulty handle work. Burgess won.

“On the plane home, I was scrolling through Instagram on my phone when the man next to me turns and asks, ‘Do you make knives?’ I said yes, and he asks if I’ve seen ‘Forged in Fire,’” Burgess laughed. “Out of everybody, I think I wanted to tell that man the most that not only was I on the show, but I won it! He actually ended up ordering a knife from me, so I was able to tell him a few months later.”



Kevin Burgess’ winning pira — the historical weapon of choice for the Yacan tribe of the South Philippines.



Burgess recycles sterling silver scraps by melting them in a crucible and pouring the metal into a wire ingot mold during his SFA metalsmithing class.



To finish a jewelry piece, Burgess uses the buffing machine, which often is used during the knife-making process.



Using two air/acetylene torches, Burgess silver solders a hollow construction ring.

CELEBRATING WITH HIS (METALS) FAMILY

Even though Burgess had to keep his win a secret until the episode aired, he had built a strong family of fellow SFA metalsmithing students who supported him throughout and after the competition.

"I am so grateful I was able to be one of his confidants during his 'Forged in Fire' experience," said Lauren Selden, SFA professor of metalworking and jewelry in the School of Art. "I don't enjoy holding onto secrets and don't find that I'm good at it, but this was a big secret, and I was so proud of him."

Burgess began largely self-taught but has since learned under American Bladesmith Society-certified master bladesmith Scott McGhee, owner of Guinea Hog Forge in Clarkton, North Carolina. While Burgess' specialty is blades, he said there is so much to learn about the science behind working with metals.

"It's a bit of chemistry and material science, because not only am I a metal worker, I'm a wood worker," Burgess said. "I have to understand material strengths when I'm choosing epoxies and have to learn all the ins and outs of heat treating. When you start to get into high-grade steels, you have to learn about cryo-treatment, and then you start worrying about oxygen contamination. This is definitely a science-heavy field."

At some point, science also begins mixing with simple muscle memory.

"We are working with science the entire time along with our senses," Selden said. "We know the melting temperature of our metals, but we learn to see a color that is a visual indicator of temperature. We learn to hear the sound of a manipulating or hollow blow of the hammer. We can hear the speed a tool is moving. This requires many parts of your brain to function together. If you know the possibilities and limitations of all of these processes and the metals, when an idea comes, you can produce a new thing for the world."

FORGING AHEAD

Burgess created his company, Burgess Forge, in 2016, which he operates out of the workshop on his family's Cushing property. He makes high-quality blades with hand-carved handles in various materials. After learning all "the finer points" of metalwork at SFA, it is Burgess' intention to make bladesmithing a lifelong career, so he can continue producing new things for the world. ★

TO VIEW BURGESS' WORK, VISIT:

🌐 burgessforge.com

📷 [@burgess_forge](https://www.instagram.com/burgess_forge)

📺 [@BurgessForge](https://www.facebook.com/BurgessForge)



Burgess' specialty is Damascus steel knife blades. Damascus steel is a famed type of steel recognizable by the watery or wavy light and dark pattern of the metal. Aside from being beautiful, Damascus steel is valued because it maintains a keen edge, yet is hard and flexible.

Vista Viewpoint / By Dr. Michara DeLaney-Fields



DR. MICHARA DELANEY-FIELDS / Chief Diversity Officer in the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

WHILE SERVING MORE than 14 years in higher education, primarily in student affairs, it has been my pleasure to watch university students mature into productive global citizens. I share this fervor for every student — traditional, nontraditional, minority, students with disabilities and all others. It is my passion to ensure the same services to achieve academic and personal success are provided to every Lumberjack.

This academic year, the SFA administration created the chief diversity officer position to join the vast majority of colleges and universities who see the need to address relevant issues in the professional and academic environment. Being named SFA's first chief diversity officer and becoming a member of the President's Cabinet are honors and privileges that carry many responsibilities. In this role, I have the opportunity to work with the provost, deans, other senior leaders, external partners, and internal stakeholders and constituents to promote a welcoming environment for all students, staff, faculty, administrators and alumni. I will be responsible for building on initiatives and goals in the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion through our student-based areas of Multicultural Affairs, Veterans Resource Center and Disability Services.

Our purpose is to ensure SFA is adhering to its vision and mission. We have to demonstrate to students, faculty, staff, community and alumni that SFA is a leader in diversity and a leader in the higher education

community. How will that be accomplished? The answer is to examine where we are and where we want to be. The first task, which is ongoing, is to look at every aspect of the university and provide a snapshot of the organization, faculty, student body and staff. While we will look at numbers, we also will assess the opportunities, which is imperative.

The task at hand is to convince the SFA family that diversity, equity and inclusion are strengths and opportunities. It does not mean bringing in unqualified students or faculty. It means ensuring that we provide a way for all to contribute and succeed. The administration has shown through its efforts that SFA will be the beacon.

My vision for the office is a little different than other diversity efforts. I always tell people to watch the trees as a gentle wind blows. As you watch the leaves go back and forth, most ignore the fact that the moving air is the reason for the movement. It is so simple that we take it for granted and move on. That is the same philosophy I have about diversity, equity and inclusion. It should be a natural occurrence. It is not about taking away from one group and giving to another. However, it is about ensuring that opportunity exists for all.

We want all to know in this region and beyond that, after almost 100 years, SFA is still going strong, and we are determined to make it even better. ★

Work Space / Inside Dr. Liane Stevens' Office



DR. LIANE STEVENS
Assistant Professor
Department of
Geology

1. The sand collection mounted on the wall includes samples mostly from beaches throughout New England. It also contains specimens from other U.S. beaches and places like Iceland and Guinea. The samples are partly from Stevens' own travels, but the majority are from students who participated in a spring break extra credit project she assigned when she taught at a Massachusetts university.
2. This small corkboard map — a repurposed Christmas ornament purchased at Target — displays 47 map pins, which mark the states Stevens has visited. She's only missing Alaska, Hawaii and Missouri. Stevens wants students to know that geology can take them on great adventures.
3. A collection of pressed fall leaves sent by Stevens' best friend from Massachusetts a couple of years ago reminds her of home and its spectacular New England autumns.
4. Stevens assembled this mini building bricks model of Delicate Arch. She purchased the model in the gift shop at Arches National Park in Utah, where she visited in 2018 as a co-instructor of field camp — the capstone course for geology majors. The students and their teachers spent six weeks mapping the geology across Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Utah. They also visited several national parks.
5. "Everybody Needs a Rock" is a book written by Byrd Baylor, who is a favorite children's author of Stevens' mother, and illustrated by Peter Parnall. The book encourages people to find their own special rock and details 10 rules for doing it.
6. Agate bookends were a parting gift from Stevens' students at Montana State University, where she spent a year as a visiting assistant professor after finishing her doctoral degree at the University of Montana and before moving to Nacogdoches to teach at SFA.
7. The top three shelves house a mineral collection containing specimens Stevens collected and many that were gifted to her. Stevens says the collection is popular among geology majors and is a great conversation starter with new SFA students.
8. This rounded gray volcanic rock was acquired in Kenya, Africa. It originated as a lava flow from Mount Kilimanjaro, which is located just across the border in Tanzania. Stevens won a safari trip to Africa after donating to a fundraiser for NPR and took her family along in 2008, acquiring this specimen.
9. Stevens keeps the hand lens she used in college on a shelf in her office. The item is typically used to magnify minerals and textures found in rocks. She altered its intended use one year when it was hung from a chain around her neck as part of a Halloween costume accessory when she dressed as a punk "rocker."
10. This shelf displays some of Stevens' most-prized samples, which she collected during many field trips. The specimens are mostly metamorphic rocks from Idaho, Montana, New England and Ontario, Canada.
11. Stevens is a big supporter of the idea that students can't do their best work when they are hungry, so she keeps this basket of snacks available in her office for them. She also donates nonperishable food items to SFA's student food pantry to help alleviate food insecurities among Lumberjacks.

Two-time alumnus excels in all endeavors

SAVILLE HARRIS '10 & '13 understands the value of a good first impression — a person's and a university's.

New SFA students are typically introduced to the 6-foot-5 self-proclaimed “big fella” when he (literally) dances into the spotlight on the Grand Ballroom stage as the bass from a popular summer anthem reverberates off the walls, vibrating the seats and the wooden floor. Within minutes of his arrival at the start of every Thursday night Spirit Rally during Orientation, Harris has hundreds of incoming students stomping their feet, shouting SFA cheers and waving their hand-sign axes like seasoned Lumberjacks.

Joking with incoming students and getting them excited about their first year as Lumberjacks brings a lot of joy to Harris, whose day job is serving as SFA assistant director of student engagement-Greek life. But along with the crash course in SFA spirit and traditions he delivers as the rally's perennial emcee, there is a deeper, more important message he is hoping to impart to the crowd.

“I remember sitting out there in the audience as a freshman and thinking, where am I? What am I even doing here? Coming to SFA wasn't my original plan, and I was a little lost and overwhelmed with no clue what my future would look like,” Harris recalls.

“In that way, I think my SFA story started off like a lot of people sitting out there. And I feel it's important for them to hear how someone just like them came to SFA and learned who he was and what he was really good at. I want them to leave that rally knowing they can do the same thing. They can take advantage of all the resources and relationships and opportunities SFA has to offer, and they can succeed at anything they want to do.” ➔

BOTTOM LEFT: Saville Harris, back row center, and the rest of the 2011 SFA Orientation leaders

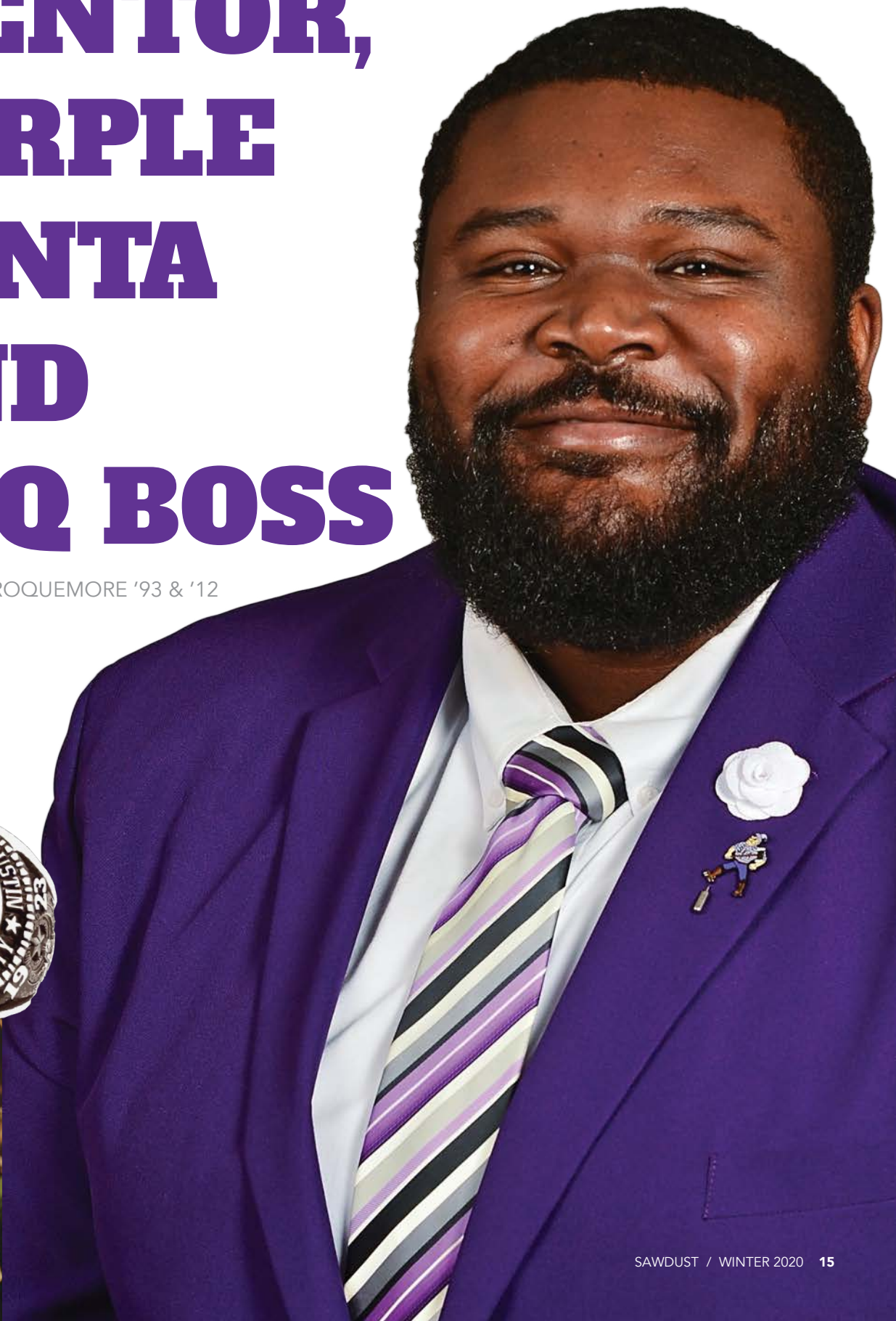
BOTTOM MIDDLE: Harris and Casey Furche received the 2012 Mr. and Miss SFA Awards presented by the SFA Alumni Association.

Photos taken by Hardy Meredith '81



MENTOR, PURPLE SANTA AND BBQ BOSS

STORY BY AMY ROQUEMORE '93 & '12



CHILDHOOD LESSONS

Harris was born and raised in the small East Texas lake city of Livingston, about 70 miles south of Nacogdoches. When he was about 5, he began “working” in the family business, a restaurant his parents have operated out of his great grandfather’s old house for more than 35 years. He and his siblings spent a good chunk of their childhood helping run Florida’s Kitchen, named for his mother, learning valuable life lessons along the way.

“You learn a lot about how to work with all kinds of people, and you get good at managing situations that don’t go as planned,” skills that have benefited him throughout his career in higher education, Harris said. “It also taught me the value of a dollar and created a mindset that I can do anything I want in life if I work hard at it. I could play sports, make good grades and have a lot of fun with my friends — but I still had to get up early to help take 80 briskets off the pit, wash the dishes and take out the trash.”

A primary reason he chose SFA was its proximity to home, which allowed him to continue to help out at the restaurant on weekends. He also was determined to get the most he possibly could out of his college experience, and he quickly rose through the leadership ranks of numerous student organizations.

LUMBERJACK LEGACY

As an undergrad, Harris was active in the Student Foundation Association, Student Activities Association, Driving Jacks, Hall 16 Council, Alpha

Phi Omega community service fraternity and SFA Spikes, a group of students who supported the SFA volleyball team. He also served as an Orientation leader and supervisor and as a Jack Camp counselor, sharing his love of SFA with incoming students.

He was a three-time recipient of the Presidential Volunteer

Service Award, was named SAA Member of the Year, Orientation Leader of the Year and Junior Homecoming Duke, and received the 1923 Society Award, recognizing students for excellence in communication, decision making, influence and teamwork. In 2012, while pursuing his master’s degree, Harris was named Mr. SFA in recognition of his leadership in academic and cocurricular activities and service to the university and community.

“SFA did so much to help me find myself, and I really loved giving back to the students and to campus,” Harris said. “I got the opportunity to be a graduate assistant in Student Activities and eventually was hired full time as coordinator of student engagement. I had just met my future wife, and it was an amazing opportunity to stay in Nacogdoches and continue to serve SFA and help students every day.”

SERVING STUDENTS

Early in his career, Harris found helping students plan events and

encouraging them to get out of their comfort zone and assume positions of leadership extremely rewarding. He soon became involved in the National Association for Campus Activities, which Harris said further convinced him he had chosen the right field and, along with his professional mentors at SFA, helped him develop as a higher education professional. He is currently serving a three-year term on the NACA Board of Directors.

In 2015, Harris’ SFA role changed again when he was promoted to his current position as assistant director of student engagement-Greek life. He remembers naively thinking at the time, “This will be easy! All I have to do is support all these students who have already adopted a creed of service and high standards.” It turned out to be a little harder than he thought.

“It took me a good two months to really establish some solid relationships with the leaders of all the different Greek organizations and convince them that we’d be better together and that I was looking out for their best interest and not just there to tell them ‘no,’” he said. “I have an open-door policy, and I am here to be an advocate for them and the impact they can have on our campus and also in the community.”

Each semester, Harris holds one-on-one meetings with the chapter presidents, hosts risk-management trainings for officers and encourages students involved in Greek life to set high standards for themselves and fellow members, gaining valuable leadership and service experience along the way.

“At the end of the day, most students just want someone they can talk to who will listen to them, and that is a huge part of my job. They know now because I have told them a thousand times, ‘I will never say no if you have your ducks in a row.’”

Harris, pictured with SFA President Dr. Scott Gordon, received the 2020 President’s Achievement Award.

Photo taken by Hardy Meredith ’81



Harris also teaches in the James I. Perkins College of Education as an adjunct professor of kinesiology, regularly presents at professional conferences and is serving on the search committee for SFA's next vice president for university affairs. Recently, he was honored with two of SFA's most prestigious recognitions, the 2020 President's Award and the 2020 SFA Alumni Lumberjack Pride Award. For the past few years, he also has taken on one of the most visible roles at the university this time of year: Purple Santa. Each year, he dons the purple Santa suit and visits dozens of campus offices to collect gifts for the Toys for Tots charity.

TURNING UP THE HEAT

Now a husband and father to two young daughters, Harris recently began exploring his other passion, one that predates his life as a Lumberjack — sharing his love and talent for cooking with others. After cooking for friends and family for years and developing his own signature recipes, he has taken a leap of faith and purchased his own food truck. Big Fella's BBQ is now a regular fixture on the local mobile culinary scene, and his trademark Come Back Ribs, Jalapeno Mac and Cheese, and Cowboy Meatballs are in high demand.

"I learned to cook from watching my parents," he said. "My mama won't tell you how to make something; you just have to watch if you want to know, and I watched her a lot. My dad taught me about barbecue and seasoning the meat. I can still hear him telling me how to season a slab of ribs and the importance of getting seasoning all over the meat."

In fact, he added, it would not be wrong to say he learned most of what he needed to know to be successful in life while working with his family at Florida's Kitchen. The rest, he said, he learned at SFA. ★

Harris, left, takes on the role of Purple Santa during the holiday season, collecting donated toys from across campus for charity. Below, he displays his Big Fella's BBQ bounty. Photos taken by Robin Johnson '99 & '19



Advising 101

The importance of an ergonomic workspace

BY SHANNIN WILLIAMS '09 & '11
SFA DESIGN CENTER, INTERIOR DESIGNER



ERGONOMICS IS DEFINED as the science of fitting a workspace to the user's needs. An ergonomically correct workspace can help increase efficiency and productivity, and reduce pain and discomfort.

In the wake of COVID-19, more and more people are working from home, and more students also are engaging in distance learning. Although our homes may be the place we feel most comfortable, they may not be set up to offer the best work and study environments.

Here are a few tips to help you and your family members remain productive and protect your health and well-being when working or studying from home.

- **Ensure the desk is the correct height.**
Your desk height should be positioned at 29.5 to 30 inches. This is considered the standard desk height by the American National Standards Institute and the Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Association.
- **Use an ergonomic desk chair.**
The chair must include arms that adjust up and down, an adjustable sliding seat and an adjustable lumbar support to help maintain proper posture and avoid neck and back pain.
- **Install a keyboard tray and tilt the keyboard.**
Place your keyboard on a keyboard tray that has been mounted under the desk. The keyboard should be tilted at 6 degrees to help keep your wrists straight and prevent carpal tunnel syndrome.
- **Consider purchasing and installing monitor arms.**
Monitor arms adjust in height to position the computer monitor at the user's eye level. The use of monitor arms helps reduce neck, back and eye strain. They also help clear the desk space for additional use.
- **Select the right type of lighting.**
Proper lighting is essential to help protect your eyes. This can come from natural lighting or an organic light emitting diodes desk lamp. OLED lamps emit beautiful, soft diffused light that is closest to natural light.

It's a fact that people do better work when they are comfortable. When you implement the ergonomic solutions mentioned above, you'll increase your efficiency and productivity while helping your body and mind stay strong and focused. ★

JACK TALK

Facebook - @SFASU
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Use #AxeEm or tag SFA on social media.



I am forever thankful to SFA for introducing this angel to me on day one of my freshman year, and making me this girl's mom! #CollegeSweethearts #SFAAlumni #Born2BeAJack #AxeEm #CollegeColorsDay

@ASHLEYWASHLC / TWITTER

When someone asks me who introduced me to my husband ... #axeem #sfasu #historynerd #historyteacher

@RECESSINHEELSTX / INSTAGRAM



My favorite little Lumberjack. #AxeEm

@PRINCESSABROOKE / INSTAGRAM



@SFASU we have the cutest future Lumberjack, and he can't wait to visit his mama's alma mater.

@MEAGAN_DIXON_ / TWITTER



Future SFA student!! #sfasu #sfa #axemjacks #everett #babyboy @sfa_jacks

@JULIAKG85 / INSTAGRAM



Getting geared up for an exciting year at SFA! #sfacharter #sfasu

@TRISHIMAY / INSTAGRAM



@sfasu Possible future Lumberjack?!

@JANA_BUSH / TWITTER

Too much? Never!! #AxeEm #SFAalumni @sfasu

@TEACHMCAWESOME / INSTAGRAM



The cutest Lumberjack cheerleader you ever did see. #futurejack #axeem #sfa #startingearly

@SWIMCAT86 / INSTAGRAM



Happy 1.5 years old, son! This little Lumberjack is growing fast! @SFASU #AxeEm #DaddysHat

@LAPROFEMONI / TWITTER

Jacks of All Trades / With Fred Poston '92

FROM SFA TO LA: Business graduate enjoys successful career as TV executive

STORY BY DR. SHIRLEY LUNA '85, '06 & '14

Fred Poston, right, is pictured with fellow SFA alum and lifelong friend Samantha Townsend McPhail and her husband Terry McPhail on the set of "The Price is Right" at Television City, the studios where Poston worked at CBS Los Angeles.

Photo courtesy of Fred Poston



WHEN FRED POSTON '92 was a senior at Klein Forest High School in the Houston area, attending SFA was a good business decision.

"I had interest in attending a private university, but when I compared the costs, SFA just made sense," he said.

Poston's early business acumen paid off — after earning a Bachelor of Business Administration from the university, he soon

departed the state to begin his career in the entertainment industry.

"It wasn't a career I had been considering," he said. "In the early '90s, most of the people I went to school with were getting job offers and lining up jobs before they graduated. Then a recession hit in 1992, and there wasn't a job waiting for me. So, I asked myself what I might enjoy doing and decided to just give it a shot."

Poston worked at a coffee factory for a few weeks to make enough money to pay for his transportation to California, and then he landed a job in the Dick Clark Productions mailroom making \$40 a day.

"It didn't pay all the bills, but it motivated me to work hard and make sure I could support myself," he recalled.

Poston's next step involved work with live television shows.

"The company was doing a lot of award shows," he said. "It was a great way to learn the aspects of production for live television — you only got one chance to get it right."

Poston learned that television production involves very long and intense working hours, so he set his sights on the networks.

"I would see network executives come and go, and I had to figure out what those folks were doing," he recalled.

Poston got his wish in 1995 when he was hired to be a part of the launch of Warner Brothers' The WB Television Network.

"It was great ground for learning everything it takes to build a television network, and it gave me the skill set to carry forward to the next network launch, which at the time was Fox Family," he explained.

Poston had the opportunity to launch Fox Family for the second time when it was bought by Disney and became ABC Family. Much like his earlier work in live television, Poston learned that executive work also was very intense.

"Starting a television network — or a business — is very different than working with an organization that's already established. You have to

build everything from the ground up," he said. "An advantage for me was coming out of the College of Business at SFA. Even though it was media work, I was a good partner to the people who were creating the product, that product being the creative business of telling stories. My priority was keeping an eye on what it takes to do storytelling as a business, and ultimately getting that product to the viewers."

More recently, Poston worked with Discovery Communications to launch The Hub, a joint venture with Hasbro, and had a hand in the launch of OWN — the Oprah Winfrey Network. Poston's work with Discovery Communications in California eventually took him across the country for what was scheduled to be a month-long project in Florida to manage Discovery's Latin American operations.

"That led to living in Miami for multiple years and working in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, setting up local operations," Poston said. "I would travel on a regular basis, meeting and hiring people to manage the regional production and operations. Managing people in other countries is an entirely different ballgame, due to the differences in languages and cultures. It definitely tested my skill sets."

Poston again rose to the occasion when asked to oversee global operations for Discovery's Asia-Pacific networks based in Singapore, managing operations for more than 80 channels and developing strategy for multipurposing media.

"I was very fortunate — I was at the right place at the right time, from that first mailroom job to my first network launch," he said. "And there was a time when my skills were used to provide change management leadership to reorganize or, in some cases, close networks. As interesting opportunities came along, I got involved, and that would lead to the next job."

Always motivated and driven, Poston consistently met the personal milestones he set for himself: a member of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, vice president by 30, senior vice president by 40. Now vice president for operations services for the CBS division of the ViacomCBS Corporation, Poston has played a role in the network origination of more than 100 channels in more than 40 countries and in 20 languages. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, he commuted to work each week in Los Angeles from his home in San Marcos.

"It's been an incredible journey," he said. "I've thoroughly enjoyed the things I've been involved with and the many talented people and projects I have had the fortune to be a part of." ★

A Bird's-eye

STORY BY SARAH FULLER '08 & '13 / PHOTOS BY HARDY MEREDITH '81



View

CONSERVATIONIST AND OLYMPIAN OVERSEES EFFORTS TO SAVE ENDANGERED GROUSE

ADENSE FOG engulfed the early spring morning as John Magera '92 led a group of visitors to a clearing on the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge. Stepping out of the vehicle, the group stood in silence as the distinct, whirring calls of the critically endangered Attwater's prairie chicken filled the air. The birds' vocalizations, coupled with the rapid thumping of their feet and vibrant, inflated air sacs on each side of their neck, are part of a unique courtship display, known as booming, performed by males in an effort to attract a mate.

"I've led a lot of tours, but that one really sticks with me," Magera, the refuge's manager, said. "This group of 15 male birds was just booming their heads off. They were probably a quarter mile away, but it was just a continual resonance. You couldn't tell where one prairie chicken stopped and the next picked up."

Considering the species' narrow escape from extinction, this annual performance is a literal celebration of life thanks to the dogged efforts of biologists who have dedicated their careers to ensuring its survival.

The refuge, located just a short drive west of the Houston metroplex, houses one of the last vestiges of Texas' untouched coastal prairie that the Attwater's prairie chicken and a host of native flora and fauna depend on for survival. Magera, who graduated from SFA with a Bachelor of Science in Forestry, has dedicated the past 12 years of his life to protecting this more than 10,000-acre stretch of coastal prairie

and its inhabitants.

Magera has always loved the outdoors. As an SFA student, he was a member of the timbersports team, the Sylvans, where he was involved in archery events during annual Southern Forestry Conclaves. This participation would later help lead to his becoming a member of the 2004 Summer Olympic U.S. archery team in Athens, Greece.

Although working to save endangered species and becoming a member of an Olympic team might, on the surface, seem worlds apart, they both require tenacity and vision. ➔

Photo by John Magera



More than a century ago, up to 1 million Attwater's prairie chickens graced the coastal prairies of Texas and Louisiana. Each spring, males gather to perform a courtship ritual. They inflate their yellow air sacs and emit a strange booming sound across a sea of grasses.

As the manager of the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge, Magera is responsible for more than 10,000 acres of native coastal prairie and the critically endangered Attwater's prairie chickens that depend on the habitat for survival.

Attwater's prairie chicken hen

Photo by John Magera



Attwater's prairie chicken male

Photo by John Magera



"I give credit to my forestry education for being able to maintain optimism while working to save the prairie chicken from extinction, because we were told straight away that this is a long-term process — you're going to be planting trees that you're never going to harvest," Magera said. "That really set me up well for this kind of work, because when you engage in the recovery of an endangered species, you're not working for results that you're going to see right away. You may have tremendous setbacks, but that's all part of it."

Once numbering in the millions across the Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coast, rapid conversion of coastal prairie to agricultural use brought about by European settlement struck a substantial blow to the species' population, resulting in the implementation of state-mandated conservation measures as early as 1897. The introduction of non-native, invasive species, such as the red imported fire ant, also was extremely detrimental to its survival.

Natural factors, such as predation by raptors, skunks and coyotes, as well as severe weather events like hurricanes and floods, also contribute to annual dips in the birds' population.

By 1967, the Attwater's prairie chicken, which Magera quickly clarifies is a grouse species and not a chicken, was listed as endangered with a population of fewer than 1,000 birds.

Magera explained that the bird is a member of the 'Class of 1967,' the original list of endangered species developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that received federal protection under the 1967 Endangered Species Preservation Act — a precursor to the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge is one of 60 national wildlife refuges across the U.S. established with the explicit goal of protecting endangered species.

Each year biologists introduce 100 to 200 Attwater's prairie chickens to acclimation pens located throughout the refuge, as well as on

private ranches near Goliad. The birds, part of a captive breeding program established in 1993, are banded, and hens are fitted with radio telemetry devices allowing biologists to monitor future nesting sites. After two weeks of adjusting to the new surroundings, the doors are opened, and the birds begin their new life on the prairie.

The Attwater's prairie chicken is not the only endangered species Magera has worked to protect during his decades-long career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. During his tenure at New Mexico's Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge, his focus centered on a number of endangered desert fish and invertebrates that rely on the refuge's wetlands. While these species may not receive the same fanfare of other more charismatic endangered species, such as the Florida panther or whooping crane, in Magera's eyes, they are no less deserving of protection.

"People would ask me what good is this or that particular species," Magera said. "My



TOP: A lifelong bowhunter, Magera's talent for archery landed him on the 2004 Summer Olympic U.S. archery team that competed in Athens, Greece. Photo courtesy of John Magera

BOTTOM LEFT: Magera's office includes mementos from his decades-long career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as the handmade wooden plaque signed by SFA forestry classmates during his induction into the Xi Sigma Pi forestry honor society as an undergraduate.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Prior to release, Attwater's prairie chickens are banded and remain in a protective enclosure for two weeks to acclimate to their new surroundings. Photo by John Magera



response is if you believe God created this animal, then who are we as human beings to cause it to become extinct?"

Magera's spiritual connection to nature is obvious as he gazes over the prairie, stopping to point out each instance a bobwhite quail, white-tailed hawk, black-tailed jackrabbit or distinctive feature of undisturbed coastal prairie crosses his path.

"How can you look at that and not see the hand of God?" Magera asked, motioning to the landscape of native flowers and grasses swaying in the breeze.

It was years earlier, while Magera was the refuge manager at the Middle Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge in Illinois, that he was reintroduced to his passion for archery. Magera enrolled his two oldest children in a local Junior Olympic Archer program. Curious to learn more, he once again picked up his own bow and arrow.

Possessing an innate talent, which he attributes to years of bow hunting in his youth,

Magera decided to pursue Honorary U.S. Archery Team qualifying events during his free time.

Magera said he assured his wife, Karin '90 & '93, that he would not spend much money pursuing these events, and if he didn't do well, he would simply return to his hobby of shooting targets at home.

Among 78 archers participating in the first qualifying tournament, Magera found himself in second place behind the No. 1-ranked target archer in the U.S.

Several events and an Olympic trial later, Magera qualified for and became a member of the 28th Olympiad's U.S. Men's Archery Team that finished just shy of a bronze medal.

Following the Olympics, Magera was one of four coaches of the Junior Dream Team of teenage archers at the Olympic Training Center. In 2007, he was the assistant head coach for the U.S. Archery Team at the Turkish Archery Federation's Grand Prix event in Antalya, Turkey. In 2008, he turned

down an offer by Kisik Lee, the national head coach of the U.S. Olympic Archery training program, to serve as the training center coach for resident athletes.

"I was flattered, and I told him that if I were much younger and didn't already have the career I dreamed of as a child, I would take him up on it," he said.

Accompanying Magera's dream job and his professional and athletic achievements is the very personal conviction that introducing youth to the natural world is absolutely imperative, not only for their health, but for the future health of the natural world.

"I get pretty passionate about projects that are going to get the next generation of kids into the outdoors and give them the opportunity to spend time in nature the way I needed to as a kid," Magera said. "I'll see kids riding their bikes or walking the trails, and I wonder if that is a future refuge manager. I wonder if that kid is going to consider a career in conservation." ★

Silver Linings

CEO leads Burke Center through pandemic

STORY BY JO GILMORE
PHOTOS BY ROBIN JOHNSON '99 & '19

AFTER SHE GRADUATED from SFA with a bachelor's degree in rehabilitation services, Melanie Taylor '86 was planning to move to Colorado and earn a master's degree in her field.

Instead she fell in love with her now-husband, Jimmy, and decided to pursue a job locally at the same center where she completed a life-changing internship as part of her SFA degree program.

"My internship experience at Burke prompted me to seek employment in a field that I may never have considered if not for the course requirement," Taylor said.

ADVANCING AN INSPIRING LEGACY

Burke Center, known previously as Deep East Texas Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services, was founded in Lufkin in 1974 by the area's county commissioners courts to provide mental health care for the region's communities.

It serves 12 counties — Angelina, Houston, Jasper, Nacogdoches, Newton, Polk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity and Tyler — and is one of 39 centers the Texas Health and Human Services Commission contracts with to deliver mental health services to communities across the state.

In 1999, Deep East Texas Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services was renamed Burke Center in honor of Ward and Anna Belle Burke, who were tireless advocates for people with mental illness and developmental disabilities. The couple also was instrumental in making community care possible in Texas.

Their legacy has inspired the excellent care and family atmosphere that drew Taylor back in November 1986 to the site of her internship as a case manager working directly with individuals with intellectual disabilities.

At the time, about 75 Burke employees were serving more than 1,500 individuals a year. Thirty-four years later, nearly 600 Burke employees serve more than 13,500 East Texans annually, and Taylor is the CEO.

"People who work for Burke generally spend their entire career here unless they have to move away for some reason," Taylor said. "We're a family."

This culture kept Taylor at Burke even when she was ready for a career change. She earned a master's degree in business and moved from direct care case manager to human resources director and then chief financial and administrative officer. She recently completed another master's degree in public service and administration.

Despite this preparation, including a year as deputy CEO, Taylor didn't foresee some of the challenges 2020 would present. No one could.

AN UNEXPECTED FIRST YEAR

When Taylor advanced to the CEO role in July 2019, she thought she was ready.

"Considering my years of experience with Burke, I anticipated my first year would be smooth," she said. "My confidence level was high. Our biggest task for the year was to convert to a new electronic health record."

Then in early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

"I have not found one CEO in our field who was prepared for the type of challenges we have seen during this pandemic," Taylor said.

She attributes any success she's had during her first year as CEO to the support of the Burke Center Board of Trustees and the "amazing" Burke staff members, who have developed new solutions to meet consumer needs because of COVID-19.

"From finding creative ways to keep adolescent kids engaged in a video call to staying safe while ensuring appropriate care in our residential facilities and clinical areas, staff members have stepped up, thought outside the box and continued our high-quality care," Taylor said. "They've made it work, and all credit goes to them."

Though the pandemic has derailed several of the goals Taylor set for her first year, it has provided some silver linings.

"There is no substitute for seeing health care providers face-to-face, but because of the pandemic, we're being allowed to provide services via phone and video that we weren't able to do before," she said.

Before the pandemic, Burke was among the first community mental health centers in Texas to provide psychiatric telehealth services and has been nationally recognized for its telehealth program.

"We do that well, so it wasn't a big leap to apply technology to our other services once the state allowed us to," Taylor said.

Many of the individuals served by Burke have difficulty finding transportation to their appointments, so remote treatment options help if the technology is available.

"It is my and my peers' hope that the COVID-19 experience creates opportunities for long-term flexibility in the use of technology, so practitioners and individuals accessing care can choose the most efficient and effective mode of service delivery for them," Taylor said. ➔



Burke



When Melanie Taylor joined Burke Center in 1986 as a case manager working directly with individuals with intellectual disabilities, the center had about 75 employees serving more than 1,500 East Texans a year. Thirty-four years later, Taylor is the CEO, and nearly 600 Burke employees serve more than 13,500 individuals annually.

The COVID-19 pandemic struck during Taylor's first year as CEO. She attributes any success she's had during this period to the support of the Burke Center Board of Trustees and "amazing" Burke staff members, who have developed new solutions to meet consumer needs both online and in residential facilities and clinical areas. "They've made it work, and all credit goes to them," Taylor said.



Another silver lining is improved support from the public and government for mental health resources.

Since the pandemic started, Burke has seen a slight increase in requests for services. Most of those involve anxiety.

"People everywhere want a sense of control," Taylor said. "The pandemic and current social unrest along with high unemployment numbers create an 'unknown' factor, and people in general don't do well with no answers."

Taylor added that many people just need the resources on Burke's website at myburke.org, which also lists contact information for local emergency mental health services. Burke's 24-hour crisis line is (800) 392-8343.

In addition, state leaders recognized the stress caused by COVID-19 and established the Texas Health and Human Services 24/7 COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line at (833) 986-1919.

"As always, recognition and education continue to be important to removing the stigma that often is associated with mental health concerns so people will feel comfortable asking for help," Taylor said.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

When the pandemic hit, Burke was experiencing a growth spurt because of the 2012 approval of the 1115 Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment program.

"This program has been a game changer for behavioral health services at Burke and throughout Texas," Taylor said.

Because of DSRIP, Burke is able to serve almost double the number of individuals with mental illness it cared for in 2012, but the program is slated to end in fiscal year 2022.

"We will be working with legislators and stakeholders on a focused approach to achieve sustainability and implement a Texas-specific behavioral health strategy designed to ensure services continue," Taylor said.

In addition, Burke is continuing its rollout of the Mental Health First Aid program in a virtual format that was recently released by the National Council for Behavioral Health. The program teaches participants how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use.

Burke is offering the courses to any organization or community member for free as part of its mental health awareness campaign. Virtual courses feature a two-hour, self-paced online class and four-and-a-half to six hours of instructor-led videoconferencing on class day.

One of the main goals of the program is to help school personnel assess behavioral threats as acts of violence committed by students continue to be a concern. In fiscal year 2019, more than 400 school personnel and 180 community members completed the training. Nearly 300 school personnel were able to



complete the training in fiscal year 2020 before the pandemic hit.

With the virtual format, Burke's trainers can continue helping school districts address this challenge despite the pandemic.

Taylor plans to still be leading her Burke family in four years when the center celebrates its 50th anniversary. Once the pandemic is under control, she will return to the center's short-term goal of using data-driven technology to make improvements. She also will refocus efforts on Burke's long-term goal of providing a more holistic approach to improve East Texans' mental and physical health.

"We need to understand our consumers' mental health and physical health needs as a whole rather than siloed issues," Taylor said. "Ultimately, our success is not measured in data but in the real-life stories of the individuals we serve." ★



ABOUT WARD AND ANNA BELLE BURKE

The center's late namesakes, Ward (1916-2010) and Anna Belle (1917-2006) Burke (pictured), advocated for people with mental illness or intellectual and developmental disabilities for half a century. A few of their accomplishments are listed below.

1950s — Ward wins a seat on the Lufkin ISD School Board. Anna Belle helps establish the first special education class in Angelina County.

1960s — The Burkes help transform the Lufkin Radar Base into the Lufkin State School, now known as the Lufkin State Supported Living Center. Gov. John Connally appoints Ward as a founding board member for the Texas

Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation.

1970s — Ward cofounds Burke Center, and the Burkes launch the Lufkin Workshop and Opportunity Center for individuals with mental and physical disabilities.



1990s — The Burkes receive the Service Above Self Award from the Angelina Rotary Club for their countless efforts spent helping children with disabilities.

2000s — The Lufkin/Angelina County Chamber of Commerce presents the couple with the Angelina Award for their lifetime of community service.



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ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION

From the Association

"I have been so proud of how our university has transformed its traditional way of doing almost everything and remained viable in an extremely competitive scholastic climate."



GREETINGS, FELLOW ALUMNI and friends.

Another year is almost in the books as we draw closer to SFA's 100th anniversary. And what a year 2020 has been!

We've all learned to adapt to new ways of doing things. Some have suffered loss, and others have charted new courses for their lives.

I have been so proud of how our university has transformed its traditional way of doing almost everything and remained viable in an extremely competitive scholastic climate. The attitude across campus has remained calm and determined. Thanks to the administration, SFA has made tough choices and charted a great course for future success.

Our Alumni Association has had to do the same rethinking and adapting to change. With restrictions on group gatherings for most of the year, our staff members have found creative ways to engage virtually. Social media, Zoom, Jack Chats, online SFA Ring sales and alliances around campus have become the new way of doing business. Here is a shout out to Craig Turnage, the Alumni Association executive director, and association staff members for

going above and beyond to take care of our organization and its members.

This will be my final letter as association president. Words can't describe what an honor it has been to serve alongside a great Board of Directors, alumni ambassadors from all areas of the state and nation, and the most dedicated group of staff members as we all work to represent and support our alma mater.

The good news is that our future is bright! Our organization will be under the leadership of Charlotte Ashcraft '80, incoming president from Nacogdoches, and a terrific and diverse Board of Directors. This board represents the geography, class year and school of study of our alumni base. Erika Tolar '02 from Houston will be joining Charlotte as our president-elect.

We appreciate your support and, as always, please let us know if there is any way we can help you. ★

Axe 'em, Jacks!



Bob Francis '78 – Bullard
President, SFA Alumni Association

SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

Bob Francis '78, Bullard
president

Charlotte Ashcraft '80, Nacogdoches
president-elect

David Madrid '02, Haughton, 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

Pamm Coleman '80, Houston

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, Tyler

Alex Ranc '11 & '13, Nacogdoches

Ted Smith '07, Nacogdoches

Erika Tolar '02, Spring

Bob Williams '70, Dallas

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION STAFF

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

Amber Lindsay
assistant to the executive director

Derek Snyder '01
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

Travis Turner '05 & '11
coordinator of communications
and sponsorships

Bob Sitton '60
director emeritus

CONTACT

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alumni@sfasu.edu ★ sfaalumni.com

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.

Scholarships



The Celeste Duncan Holt Scholarship

THE CELESTE DUNCAN Holt Scholarship was established by her son and daughter-in-law, Larry and Judy Holt of Bryan. The scholarship will be eligible to be awarded for the first time in fall 2021 to students from Shelby County pursuing a major in interdisciplinary studies, in good standing with the university and demonstrating financial need.

Holt began her first semester at SFA in fall 1935. She received her primary of elementary certification in May 1938 and graduated with a bachelor's degree in fine arts in 1952. A native of Shelby County, Holt taught in the Texas public school system for 29 years, including in the Shelby County school system and independent school districts in Snook, College Station and Bryan. She passed away Aug. 13, 2005, at the age of 88. ★

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. Staff members in the 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.



Life Members

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

- 8383. Donna Stephens '79, Nacogdoches
- 8384. John K. Stephens '79, Nacogdoches
- 8385. Michael Todd Freeman '88, The Woodlands
- 8386. Morgan E. Wright '20, Cypress
- 8387. Christopher W. Arnold '05, Cedar Park
- 8388. Rachel M. Arnold '07, Cedar Park
- 8389. Dr. Carl P. McKnight '95, Longview
- 8390. Dr. Jason Reese, SFA Professor and Friend, Nacogdoches
- 8391. Kristin Reese, Friend, Nacogdoches
- 8392. Tami K. Rater '02, Boston, Massachusetts
- 8393. Stormy N. Munoz '12, League City
- 8394. Autumn R. Fincher '08, Nacogdoches

Around Campus



TOP: SFA's Young Conservatives of Texas and volunteers place 2,977 American flags — one for each person who died during the terrorist attacks Sept. 11, 2001 — outside the McKibben Education Building to commemorate the 19th anniversary. Photo by Robin Johnson

MIDDLE LEFT: SFA graduate student Kaleth Salazar and Megan Carswell, senior mass communication student, titrate an acid with a strong base under the direction of Dr. Kefa Onchoke, professor of chemistry, while maintaining physical distancing protocols. Photo by Hardy Meredith



BOTTOM LEFT: Madison Teale, a senior interior design major, uses a new study unit called an ecopod. The units are located in the Steen Library and equipped with electricity and USB outlets. Photo by Robin Johnson

MIDDLE RIGHT: Music students, including graduate student Taylor Davis, practice outdoors underneath a tent to help ensure appropriate physical distancing. Photo by Robin Johnson



BOTTOM RIGHT: Students visit on the balcony overlooking the Baker Pattillo Student Center Plaza. Face coverings are required to be worn in public areas inside buildings and outside when maintaining a physical distance of at least 6 feet is not possible. Photo by Hardy Meredith

HAVE YOU EVER opened a textbook or novel, thumbed through its pages and wondered how the writing, photography, illustrations, editing and printing came together to produce the book? Indeed, it is no small undertaking.

At SFA, where hundreds of academicians and creative scholars are employed, it is advantageous to offer a way to assist these professionals in producing and publishing their works. That's where the SFA Press enters the picture.

Located in the McKibben Education Building on SFA's campus, the SFA Press is the birthplace of award-winning academic and literary works that have been distributed worldwide. Under the guidance of Kimberly Verhines, SFA Press director, students also have the opportunity to help create books from start to finish.

"The press was planned to be a teaching press, not a large publishing house," Verhines said. "We designed it to serve the community and our students. The press is really about giving students the opportunity to learn skills they will use in the real world."

Following the Great Recession in 2009, many colleges and universities closed their presses. But in 2010, Verhines, along with Dr. Brian Murphy, dean of the College of Liberal and Applied Arts, and Dr. Richard Berry, professor of music and former provost, began planning for SFA to have its own self-funding press. It became a reality later that same year.



The Next Chapter

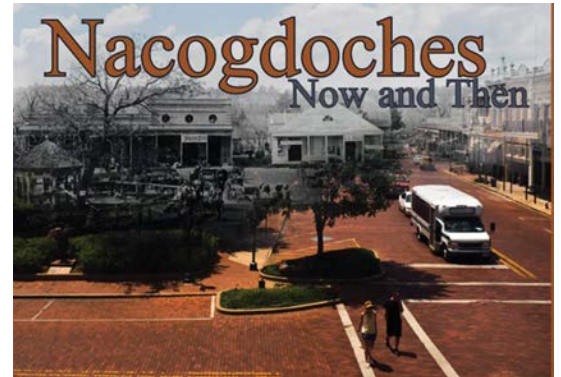
SFA Press celebrates 10th year,
publishes new children's book

STORY BY EMILY BROWN '17
PHOTOS BY ROBIN JOHNSON '99 & '19



Kimberly Verhines, director of the SFA Press, right, holds "Blazer's Taxi" by Una Belle Townsend, while student assistant Jakayla Murphy holds the press' latest book, "A Day at SFA" by Dr. Shirley Luna and Donna Parish.

The first book the press published was "Nacogdoches Now and Then" by Christopher Talbot, SFA professor of art and director of the School of Art. It featured vintage photos of Nacogdoches juxtaposed with current pictures. Students majoring in English and art assisted in creating the book.



Over time, the press has steadily grown and hired interns and graduate students to assist in publishing and acquire professional skills. Unlike many other university presses, the SFA Press utilizes student workers to help with every step of the publishing process. From proofing manuscripts and creating artwork to layout and distribution, students leave the press with experience in every area of publishing and are job ready.

"Many other university presses have a much larger staff who complete the majority of the publication process," Verhines said. "Since I am the sole part-time employee, students serve as my right hand. They typically join the press from either a writing or art program and use the skills they are learning before they graduate. This helps the press and also boosts their résumés." ➔

AWARD-WINNING SFA PRESS BOOKS

- 2013 Texas Association of Authors First Place for Autobiography: "Chopper Blues"
- 2013 International Book Prize for Military History: "Chopper Blues"
- 2015 The Society of Midland Authors Award in Poetry: "Nowhere All At Once"
- 2015 Nebraska Book Award Poetry Honor: "Always the Detail"
- 2016 Nebraska Book Award for Anthology: "A Sandhills Reader: Thirty Years of Great Writing from the Great Plains"
- 2016 HOW International Design Award: "Correspondence in D Minor"
- 2017 NACC Tejas Fiction Book Award: "The Road to Llorona Park"
- 2018 Nebraska Book Award for Nonfiction Biography: "The Weight of the Weather"
- 2018 Nebraska Book Award for Poetry Anthology: "Nebraska Poetry: A Sesquicentennial Anthology 1867-2017"
- 2019 Western Heritage Award for Poetry: "Landscapes with Horses"
- 2018-2019 Texas Institute of Letters Soeurette Diehl Fraser Award for Best Translation of a Book: "Still Life with Children"

Jakayla Murphy displays books she assisted the SFA Press in publishing. As a student assistant, Murphy is able to gain hands-on experience in every part of the publication process, including designing, editing and marketing.



Verhines said it's important for students to have already honed useful and practical skills when they leave the university. She said SFA provides many unique opportunities for them to develop distinctive skills they can take with them into their careers. "It's paramount in today's higher education to offer students transformative learning experiences they can't get elsewhere," Verhines said.

In 2019, the press partnered with the SFA Division of Multidisciplinary Programs to create a Master of Arts in publishing. The program combines courses in art, business, mass communication and publishing, allowing students to gain a holistic publishing education.

These graduate students also work at the press, gaining valuable experience. "They are involved in every step of the publishing process," Verhines said, "including paper selection, layout, editing, marketing and more."

Since its founding a decade ago, the press has published and distributed more than 200 titles. Numerous publications have received multiple accolades, including the Western Heritage Award and the Texas Institute of Letters Award in Translation.

One of the press' most recent books features a certain well-loved university in Nacogdoches.

"A Day at SFA" was written by University Marketing Communications staff members Dr. Shirley Luna, executive director, and Donna Parish, assistant director. It was illustrated by Tristan Brewster, who graduated from SFA in 2019. The book is geared toward children and is meant to encourage them early on to consider SFA as their university of choice. It features campus landmarks, academic buildings, SFA traditions and a few familiar faces. Brewster has incorporated much of what makes SFA special into his whimsical artwork.

"I'm very excited to distribute this book because although it's mainly for children, a portion of the proceeds from the book's sales will help fund student scholarships," Verhines said. "I think SFA alumni will enjoy reading it, too."

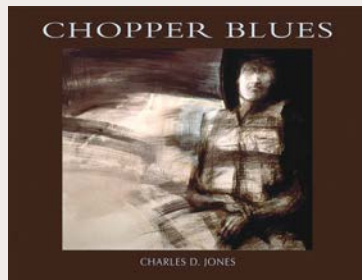
A little more than 10 years ago, the SFA Press put ink to paper. Verhines and her student staff members have since published a plethora of books aimed at audiences from kids to scholars.

"This latest book is the perfect chapter to start our 10th year," Verhines said. "It encompasses the past, present and future of SFA. I'm looking forward to the next chapter." ★

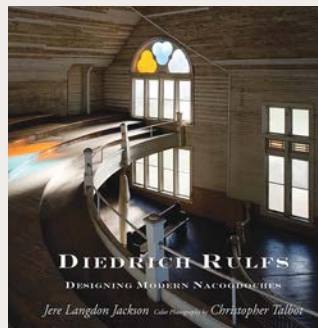
SAMPLING OF NONFICTION BOOKS



"Bone Chalk"
by Jim Reese



"Chopper Blues"
by Charles D. Jones



"Diedrich Rulfs: Designing
Modern Nacogdoches"
by Jere Langdon Jackson
Photography by
Christopher Talbot



"The Azaleas of Nacogdoches:
Garden Capital of Texas"
by Barbara S. Stump

A Day at SFA



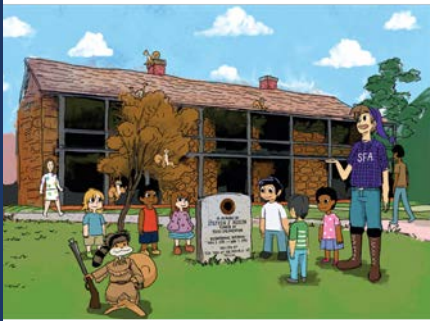
Shirley Luna and Donna Parish
Illustrated by Tristan Brewster



The oldest building on campus is the Austin Building. When it was completed in 1924, it housed classrooms, offices and even the library. Today, it is where the university's president and many staff members work.



Inside the Lehmann Chemistry Building, professors and students conduct science experiments to study what things are made of and how they work.



This replica of the Stone Fort, which was originally built more than 200 years ago, now houses a museum. The Stone Fort started its life as a house, but through the years served as a store, jail, church and saloon.



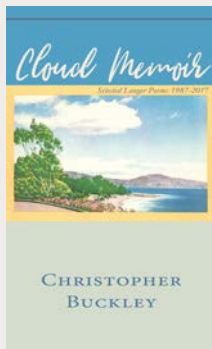
Years ago, the Ag Pond served as a place for the cattle and other animals that lived on SFA's campus to get a drink. Today, it's just a pretty place for students to relax and enjoy the outdoors.



On graduation day, Lumberjacks receive their diplomas and celebrate with family and friends.

A SAMPLING OF PAGES FROM THE SFA PRESS' NEWEST PUBLICATION, "A DAY AT SFA," WHICH TAKES CHILDREN ON A HISTORY LESSON AND TOUR OF ALL THINGS LUMBERJACK. TO PURCHASE THE BOOK, GO TO SFAU.EDU/KIDSBOOK.

SAMPLING OF FICTION BOOKS



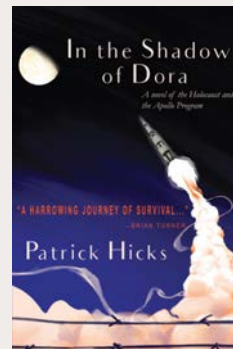
"Cloud Memoir"
by Christopher Buckley



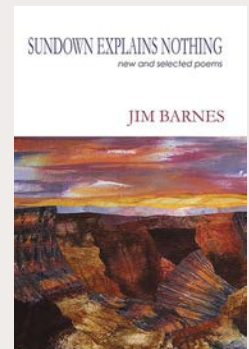
"Deleted Scenes and Other Bonus Features"
by Kevin Catalano



"Down"
by Erin Elizabeth Smith



"In the Shadow of Dora"
by Patrick Hicks



"Sundown Explains Nothing"
by Jim Barnes

Class Notes

1960s



← **Marshall '63 & '66** and **Carol Treadwell '65** celebrated the May 2020 graduation of their granddaughter, **Sara Bass**, from SFA. Bass also joined the family's Lumberjack legacy by becoming an SFA Alumni Association life member.

William C. Book '67 of Houston was honored through his inclusion in Marquis Who's Who, a biographical source for

thousands of researchers, journalists, librarians and executive search firms around the world.

John W. Lewis '69 & '72 of Tyler recently had his book, "Going from Zero to Hero in One Generation," published.

Joe W. "Bill" Wallace '75 of Longview retired from Advantage Solutions, a marketing and brand solutions company for manufacturers and retailers, after 50 years in the grocery business.



← **Patricia Wells '77** of Tyler was awarded first place for poetry in the 2020 Best of Texas book awards for her novel "LodeStar: Reflections of Light and Dark."

Janet Ragland '79 was hired as the senior media relations specialist at the University of Texas at Tyler's Health Science Center after working for LeTourneau University's media relations for almost 18 years.

1980s

Syros Pharmaceuticals appointed **Dr. S. Gail Eckhardt '81** of Boulder, Colorado, to the company's Board of Directors.



← **Scott Pirnie '84 & '86** of Irving partnered with three other individuals to open the new Tidal Wave Auto Spa in Nacogdoches. Construction on the facility began in September.

→ **Pam Kehoe**

'85 of Houston was inducted into the Texas Radio Hall of Fame. Kehoe has spent 25 years in the radio industry and is the associate athletic director for marketing and fan engagement for the University of Houston.

Clayton R. Wolf '86 of Paige was selected to serve as the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's chief operating officer.



1970s



Monte L. Monroe '78 was reappointed Texas State Historian by Gov. Greg Abbott.

Responsible for increasing public knowledge about the rich and diverse history of the state and encouraging the teaching of Texas history in public schools, Monroe also will consult with state leaders to promote Texas

history and make presentations on related topics.

Monroe earned a bachelor's degree in literature and history from SFA and master's and doctoral degrees from Texas Tech University. He is the archivist of the Southwest Collection and a fellow of the West Texas Historical Association. The former editor of the association's journal, he has served on the Texas Historical Records Advisory Board, the boards of the West and East Texas Historical Associations and is chair of the Texas State Historical Association Archives Committee. He was formerly secretary general of the Pan American Taekwondo Union, and an international master instructor and international referee in taekwondo, and he officiated the sport at the Seoul and Barcelona Olympic games.



← **Joan Davis Ragland '74** of Kennard received the 2020 Texas Computer Education Association's Lifetime Achievement for the Advancement of Technology in Education award. Ragland has been employed with Hudson Independent School District since 1978.

→ **Gary Fisher '75** of Tyler and **Scott Goodrich '77** of Nacogdoches traveled with friends Wally Scoggins and Darrell Baca to the top of the Beartooth Mountains in Montana.



Carolyn '85 and David Gazda of Athens, Georgia, were the 2020 inductees into the National Junior Angus Association's Honorary Angus Foundation.

Carolyn, who earned her master's degree in agriculture from SFA, has devoted much of her time to the Georgia Junior Angus Association.

In 2010, she was recognized as Advisor of the Year at the National Junior Angus Show for her efforts as a longtime advisor of the GJAA. In 2019, she served on the committee of judges for the acclaimed National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest.

David attended SFA and managed cattle at the Beef Farm while a student. He was named regional manager for the American Angus Association in 1988. Today, he is responsible for three states and, as director of field services, manages 12 regions throughout the country.

Class Notes

1990s

Roger Dees '91 was named the 2020 Regional Superintendent of the Year by the Education Service Center Region 13. Dees is the superintendent for Giddings Independent School District.



← **Elizabeth Baker Gound '92** of Nacogdoches received her Doctor of Literacy in Education from Sam Houston State University. Gound works as an associate professor of education studies at SFA.

→ **Jim Hardwick '92 & '98** of Cypress has owned Ideal Roofing in Houston for 17 years and was recently featured in Living magazine.



Patricia Patton '93 of Houston retired from her position as human resources director for Ector County.

Scott Griggs '94 of Marietta, Georgia, was promoted to president of MJB Wood Group, a leading manufacturer and distributor of industrial wood products.

Mario Canizares '95 of Nacogdoches was named city manager for the City of Nacogdoches. He previously worked as deputy city manager for the City of Denton.

Carla Dupree '95 of Douglasville was named Region VIII Outstanding Principal of the Year by the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals.

Jason Otteson '96 of Huntsville was named CEO of Ensurge Inc. and elected to serve on the company's Board of Directors.



← **Deborah Daniels Calhoun '97** of Indianapolis, Indiana, received a Doctor of Education in organizational leadership from Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Ashley Klamfoth '98 of Lumberton was hired as a psychotherapist in Lamar University's Student Health Center.

→ **Dr. John F. Landis '98** of Jacksonville, Florida, was promoted to the rank of commander in the U.S. Navy Reserves Dental Corps.



Clark Miller '99 retired from the Plano Police Department.

Misti Buard '05 of Missouri City owns and operates Brand Appétit, a food service business that focuses on using food trucks to enhance events. Recently, Buard's company was featured in a People magazine article when she was hired to assist

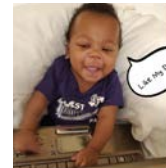


in the wedding of R&B singer Major R. Johnson Finley.

← **Danielle Parsons '05** was named technology director for

Granbury Independent School District.

→ **Tristan '07 and Crystal '10 Adams** of Chireno announced the March birth of Grayson Adams.



3 months
June 24, 2020



2010s

Sarah Cunningham '11 of Greenwood, South Carolina, was named by the U.S. National Park Service as superintendent of Wilson's Creek National Battlefield.

Dan '12 & '16 and Katie Usher '12 announced the birth of their daughter, Addilyn Lorraine.



← **Kristin Poole Steely '15** was named principal of Elkhart Elementary School.

George Lane '16 of Washington, D.C., was named a political appointee at the United States Agency for International Development in the Office of Legislative and Public Affairs.

→ **Sierra '17 and Cam Chambers** were married in June 2020 at Loveland Pass in Breckenridge, Colorado.

Jodi Choate '18 of Round Rock was named assistant principal at Ridgeview Middle School.



2000s

Johna Tritt '01 & '04 was named a Teacher of the Year by the Education Service Center Region VII. Tritt works for Kilgore Independent School District.



← **Chris '05 and Rachel Arnold '07** of Leander announced the May birth of their daughter, Carsen Kay.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.

As part of our continuous effort to improve Sawdust, we are conducting an online survey to gain information about reader preferences.

sfasu.edu/sawdust/survey

In Memoriam

OSCAR STAFFORD CRIPPS



Oscar Stafford Cripps, a 1965 and 1970 SFA graduate, passed away Sept. 12.

During his time at the university, Cripps played football for the Lumberjacks. While a student, he met his wife of 55 years, Janette, during a square dance class.

After receiving his bachelor's and master's degrees in physical education from SFA, Cripps began his coaching career as head coach at Hemphill High School. He then moved to Spring Branch ISD as an assistant coach at Westchester High School, where he coached from 1968 to 73, before joining Stratford High School when it opened in 1973 as the school's first campus athletic director and head coach. He was employed with Stratford until 2000. More than 100 student-athletes from Stratford went on to play college football, at least six of them continued to the NFL — two of those playing in Super Bowls.

In 1978, the Stratford Spartans won the 1978 Class 4A State Championship with a perfect 15-0 record. The Spartans played in the 1980 state quarterfinals, the 1987 state championship and 1988 state semifinals. They won seven district championships.

Cripps was twice named the Greater Houston Coach of the Year by the Houston Post and Houston Chronicle. He was named the Texas Coach of the Year by the Sports Writer's Association, named the Spring Branch-Memorial Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year in 1978, selected as the Spring Branch ISD's Man of the Year by the Rotary Club in 1987, and inducted into the Greater Houston Coaches Hall of Honor in 1998, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes Ring of Honor in 2004, the AdvoCare Texas Bowl Hall of Honor in 2016, and the Texas High School Coaches Association Hall of Honor. He is a member of the Stephen F. Austin State University Hall of Fame.

CAPT. JAMES GILLILAND



A resident of Corpus Christi, Capt. James Gilliland passed away Aug. 4.

After his graduation from Hudson High School in 1969, Gilliland joined the U.S. Air Force. He graduated from SFA in 1978 with a degree in sociology. After receiving his degree,

he joined the U.S. Army as a commissioned officer, where he was a

member of the special forces Airborne Rangers and Green Berets, graduating second in his class of 400.

Gilliland continued in the Army Reserves after active duty. In civilian life, he owned a construction company and worked in the oil and gas industry as a company man.

DR. VOLKER W. GOBEL



Dr. Volker W. Gobel, former SFA professor of geology, passed away July 30 in Nacogdoches.

Gobel was born in Berlin, Germany, in 1940 and grew up in Wetzlar, West Germany. After finishing his undergraduate studies overseas, he came to the U.S. as a Fulbright Scholar and

completed his doctoral degree at the Colorado School of Mines in Golden, Colorado.

When Gobel retired from SFA in 2015, he was the longest-serving faculty member in the department, dedicating almost 42 years of service to the university.

DR. BOBBY H. JOHNSON



Named SFA Regents Professor from 1992 to 93, Dr. Bobby H. Johnson, professor emeritus of history, passed away Aug. 13.

Johnson joined the university in 1966, teaching American history. During the course of 39 years, he rose through the ranks

from assistant professor to professor. Johnson was the author of several books, including "Wiley Post: His Winnie Mae and the First Pressure Suit," "The Coushatta People," and "From Pine Trees to Paper: Interviews with Southland Paper Employees." He also was the author of numerous articles and book reviews, and he conducted many presentations for groups and clubs.

He also was an avid writer of plays, including "East Texas Remembers World War II," "Texas Talks" and "A Texas Tragedy: The New London Explosion." When Johnson was a toddler living in New London with his family, the school exploded, killing almost 300 students and teachers. This experience shaped some of his work as a historian and playwright.

In Memoriam

Johnson served as past president of the Texas Oral History Association. He conducted hundreds of oral history reviews, mainly in East Texas on topics that include the oil boom, the Great Depression, the experiences of World War I and World War II veterans, and life on the homefront.

Johnson was honored by the Texas Legislature in 1993 with a resolution of recognition for his work as a writer and teacher.

DR. JOSEPH GRAVES MCWILLIAMS



Dr. Joseph Graves McWilliams, a 1974 SFA graduate and retired professor of mathematics and statistics, passed away Oct. 11.

McWilliams served in the U.S. Navy as petty officer 2nd class during the Vietnam War on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific as a jet engine mechanic.

After the war, McWilliams returned to the states and attended McNeese State University, where he received his bachelor's degree in mathematics in 1972. He continued his education at SFA, receiving a master's degree in mathematics in 1974. In 1981, McWilliams graduated with a second master's degree in statistics from Southern Methodist University. He received his doctoral degree in mathematics from SMU in 1985.

McWilliams began serving on the SFA faculty in 1985, teaching undergraduate and graduate courses. He was a Student Life Award finalist in 1994 and nominated for the university's Teaching Excellence Award in 2002. McWilliams retired from SFA in 2011.

His book, "A First Course in Probability and Statistics," published in 2008, was adopted and used by the university for many years in its introductory probability and statistics course. McWilliams donated all profits from the book to scholarships for SFA students.

Those who wish to contribute to the scholarship in honor of McWilliams may do so by contacting SFA's Office of Development at (936) 468-5406.

SENIOR MASTER SGT. THOMAS D. WALTON



Senior Master Sgt. Thomas D. Walton of Lakehills passed away July 14.

A 1981 SFA graduate, Walton was the first in his family to earn a college degree.

Walton served in the U.S. Air Force. He enlisted in 1958 and served in Alaska, Hawaii,

Turkey, South Vietnam, Germany and Texas. His entire military career was spent with the U.S. Air Force Security Service.

During his 20-plus years serving his country, Walton earned numerous individual and unit citations and medals, including the Air Force Commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster, Meritorious Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with fourth battle star and the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with palm.

In Memoriam

Karoline V. Ayres '73 & '75 of Nacogdoches, June 8

James M. Brightwell '61 of Garland, Aug. 23

Lucy Canter '50 of Jacksonville, Sept. 15

George C. Corley '57 & '58 of Nacogdoches, July 16

Winell C. Cottingham '82 of Hemphill, May 25

Joseph E. Cucci '69 of Holly Hill, South Carolina, Aug. 20

Dr. Ronald M. Davis '59 of Cleveland, Aug. 6

Jason Darren Ellis '89 of Frisco, May 15

Arthur Ellison '61 & '74 of Bronson, July 24

Royce R. Feaster '75 of Lufkin, June 23

Gwenette R. Ferguson '97 of Houston, Aug. 10

Brenton "Kyle" Finley '83 of Arlington, June 25

Billie L. Fuller '72 of Longview, Aug. 16

Robert K. Gary '59 & '63 of Jasper, Aug. 6

Billy C. Hall '74 of Tyler, June 7

Nelda J. Hammett '61 & '67 of Nacogdoches, Aug. 12

Virginia J. Heath '43 & '51 of Nacogdoches, Aug. 4

Danna O. Huddleston '75 of New Braunfels, July 4

Derek Hutchinson '97 of Houston, Aug. 12

Janie L. Jones '54 of Rusk, Aug. 13

Lincoln H. King '78 & '89 of Carthage, Aug. 16

Helen W. Kinzbach '46 of Waco, July 22

Randall Kneal Kirby '69 of Lindale, March 27

Tamra K. Lang '79 & '86 of Colorado Springs, Colorado, Aug. 14

Walter L. Martin '64 of Lytle, Aug. 16

Louella D. McGee '55 of Deer Park, Aug. 14

Homer R. Metcalf '75 & '80 of Beckville, May 29

Randa J. Moore '17 of Chireno, July 14

Robert W. (Bob) Morisak '68 of Willis, Jan. 17

Cecilia James Ogden '93 of North Richland Hills, Sept. 3

William K. Park '81 of Galveston, July 25

Clifford B. Peavy '88 of Katy, Aug. 3

Margarette O. Pitts '43 & '53 of Nacogdoches, Aug. 10

James R. Pruett '65 & '73 of Jacksonville, Aug. 27

James T. Quitta '54 of Winnfield, Louisiana, Aug. 30

Glenda E. Raines '63 of Kilgore, Aug. 5

Calvin A. Remy '70 of Fort Smith, Arkansas, July 14

Marilyn Y. Rhodes '83 of Longview, Sept. 4

Lisa G. Risner '07 of Lufkin, April 21

Dr. Frank A. Roth II '83 of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Aug. 15

Devita R. Rowlett-Allen '97 of Longview, Aug. 24

Reed L. Sibley '56 of Boerne, June 16

Mary E. Smith '78 of Baytown, May 28

Joseph H. Stone '66 of Longview, Aug. 9

Jennifer K. Stringfield '08 & '09 and SFA staff member, July 21

Estelle Stroud '81 of The Woodlands, June 9

Kenneth G. Swann '70 of Nacogdoches, July 11

Max Treadwell '51 & '52 of Jacksonville, March 11

Danna L. Turner '79 & '83 of Pollok, June 17

Helen S. Vaughn '03 of Crockett, Sept. 5

Patrick D. Welch '69 of La Grange, June 27

Betty R. Whitener '63 of Lebanon, Tennessee, Aug. 22

James B. Wilkerson '73 & '77 of Lufkin, July 21

Kathleen M. Wilkins '78 of Lufkin, July 25



SFA student

Ashley Johnson of Nacogdoches, Aug. 29

Throughout this fall semester, as I have walked to and from the Alumni Association office, I have found myself more thankful and appreciative than ever before to see our Lumberjack students back on campus. However, these walks revealed a new reality – students, faculty and staff wearing face coverings; and friends waving to each other from a distance and resisting the urge for a quick hug or even a hearty handshake. Please know our SFA leadership, faculty and staff have diligently worked to minimize the risks for all stakeholders while making our campus operations as “normal” for everyone as possible.

Your SFA Alumni Association exists to build a community. Beginning in March, this seemingly simple task took on a new level of difficulty when we were required to stay physically distant. However, our commitment to providing a platform through which students, alumni and friends may engage and demonstrate continued loyalty and support for SFA remains strong, even when world events cast a shadow over our normal routines.

Now, more than ever, your support is needed so we can continue our work to help ensure current and future Lumberjacks have ample opportunities to further their education, improve their future opportunities for success and make great memories here on our campus. Your gift can help us make a significant difference in the Lumberjack experience and keep SFA on the positive trajectory from which we have all benefited.

For your convenience, in hopes that you are able to make a pledge toward our mission, donations may be made online at www.sfaalumni.com/donations. All gifts are tax deductible and greatly appreciated. Don't forget, you can double or even triple your gift to SFA if your employer matches employees' charitable giving. Check with your personnel office, or give us a call for more information.

We sincerely hope you and yours are faring well and looking forward to a blessed holiday season. Your SFA Alumni Association will continue to strive to make the best of our current circumstances by safely engaging alumni where you are.

With deep appreciation, we thank you for your loyalty to SFA.

Axe 'em, Jacks!



Craig Turnage '00 & '05
Stephen F. Austin State University
Executive Director of Alumni Relations



TELL YOUR LUMBERJACK STORY.

Ask a fellow Lumberjack to become an SFA Alumni Association member by visiting SFAalumni.com/Join.



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