Striking a Chord with Texas Music

Sylvia Plath—The "Confessional" Poet?

Lost & Found in Virtual Reality
The New Year is again just around the corner, and I hope you and those close to you have had a happy, safe and healthy 2003.

As December draws to a close, we are reflecting on the challenges and successes we have experienced here at the college. We have been able to rise to the challenge of a significant budget shortfall, we have made progress in reducing our enrollment, and most importantly, we are seeing nearly 900 new graduates of the university make their way into the world this semester.

Again, this issue of Life & Letters will bring you up to date on some of the work our faculty and students are doing. For those of you who are Texans at heart, I think you’ll enjoy reading about the history of Texas music, including music legends from the past and present. It may even bring back some fond memories of living in the Live Music Capital of the World.

From our Department of Psychology, is an article about the Center for Perceptual Systems that is doing research using virtual reality which will assist people with severe visual impairments. Other research you’ll see is from Dr. Debra Umberson who recently published a book on the reaction of adult children upon the death of a parent, and information about a new area of study in the College, the Center for the Scientific Study of Religion.

Of course, the best thing about the College is the people, several of whom you’ll meet in these pages. Amy Chiou is the current president of our student group, the Liberal Arts Council, and a very busy young woman with studies, volunteering and work. Dr. Ian Hancock has spent much of his life working on behalf of his family and culture, the Romani. I’m sure you’ll find his story of dropping out of high school and later becoming a professor at The University of Texas at Austin a fascinating one.
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Striking a Chord
with Texas Music

Few places in the world have had the impact that Texas has had on music. From the people in the spotlight to those behind the scenes, Texas music and their fans finally have a source that links the state’s musical heritage.

The Center for Studies in Texas History, in conjunction with its non-profit counterpart the Texas State Historical Association (TSHA), has documented the stories of some of the most influential people and places in music in its new book “The Handbook of Texas Music.”

The entries in the handbook were contributed by a wide range of volunteers—musicians, teachers, musicologists, those in various jobs in the music industry and music buffs—some of whom have devoted a lifetime of study to their subject. In their collaboration they have been able to create an encyclopedia and biographical dictionary covering all aspects of Texas music with articles and more than 125 images.

“Texas has been immensely important in the development of American music,” said Dr. Roy Barkley, senior editor of the book. “The handbook brings together the stories that give rise to this claim.

“The book includes music legends that will inspire generations to come such as Stevie Ray Vaughan, Janis Joplin and Selena,” Barkley added.

“There are the stories of blues guitarist Freddy King, who was a major influence on Eric Clapton, and Dooley ‘Play it Again, Sam’ Wilson who became part of cinematic history when he sat at the piano and sang ‘As Time Goes By’ in the famous scene from ‘Casablanca.’”

“The stories of Texas musicians are important barometers of the political, social and cultural world around them,” said Dr. George B. Ward, senior co-editor. “There are stories of musicians such as Blind Lemon Jefferson. When he recorded ‘Matchbox Blues’ in the 1920s, it would have been hard to imagine that decades later the rock-and-roll pioneer Carl ‘Blue Suede Shoes’ Perkins would record a version of the song, and that in the 1960s the Beatles would do the same, inspired by the music of a blind, black entertainer from rural Texas.

Willie May “Big Mama” Thornton contributed greatly to the Texas blues tradition. Photo Courtesy “The Handbook of Texas Music.” © Jerry Hauser Blues Archive, Special Collections, University of Mississippi Libraries.
“Just like the people, there are places and events that have had a major impact on music as well,” Ward added.

One example from the handbook includes the Willie Nelson July Fourth Picnic. In 1975, 90,000 people descended upon Liberty Hill in Williamson County to hear Nelson and guests. The success of the concert prompted the Texas Senate to proclaim July 4 Willie Nelson Day. Ironically, the overcrowding problems of the previous picnics had also prompted the Texas legislature to pass the Texas Mass Gathering Act, and Williamson County officials charged Nelson with violating that law. Nelson overcame the minor setback and his picnic is now part of Texas music history and an ongoing July Fourth tradition.

Dr. Dave Oliphant, senior co-editor, recalls discovering his favorite entry in the handbook.

“It all began when a 1930’s recording of Tom Howell playing the cornet was mistakenly identified in England as the jazz legend Bix Beiderbecke,” he said. “Hearing Howell play, one can easily understand why.

“It was theorized that the jazz musician in the recording might have been a student at The University of Texas at Austin. My research took me to Cameron, Texas and eventually led me to Howell’s daughter back in Austin, who was able to share some rare photographs and materials from her father.”

Howell was born in Belton, one of five brothers, all self-taught musicians. The family moved to Cameron, and in 1921 when the four oldest boys were attending The University of Texas at Austin, he moved to Austin to attend Austin High School and joined his four siblings in the Howell Brothers Moonshiner Orchestra, which played regularly at university dances and in the Central Texas area.

It was in 1930 that the jazz recording was made by Fred Gardner’s Texas University Troubadours. Later in life, after retiring in 1968 as a special agent with the Internal Revenue Service, Howell sometimes performed in San Antonio with various River City jazz groups.

“The fact that a Texas jazzman could play on a level approaching that of the legendary Bix,” Oliphant said, “As well as the university connection really stood out to me.

“When you set out to do a project like this you don’t know what you are going to find,” Oliphant added. “It’s so unexpected and so close to home. Since the handbook was published, so many people have told me, ‘I had no idea that person was from Texas.’ The book really serves as an inspiration to each generation to build on.”

The Center for Studies in Texas History in the College of Liberal Arts and TSHA have been publishing Texas history for more than a century. Unlike historical organizations in many other states, the TSHA focuses on the actual doing of history–research, editing, publication, dissemination and education–and does not administer a museum, library or archives. Today, the association’s activities are organized into four major programs: publications, research and information services, public programs and educational services. For more information on the “Handbook of Texas Music” or any of the TSHA’s other publications visit www.tsha.utexas.edu.

--Michelle Bryant

Blind Lemon Jefferson
Dr. Christopher Ellison and Dr. Mark Regnerus are just two of the faculty members in the Center for the Scientific Study of Religion (CSSR) looking at these questions.

“We want to look at the role and influence of religion on individuals and communities, particularly in the United States,” said Ellison, director of CSSR and professor in the Department of Sociology. “A good deal of our work explores the link between religious involvement and individual outcomes like health, well-being and mortality risk. There is also work being done on aspects of marital quality, childrearing, adolescent risk-taking behavior and the parent-child relationship through adolescence and on into adulthood.”

“The CSSR is interested in how religion motivates and shapes behavior,” Regnerus said. “To the vast majority of the world’s citizens, this is taken for granted. Academics, however, are more skeptical. But the evidence remains. It is a context through which a great deal of human interaction takes place—interaction that in turn can affect lots of behavioral outcomes.”

Unlike other religion-focused academic centers across the country, the CSSR is not a humanities unit, but a social science entity. It is part of the university’s Population Research Center (PRC), making the PRC the only federally funded population center with religion, family life and health as a major thematic area.

“The CSSR is distinctive in that we have close ties to the Population Research Center,” Ellison said. “This close connection between the work the center is doing and the broader mission of the PRC is marvelous and unlike any other. The integration of the sociology of religion with research that is underway in public health and population studies gives us the potential to break new ground.”

Although the CSSR is only a little more than a year old, groundbreaking research on the influence of religion has been coming out of the university for several years. One study, published in 1999 in the journal Demography, shows that regular church attendance is associated with increased life expectancy in the U.S.

“We’ve explored the suggestion in the literature that there is a connection between religious involvement and mortality risk,” Ellison said. “We’ve been particularly interested in racial and ethnic minorities, as well as the general population. Our first study showed a fairly substantial protective effect of religious involvement—even after adjustments were made for the types of social networks people have, their social class, race and ethnicity, age and gender, and a range of behavioral predictors such as drinking, smoking and body mass. The average difference in life expectancy between those who said they attended services more than once a week and those who never attended—which are the two extreme categories—was on the order of seven to eight years for the overall
sample. This difference was even larger for African Americans.”

Other ongoing research projects include the examination of religious coping when dealing with adversity and the role of religion and spirituality in the promotion of forgiveness and the links between forgiveness and health.

Much of Regnerus’s work looks at the influence of religion on American adolescents, including sexual behavior, school performance and family relations. In looking at adolescents' relationships with their parents, he has found noteworthy difference in relationships where parents are more religious than their teenage children, and those where the teenagers are more religious.

“When parents are more religious than their adolescent kids, family relations tend to suffer,” Regnerus said. “It is clearly a source that gives rise to tension. But when kids report being more religious than their parents, it tends to boost family relations in the eyes of the child—even more so than when the parent and child are at the same religious level, whether that is low or high.”

Not all of the research results show a positive influence by religion. Ellison pointed out that negative effects can include feelings of divine abandonment, anger at God in times of adversity and crises of faith.

“While a lot of our work is turning up what seems to be salutary or beneficial implications of religious involvement for individuals and communities, that’s not our only focus,” he said. “We are taking a balanced approach. The study of religion as a social institution has to take into account that—like any social institution—there are aspects we think of as positive and aspects we think of as negative. Not everything about this picture is rosy or beneficial—we are interested in exploring both sides of it.”

Though he has come across negative influences of religion on behavior, Regnerus says it is less typical in his research.

“Generally speaking, 80 to 85 percent of the time it’s a positive effect,” he said. “Sometimes we have a null effect, and about 5 to 10 percent of the time it can be detrimental—but that is less typical.”

Some of the studies have found that the negative behavior is not necessarily from religion itself, but from the differing views of religion, particularly in family relationships.

One area that has been examined is religious matching between couples—similarity or dissimilarity of their views on religion, including attendance at houses of worship, denomination and theological beliefs.

“There are links between the degree of religious dissimilarity and the frequency and topics of arguments among couples with strong differences,” Ellison said. “They argue more often than others, and their arguments are usually centered around finances and money, and the distribution of household labor.”

Although the faculty members in the center are chiefly from the Department of Sociology, there are also affiliations with faculty and students in Asian Studies and Mexican American Studies. While research on the sociology of religion is a primary mission of the center, teaching and mentoring are also vitally important.

“We want to be a center that promotes collaborative research involving faculty, but also with graduate students and individual work as well,” Ellison said. “We place a premium on training and mentorship.”

---Robin Stanton Gerrow
Photos by Marsha Miller

Dr. Mark Regnerus

Dr. Robert Woodberry
With the October 2003 release of the movie “Sylvia” starring Gwyneth Paltrow, more people than ever will get a glimpse into the tumultuous life and work of American poet Sylvia Plath.

Dr. Judith Kroll, associate professor of English at The University of Texas at Austin, is the author of “Chapters in a Mythology: The Poetry of Sylvia Plath” (Harper & Row, 1976), the first full-length critical book on Plath’s poetry.

She first heard about Plath in 1961 while attending Smith College, Plath’s alma mater (1955). The two had a mutual professor who urged Kroll to read Plath’s first published book of poems, “The Colossus.”

“I wasn’t all that impressed,” Kroll said. “Everything seemed very well-mannered and restrained, except for the last few poems which seemed to be moving in another direction.”

In 1965, two years after Plath’s suicide at the age of thirty, her book “Ariel” was released. Kroll was then a graduate student at Yale University.

“My friends and I were knocked over by ‘Ariel,’” she said. “It was startling because Plath’s early work is separated from her late work by only a couple of years. It had a power, an openness of voice and effortless control that was electrifying in its effect.”

At this time, Kroll had already gotten a proposal on Yeats approved for her Ph.D. dissertation. She wanted to write on Plath, but was concerned that the topic would not be approved because of the critical climate surrounding Plath’s work and because it might be considered too contemporary. So she wrote another proposal, on the influence of modern poets on the ‘so-called confessional poets,’ but gradually her work began to focus solely on Plath.

“I didn’t like the term ‘con-
my interest in writing about Plath came from wanting her poetry to be taken as seriously as I thought it should be taken.

“She had the most amazing vocabulary,” she added. “I got in the habit of looking up words that I would not ordinarily look up, since I thought I already knew their meaning. Using a very elaborate etymological dictionary, I found all kinds of connections came to light that I didn’t know existed and that Plath, who habitually read a thesaurus, clearly had taken into account.”

One example was when Kroll looked up the word Medusa. She found that it was not just the Gorgon of Greek mythology, but a genus of jellyfish which was also called Aurelia—Plath’s mother’s name.

In 1974, at the request of Olwyn Hughes, sister to Ted Hughes (Plath’s estranged husband at the time of her death) and executor of Plath’s literary estate, Kroll worked in England on establishing the text for Plath’s “Collected Poems.” Ted Hughes had read Kroll’s dissertation after she had submitted it to Olwyn for purposes of copyright permissions.

Kroll discussed her dissertation with Ted Hughes, who had made about four pages of handwritten notes on it that she still has. Her current project is a long narrative about her interaction with Ted and Olwyn Hughes while working on the manuscripts for “Collected Poems.”

“Ted kept asking me how I found out that she read this, or liked that writer. He wanted to know who I had been talking to,” Kroll said. “I said I figured it out, it’s in the poems.

“Some things he wanted me to change or omit,”

she added. “Not because they were wrong, but because they were right.”

Kroll did not make the changes.

Given the notoriety of Plath’s suicide, as well as the suicide, six years later, of the woman for whom Hughes had left Plath, and the fact that he was the surviving natural parent of their two children, Hughes had avoided interviews. His stature as a poet in England seemed to allow him to command a certain silence about his relationship with Plath.

“One of Ted’s friends from his Cambridge years, when Ted met Plath, said ‘most of us didn’t like her, and not for any good reason,’” Kroll said. “Perhaps in her being American she seemed too open and exaggerated in some of her responses to things, while Ted was so Yorkshire Englishman.

“They may have had their own cherished idea of the kind of woman this particular man should be with,” she said. “It certainly wasn’t this tall blond all-around female who was on a Fulbright at Cambridge University, a top scholar who posed in bathing suits for the campus newspaper.”

Ultimately, Hughes himself helped to break much of the silence about their life together. In 1998, six months before his death from cancer, he released an immensely personal book of poetry, “Birthday Letters,” which was almost entirely about his relationship with Plath.

“Whether people are Plath admirers or detractors, it’s important to look at what a marvelous poet she was,” Kroll said. “If she wasn’t such a wonderful poet, the rest wouldn’t matter.”

—Michelle Bryant
Remember your first day on campus? Chances are you probably got lost. You may have looked around for a familiar landmark, a street sign to confirm your location, or a friendly face to point you in the right direction. Everyone has had to deal with the frustration of being lost, but eventually we find our way.

Dr. Brian Stankiewicz, assistant professor in the Department of Psychology and Center for Perceptual Systems, studies spatial navigation and object recognition at The University of Texas at Austin. His research uses virtual reality environments to help pinpoint the information and process needed to navigate through large-scale spaces such as a building or city.

“What I’m particularly interested in is what we remember and store about an environment so that when we return we are able to way-find and move to a particular destination,” Stankiewicz said. “I enjoy the overlap between psychology, computer science, and engineering this type of research allows me to do.”

A series of experiments compared the importance of visual cues such as pictures on the walls, doors and signs versus topological structures such as the way roads or hallways interconnect.

“We found that people learned the topological structure more rapidly,” Stankiewicz said. “People were better at identifying the structural landmarks.” Stankiewicz has developed human and robot models to predict human behavior in different navigational situations and to measure efficiency. He compares the humans’ ability to that of the robot model or
“ideal observer.”

The subjects become familiar with an overview of an entire virtual environment. They are then dropped in a random starting point within that virtual environment and asked to find their way to a target location. The environment is visually sparse throughout, with the only difference being the way the hallways connect.

“Humans take about twice as many actions as does the ‘ideal observer’ to complete this task,” he said.

Stankiewicz attributes this to a process called hypothesis maintenance. A hypothesis is a belief that is based off the given facts and can be tested by further investigation. When the subject enters the virtual environment they are constantly making observations. Maintenance occurs when the subject uses this new information to update their beliefs.

For example, the subject may come to a dead-end and realize that means they could be in one of three spots. They would look around them to see if there are any other indicators. Maybe only one hallway dead-ends to the left or is that particular distance. Their hypothesis maintenance would then allow them to confirm a location or rule out others. They would continue this process until they find the target.

During a second phase of the experiment, the hypothesis maintenance was provided for the subject. Arrows were displayed in the subject’s viewfinder to help them keep track of where they had been.

“When they no longer have to keep track of this information in their heads, we can get them to navigate almost optimally,” he said. “When a subject is lost, they are most likely stressed and frustrated which can make the hypothesis maintenance process even more difficult.”

Another series of experiments was motivated in an effort to develop a training regimen for low-vision navigation. Low vision means the subject can see, but their perception is greatly hindered, as a result of a variety of diseases, disorders and injuries that affect the eye. Many people with low vision have age-related macular degeneration, cataract, glaucoma or diabetic retinopathy.

According to “The Lighthouse National Survey on Vision Loss: The Experience, Attitudes, and Knowledge of Middle-Aged and Older Americans,” approximately 14 million Americans—about one out of every 20 people have low vision, and about 135 million people around the world have low vision.

“We wanted to see how well we could train people remotely before they actually reached their target destination,” he said. “Before they visit a building they could use a computer, access a corresponding virtual environment, and learn about that environment prior to the visit. Most people with low vision can navigate through familiar environments just fine, it is when they have to go to a novel environment that they may have trouble.

“Our first question was how well matched does the virtual environment have to be to the real one,” he added.

Stankiewicz’s team ran a number of conditions. One example included a low-resolution environment that was very sparse where they just put up walls—the bare minimum. The second was a high-resolution environment using detailed video footage.

“When we took the subjects to the real environment they were nearly as good after training on the low-resolution environment as they were after training in the high-resolution one,” he said.

Another piece of the low-vision training research is creating a navigation device. A map of the environment could be downloaded to a small handheld device that offers a range finding function and hypothesis maintenance. The device would allow the user to take easy point and click measurements. Once the device has the necessary information it can direct the user to their target location.

Stankiewicz’s future research topics are the differences in people’s navigational strategies and the way they acquire information.

“Once we understand the parameters of what makes someone a good or bad navigator, we can ultimately teach someone the strategies to become a more efficient navigator,” he said.

—Michelle Bryant
Photos by Marsha Miller
After immigrating to the United States from Sweden, Carrin Patman’s grandmother Maria saved her humble wages to buy platinum bar pins set with diamonds for each of her daughters—a pin that Patman would one day wear to the White House.

On Sept. 5, Patman added a new pin to her lapel. She was awarded the Swedish Royal Order of the Polar Star. His Majesty King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden is the Grand Master of the Order that recognized Patman for her outstanding contributions in Swedish Studies. She was honored at a dinner and decoration ceremony hosted by the Consul General of Sweden Olle Wästberg and Mrs. Inger Claesson Wästberg in their Beaux-Arts Mansion on Park Avenue in New York.

The Swedish Royal Order of the Polar Star dates back to 1748 to recognize great merit achieved in the civilian sphere, the sciences, for literary, learned and beneficial works, for useful institutions, and since 1975, also for outstanding achievements in industry and trade. Patman’s medal consists of a white Maltese cross set in gold, with open gold crowns in the angles between the arms of the cross. In the center is a blue medallion with a Polar Star inscribed with the legend “nescit occasum” (“it never sets”).

The date of the ceremony had added significance as it was Patman’s 50th wedding anniversary with her husband Bill. The two were treated to a beautiful serenade in celebration at the reception.

“To most Swedish Americans, Sweden is not just a place, it’s an idea,” she said. “It’s an idea, infused with our history, values, family, so I think it’s not surprising that we want to kept that idea alive and vibrant.”

Patman has worked to establish the Swedish Studies Excellence Endowment in the College of Liberal Arts at The University of Texas at Austin. The endowment has supported scholarships and fellowships, symposia, study abroad opportunities, lecturers, as well as cultural exhibits and performances. Pledges and gifts to the endowment now total more than $1 million.

“Every success that I’ve ever had has been a team effort,” she said. “It belongs to all of the people that have given their time, their money, and above all kept their faith that we could do it.

“The best advice my life’s experience can offer is persistence,” Patman added. “Whether it’s been political battles or challenges like fundraising it is important to either overcome or outlast the resistance. That has always made the difference in my success.”

She is an honors graduate from the university in English and philosophy (1954). It was during her time at the university that she met her husband at Barton Springs Pool.

The two embarked on a long journey into political life. Bill Patman served as a Texas state senator and U.S. congressman for 25 years, with his wife managing his 18 campaigns and working as a volunteer staffer. She served almost two decades in an elective position on the State Democratic Executive Committee and for four years as the Democratic National Committeewoman from Texas, serving on numerous national and state committees on party rules.

“I found my work in party reform and party rules...
Ian Hancock is not a gypsy. He is a Romani. The difference in nomenclature is so important that Hancock, a professor of English, linguistics and Asian studies at The University of Texas at Austin since 1972, has devoted most of his adult life to dispelling ignorance about the ethnic group into which he was born.

“Most people don’t know that appending the name ‘gypsy’ to my people is both wrong and pejorative,” said Hancock, the official ambassador to the United Nations and UNICEF for the world’s 15 million Romanies and the only Romani to have been appointed to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council. “‘Gypsy’ is simply a shortened form of Egyptian—that’s what many outsiders thought Romanies were. Using a little ‘g’ in ‘gypsy’ also compounds the problem because that indicates that as a common noun it’s a lifestyle choice and not that we’re an actual ethnic group.

“Most people don’t even have a minimal education about Romanies. They don’t know that 70 percent of the Romani population of Nazi-occupied Europe were murdered during the Holocaust. Or that we’re the largest ethnic minority in Europe but have no political strength, military strength, economic strength or a territory. Or, for that matter, that there are over one million Romani Americans.”

Educating the public about Romani history and culture has been a colossal task for Hancock because most individuals do, unfortunately, have a graphic mental image of the “typical gypsy,” but they have formed their ideas from all the wrong information.

According to Hancock, most people are only familiar with the surfeit of romantic fairytale myths that surround the diverse collection of individuals erroneously termed “gypsies.”

Novels, poems, plays, films and songs over the past several centuries have portrayed “gypsies” as free-spirited, promiscuous, indigent criminals who dance around campfires and are fortunetellers, thieves and liars. “Gypsies” are carefree and enjoy an almost childlike innocence and release from duty. “Gypsies” practice witchcraft, steal babies in the dead of night and are filthy and unkempt, so the stories say.

“This ridiculous fictional image has taken on a life of its own,” said Hancock.

“The cliché description of Romanies is so deeply rooted that it may never totally be eradicated. There are countless representations in films and books of Italians as Mafia members, but no one actually believes that all Italians are Mafia members. That is not true for my people.”

Although fictional accounts of Romanies have left the non-Romani population with almost no accurate information about the traditions and culture of that ethnic group, the history of the Romanies also has contributed to centuries of misunderstanding and suspicion.
Family Loss

Sociologist examines the reaction of adult children upon the death of a parent

The death of the parent has a much more profound and far-reaching impact on adult children than most people believe, according to new research by a sociologist at The University of Texas at Austin.

Dr. Debra Umberson, professor and chair of Sociology in the College of Liberal Arts at the university, interviewed more than 3,600 adults at two points in time over a three-year period. More than 200 of these individuals experienced the death of a parent in that time, allowing her to make comparisons of them before and after the death, and compare them to counterparts who had not lost a parent. Her findings, as well as numerous anecdotal stories, have just been published in a new book, “Death of a Parent: Transition to a New Adult Identity.”

“On average, adults who lose a parent experience increased risk for depression, they begin to drink more and they experience a decline in health,” Umberson said. “Some relationships tend to suffer from the loss while other types of relationships tend to improve. Perhaps most striking is the remarkable change that adults experience in their sense of self. The time following a parent’s death is a time of tremendous upheaval and change in the way we think about who we are and what we want to accomplish in life.”

In her research, Umberson found that some adults benefit following the death of a parent and experience a sense of relief.

“Some adults actually experience improved emotional and psychological well-being following a parent’s death,” she said. “This is most likely to happen to those adults who grew up with an extremely critical parent. These adults often feel a sense of liberation and relief in their newfound ability to live life without constant criticism and disapproval.

“In addition, while sons who grew up with a father with mental health or alcohol problems tend to exhibit more symptoms like their fathers, daughters who grew up with dysfunctional fathers are much...
If Amy Chiou could have one superpower it would probably be the ability to add more time in a day.

“There is a Chinese proverb that my mother always says,” said Chiou. “Those who have money give money, those who have time give time, and those who have both give both.”

Chiou, a Plano native, has taken this wisdom to heart. She is a senior government major who has dedicated herself to volunteerism, leadership and work. As president of Liberal Arts Council, she has the daunting task of uniting the largest college on campus, which represents students from 46 different majors. As part of her presidential duty, she serves on the university’s Senate of College Council, where she is involved in the creation of academic policies, a student bill of rights and honor code.

“Last year, the Liberal Arts Council formed a departmental representative committee in an effort to reach all liberal arts students,” Chiou said. “We are building off that momentum. For the first time, all of the committee positions were filled and monthly departmental reports are now being posted online.”

During Liberal Arts Week, the council competed against the other college councils in an event that raised more than $800 for The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) with $400 of that total coming from the Liberal Arts Council.

Another first under Chiou’s leadership included the “Parents, Professors and Pasta” event during Parents’ Day Weekend. The event boasted 300 participants, giving parents an opportunity to speak with professors and students about the college experience in informal roundtable discussions.

“I think a lot of the parents just wanted to know what students were doing–what we were doing at school, what we were involved in–those types of things,” she said. “It was also a good opportunity for students to speak with professors outside of the classroom–they have so much to share just in conversation. I was paired with a Spanish professor, so the importance of language was one of the discussion topics. “It never really sunk in what the language requirement would mean to me personally until Mexico’s President Vicente Fox came to speak on campus,” she added. “He spoke completely in Spanish and I could understand everything he said. I was completely surprised.”

Chiou attended the event as a member of the Orange Jackets, a student service
The ancestors of Romanies originated in India 1,000 years ago, then moved west in response to the spread of Islam, arriving in Europe around 1300. They eventually ended up in every European country and also in North and South America.

"From the beginning, Europeans were aware of the presence of the Romanies and viewed us as a foreign, undesirable population—like the Jews, we were the quintessential outsiders," Hancock said. "Romanies were non-Christian and associated with the Islamic threat, were non-white and were on the margins of society. A large part of the problem has been a separation that occurred because of both internal and external factors. There were and still are laws imposed to keep Romanies segregated, and there are internal forces in the Romani culture that keep us from mingling and getting too close to people outside our group or society."

Because of their cultural habits and lifestyle choices, Romanies continue to be a target for harassment, misunderstanding and discrimination. In May 2001, The Economist stated that Romanies in Europe were at the bottom of every socioeconomic indicator: the least educated, the poorest, the most unemployed, the shortest-lived, the most imprisoned, the most welfare-dependent and the most segregated. The results of a public opinion poll conducted over a 25-year period and published in the New York Times in 1992 indicated that Romanies were ranked last out of 58 different American ethnic and religious minorities.

"An American can best understand the discrimination that Romanies experience in Europe, for example, by looking at how African Americans have been treated in the recent past here in the U.S.,” said Roy Mersky, Harry M. Reasoner Regents Chair in Law and board member for the United Romani Educational Foundation Inc., of which Hancock is chairman. "In Europe, Romanies can’t even enter some towns. It’s against the law."

Although Hancock has been a teacher and had an intellectual interest in the language and history of the Romanies for decades, perhaps his greater contribution to education has been outside the classroom and more due to intensely personal experiences than to a dispassionately curious and active mind.

Hancock was born in Britain of both British Romani and Hungarian Romani descent and was raised according to Romani traditions and mores. He experienced firsthand the prejudice, discrimination and alienation that so many centuries of Romanies before him had endured.

"I dropped out of high school in the 9th grade to go to work. That was very common," he said. "No one in my family could read or write and none of them had gone to school. I did realize that we were different. You couldn’t NOT realize that. As a child, I wondered about relatives who were frequently evicted and treated badly by the law. When I was young I just accepted the fact that that was what white people did to people like us, that there’s this seemingly bottomless human desire for a scapegoat and that we were the scapegoats."

A fatalist might advance that Hancock was destined to be a preeminent international spokesperson, advocate, scholar and leader for his ethnic group. It was written in the stars. His roles as academic and activist certainly hinged upon chance and unexpected circumstances that removed him from a life typical of many Romanies, one of poverty and nonexistent avenues for advancement or redress in the face of wrongs.

While working at one of many menial jobs as a teenager, Hancock met some workers from Sierra Leone who were living in West London and befriended them. Exhibiting a surprising fascination and facility with linguistics at an early age, he began to learn their language and collect material on them and their backgrounds. Word of the precocious 9th grade dropout spread and reached London University, and soon Hancock was being courted to enter the doctoral program at the university as part of Prime Minister Harold Wilson’s fledgling experiment with affirmative action. He embraced the opportunity, although such a move set him apart from his Romani peers.

At London University, Hancock became the first Romani in Britain to receive a Ph.D., and, in addition to beginning a career path he would follow for several decades, also found his voice as an activist.

"I can remember the precise incident that started my activist involvement," Hancock said. "It had a profound effect on me that’s lasted to this day."
mid 1960s while I was at the university, there was a significant increase in police violence against Roma-nies.

“During that time there was one particular story that managed to find a small spot in the news—a Ro-man family had been pulled over to the side of the road by the police, and the husband refused to move the trailer they were in when the police told him to. He informed the policeman that his wife had gone into labor and that it was impossible to move her. The police brought in a bulldozer and started rocking and jarring the trailer. A kerosene lamp inside fell and the trailer went up in flames, the wife miscarried and her two children died in the ensuing blaze.”

After reading about the tragedy, Hancock con-tacted a Romani organization in London and for the first time met other individuals who felt the same concern, indignation and desire for change that he felt.

Since his London University days, Hancock has used his somewhat unique position as a Romani-born, university-educated scholar to speak for an oppressed population that has traditionally had no voice or representation, to preserve information about Romani customs and history and to fight for Romani political and civil rights.

Among his numerous accolades, Hancock was the 1998 recipient of the Gamaliel Chair in Peace and Justice from the University of Wisconsin and the 1997 winner of Norway’s prestigious Rafto Inter-national Human Rights Prize, in addition to being named for an honorary doctorate by Umeå University in Sweden. West Chester University in Pennsylvania is in the process of creating the Ian Hancock Gradu-ate Fellowship in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, and former President Bill Clinton appointed Hancock to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

Hancock is responsible for the first Romani pro-gram of university studies, which he initiated at The University of Texas at Austin, and is credited with the university’s distinction as the leading U.S. center for studies of Romani history, language and culture.

Known internationally for his work on Creole lan-guages, Hancock is author of nearly 400 articles and books, including “The Pariah Syndrome: An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution,” ”A Handbook of Vlax Romani” and, most recently, “We Are the Romani People.”

He has organized and maintains at The University of Texas at Austin the Romani Archives and Docu-mentation Center (RADOC), the largest collection of Romani materials in the world, with more than 25,000 books, monographs, bound articles, prints, transparencies, photos, audio- and video-recorded me-dia items. The center also contains reports from international human rights groups, including Helsinki Watch, a division of Human Rights Watch, that docu-ments rising violence against Romanies and the continuing problem of discrimi-nation in employ-ment and social services. In Europe, rapes, murders and assaults on Romanies by skinheads and Neo-Nazi street gangs have greatly increased over the past decade. According to Han-cock, the incidents usually go uncovered by the press.

Since the fall of Communism in Europe, ethnic minor-ities in areas such as Bosnia, Slovakia and Romani-a have suffered attacks and destruction of property as various ethnic populations have asserted, in a bloody and violent manner, their right to a territory. They have attempted to drive out the Romanies who, unfortunately, have no territory to which they may return—no “original lands” in Europe.

“Unlike the Jews, the fate of the Romanies in Eu-rpe has not improved,” said Dr. Stephen Feinstein, director of the Center for Ho-locaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Minnesota.

“In fact, one can argue that it has gotten worse, especially in the Czech Republic. So voices like Hancock’s are needed in both the struggle for memory as well as for human rights.”

With this most current at-tempt to destroy the Romanies tragically resembling their treatment by the Nazis during the Holocaust, it is ironic that Nazi riches may hold the key to economic assistance for Europe’s Romanies.

For 50 years, Swiss banks secretly retained the assets of Holocaust victims, as well as deposits of Nazi gold and war loot worth billions of today’s dollars. This included valu-ables stolen by the Nazis from Romanies who were sent to the death camps.

According to Hancock, Romanies carried their wealth with them in the form of jewelry, gold coins, gems,

Romanticized, fictional representations of “gypsies” leave the general public with little accurate information about Romanies.
Researcher receives $3.2 million to track alcohol usage in college students

A researcher in the College of Liberal Arts at The University of Texas at Austin has received a $3.2 million research grant to track the alcohol use and associated behavioral risks of students transitioning from high school through their college years. The grant was awarded to Dr. Kim Fromme, associate professor of clinical psychology, by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism and will be used over the next five years.

“Developmental trajectories of alcohol use and abuse have been identified across the college years, but little is known about the behavioral risks such as risky sex and aggression associated with collegiate drinking,” Fromme said. “Identification of the factors that increase or decrease these types of behaviors during college will have significant implications for the types of university policies and prevention programs that are likely to be successful.”

“The UT Experience!” study will examine the association among traits, backgrounds, individual and environmental factors, alcohol use and behavior risks. Over the next four years, about 5,200 participants from the university, beginning with the freshman class for the fall of 2004, will complete Web-based surveys and self-monitoring at different frequencies within the sample. The behavioral outcomes assessed for participants include academic, alcohol use, and behavioral risks such as risky sex, aggression, sexual assault, illicit drug use, reckless driving and driving after drinking alcohol.

Laboratory assessments will also be used to assess potential differences in cognitive functions and behavioral inhibition among a representative sub-sample that transition into or out of large-effect drinking patterns.

Fromme will work with co-investigator Dr. William Corbin from the department of psychology at Yale University.

Cultural study centers awarded federal grants exceeding $6 million

Four cultural study areas in the College of Liberal Arts at The University of Texas at Austin have received grants totaling more than $6.7 million from the United States Department of Education under Title VI, to be used over the next three years. The four federally funded programs include the Center for Asian Studies, the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and the Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies. The centers promote the study of these world regions at the university level as well as in communities and K-12 classrooms. Each area of study received funds designating them a National Resource Center (NRC), as well as funds for Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships.

“In today’s political and economic climate, the increase in this funding is especially important,” said Dr. Richard Lariviere, dean of the college.

In Memoriam

Geography professor Terry Jordan died Oct. 16 of pancreatic cancer. He was 65. A native Texan, Jordan spent most of his professional career researching, writing and teaching about Texas and the West. In 1982, Jordan became Walter Webb Prescott Webb professor of History and Ideas in the Geography department at The University of Texas at Austin. Prior to that he spent 13 years as chair of the geography department of North Texas at Denton. Among his many accomplishments Jordan completed field research in 65 countries, was one of the most published and cited cultural geographers of his generation, he received numerous professional and teaching awards, and served as president of the Association of American Geographers. Jordan is survived by his wife, Bella; his children, Tina, Sonya, and Eric; former wife and mother of his children, Marlis Anderson Jordan; his granddaughters, Madeleine, Anna Belle, and Olivia; and his sister, Janice Shefelman.
“It will allow us to continue teaching our students about vital aspects of these world regions including government, religion, history and culture.”

As an NRC, the centers provide significant outreach services to public schools and the community through Hemispheres, the international areas studies outreach consortium at the university. As a result of this funding, Hemispheres will continue to work with Texas schools and civic organizations offering speakers, teacher workshops and seminars, and assisting businesses and media needing country-specific information and specialists.

Parents’ Association presents annual awards to students

Students Brian Haley and Corinna Kester received the Outstanding Student Award presented the weekend of Oct. 31-Nov. 1 by The University of Texas at Austin Parents’ Association during the university’s annual Parents’ Weekend activities.

The Outstanding Student Award recognizes students who symbolize the hundreds of outstanding student leaders on the university’s campus. Haley, a senior majoring in government and Chinese, is president of the university’s student government and is a Texas Cowboy. He is the son of Bob Haley of Pilot Point and Barbara Haley of Corinth. Kester is a senior majoring in chemical engineering and Plan II. She is a Truman Scholar and two-time recipient of the Morris K. Udall Scholarship. Kester is the daughter of Marsha and Jerry Newcomb of Vail, Ariz.

The Parents’ Association also presented the Award of Distinction to Dr. Larry R. Faulkner, president of the university, for his distinguished contributions and dedicated service to the university.

For the past six years, the Parents’ Association has presented merit awards to outstanding staff members in the university’s Division of Student Affairs. This $1,000 award recognizes student affairs professionals who demonstrate exceptional commitment to the welfare of the students. This year, the award was presented to Glen Baumgart, a program coordinator in the Volunteer and Service Learning Center; Margie Garcia, a building attendant in the Division of Housing and Food Services; Jeffery Latimer, a physician in University Health Services; Chuck Roper, a health education coordinator in University Health Services; and Rachel Zierzow, a learning specialist in the university’s Learning Center.

Class Notes

Sharon Hudgins (Arts & Sciences, 1968; Communications, 1975) is the author of a new book, “The Other Side of Russia: A Slice of Life in Siberia and the Russian Far East,” (Texas A&M University Press, 2003). Hudgins was one of the first American women to live and work in the far eastern part of Russia during the early period after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Her book is a memoir of daily life in Asian Russia, including her experiences as a professor at two Russian universities.

Jeffrey K. Fleishmann (Economics, 1991) of Memphis, Tenn., has joined Wyatt, Tarrant & Combs, LLP as an associate. It is a regional law firm with more than 200 attorneys located in seven offices throughout Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana. He concentrates his practice in the area of commercial litigation.

George Lederer (Plan II, 1969) was elected to the Downtown Houston Association Board of Directors. He has been a trial attorney for 30 years, and is a shareholder with Crain, Caton & James, a downtown Houston-based law firm.

Clyde Lehmann (English and Education, 1988; MA Latin, 1993), a Latin teacher at Health Careers High School in San Antonio, has won one of this year’s 100 National Educator Awards, a $25,000 award from the Milken Family Foundation.

Sam Mendales (American Studies, 1975) was awarded an honorary Doctor of Jewish Communal Service degree by the Hebrew Union College in New York. He is the Executive Director of Hillel Council of New England.

Carole Keeton Strayhorn (Government Honors, 1961) was awarded a 2003 Distinguished Alumnus Award for her professional achievements and service to the university. She is the comptroller of the State of Texas and was the first female elected mayor of Austin and first female member of the Texas Railroad Commission.
Umberson continued from page 13

more likely to experience the sort of relief effect that is characterized by improved mental health.”

Umberson’s research also shows that adults react somewhat differently to the death of a mother versus that of a father.

“They are more likely to experience symptoms of emotional or psychological distress following a mother’s death yet adults are more likely to increase their alcohol consumptions following a father’s death,” Umberson said. “A decline in physical health, though, is equally likely following a mother’s or a father’s death.”

Although adults’ health is likely to decline in the short term following a parent’s death, the long-term outlook on their physical health is much more positive.

“In the first three years following the loss, overall physical health declines more for those who lose a parent than those who did not lose a parent,” she said. “But, when we look at those same people eight years after the loss, we see that those adults who lost a parent actually exhibit improved health compared to those who did not lose a parent. The loss can sharpen their own sense of mortality. In response, many adults make important changes in their health habits that can have a long-term positive effect on health. For example, an adult who has a fear of heart disease may begin to exercise and lose weight—health habits that are good for their long-term health.”

Other areas examined in Umberson’s research include the change in relationships with spouses and siblings after the loss of a parent, how adults react to the death of the second parent and how adults deal with their own children after the death of a parent.

Patman continued from page 11

very rewarding,” Patman said. “We began to see doors open to people who had previously found them closed.”

She led the way in instituting the reforms that led to broader participation of women and minorities in party politics and was instrumental in the adoption by both the Democratic and Republican parties of their first written and publicized party rules.

Patman also recalls a very special occasion while attending a State dinner at the White House when she had the opportunity to wear the platinum and diamond pin from her grandmother.

“My grandmother had a baby only three days after arriving to this country,” she said. “Her story is a moving testimonial to the typical strength and optimism of not only Swedish immigrants, but all immigrants. She believed in the limitless opportunities this country has to offer. I think she would have been very pleased to see her granddaughter dining in style at our nation’s capital.”

In 1984, the Patmans exited political life and began a new chapter in their lives.

“We spent 25 years in the maelstrom of political life and then all of sudden that wasn’t our life anymore,” she said. “I needed a new challenge.”

It was at this time that Patman discovered aerobics. She has trained at Cooper’s Institute for Aerobics in Dallas and has been teaching four to five classes a week to seniors ever since.

“I am really inspired by a quote by Dr. Kenneth Cooper,” she said. “ ‘Isn’t it good to know that we can grow healthier as we grow older.’ I feel healthier and stronger than ever—and ready to keep working to strengthen the links between Sweden and my university.”

--Michelle Bryant

Patman continued from page 11

Now is the time to mark your calendars for the 5th annual Explore UT! The Biggest Open House in Texas is scheduled for 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., March 6, 2004, and will showcase hands-on activities for all Texans.

Some of the activities from the College of Liberal Arts include:

• From the Taliban to Aga Khan: Islam in Central Asia
• On the Track of Prehistoric Humans
• Origins of the Vampire
• Medieval Children’s Crafts
• Seuss Sayers
• Henna Hand Painting
• X-treme Trivia

This free event is a chance for explorers of all ages to see the treasures the university has to offer! Information booths around campus will supply explorers with maps, schedules and passports. Stamps collected in the passport at each activity can be traded in for a free T-shirt at the University Co-op.

A full list of events will be available in January at www.utexas.edu/events/exploreut. For more information, call the Office of Relationship Management and University Events at 512-471-7753.

--Robin Stanton Gerrow
Liberal Arts alumnus receives 2003 Nobel Prize in Literature

J.M. Coetzee, author of “Waiting for the Barbarians” and “Life and Times of Michael K,” was awarded the 2003 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Coetzee, who received his Ph.D. in English from The University of Texas at Austin, sets most of his literary work in his native South Africa. The Swedish Academy in Stockholm described his books as being “characterized by their well-crafted composition, pregnant dialogue and analytical brilliance. But at the same time he is a scrupulous doubter, ruthless in his criticism of the cruel rationalism and cosmetic morality of western civilization.”

He was recognized in 2001 by the university’s Graduate School with the Outstanding Alumnus Award.

“Both the state of Texas and The University of Texas were welcoming and generous to me from the moment I arrived there in 1965,” Coetzee said in the November/December 2001 issue of The Alcalde magazine. "I learned a great deal during my time as a student, as well as during my two subsequent academic visits. It is a source of much satisfaction to me to have kept up the connection with UT to the present day.”

Dr. Tom Cable, of the Department of English, was a fellow graduate student with Coetzee at the university.

“He was always very smart and an excellent writer, even as a grad student,” Cable said. “I’m probably the first person to have taught his work in a classroom. In 1967 or 68 he wrote a letter to the Daily Texan about the Vietnam war—it was so subtly ironic I thought he was worth teaching even then.”

Coetzee returned to the university in 1995 as a visiting professor, and later participated in literary readings as well.

“A number of his students have gone on to have a great deal of success,” said James Magnuson, director of the James A. Michener Center for Writers at the university. “He was very generous with all his students, very precise and thorough in his comments. The students were in awe of him—as, frankly, was I. He is a person of great integrity, someone you know will always come through on his promises.”

Coetzee was the first writer to win the prestigious Booker Prize twice, first for “Life and Times of Michael K” in 1983 and again in 1999 for “Disgrace.” His other novels include “The Master of Petersburg,” “Age of Iron,” and “Foe.”

“There is a great wealth of variety on Coetzee’s works,” according to the Swedish Academy. “No two books ever follow the same recipe. Extensive reading reveals a recurring pattern, the downward spiraling journeys he considers necessary for the salvation of his characters. His protagonists are overwhelmed by the urge to sink but paradoxically derive strength from being stripped of all external dignity.”

“In the mid-1960s when we were studying Old English grammar with Ruth Lehmann and theoretical phonology with Archibald Hill, I think we believed that these obscure subjects might somehow connect to more timely events,” Cable said. “Coetzee has always been brilliant at making connections. It’s not explicit, but his graduate linguistic studies are clearly a part of his intellectual background.”

Chiou continued from page 14

organization. As an Orange Jacket, Chiou volunteers almost every Friday at the Settlement Home, a residential treatment center and foster care facility for children in Austin, and participates in a yearly benefit that raises money for the home.

She is also founder of a new organization called the Texas Belles, an event planning organization established to give students real-world experience and access to experts in the field. Its first year, the organization quickly grew to 60 members.

“There is a huge demand for this and very little career guidance,” said Chiou. “There is a hospitality industry, event planning, corporate relations, public relations, wedding planning—all of those industries need people with particular skills and that know the vocabulary. We work as volunteers to gain that experience and several of our members serve as event planning chairs and social chairs of other organizations because they have that knowledge.”

Another passion in Chiou’s life is government. She is particularly interested in the characteristics of a good leader and campaign strategies. She will serve as a campaign manager for the upcoming student government elections.

“Our campaigns are pretty close to the real thing, and that is only possible at a university of our size,” she said. “Next year is going to be such a politically awake time on campus with primaries and student body elections. We’re really having to think of new ways to reach students, because they are growing numb to flyers being handed out on the West Mall.”

On top of all these activities, Chiou has worked at Michael’s Arts and Crafts since she was 16 years old.

“The hardest thing for me is the lack of time because there is so much here that I want to do,” she said.

--Michelle Bryant
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---Kay Randall
Art courtesy Dr. Ian Hancock
Why do you think the Shakespeare at Winedale program is important?

I fell in love with the enthusiasm of James Loehlin, Jim Ayres and the students involved in the Shakespeare at Winedale program. There are so many reasons why I feel the program is important. There is an incredible sense of history and the wonderful language. Shakespeare by far is the most wonderful playwright. I think the experience has proven to be a special time in the students' lives when they get to spend the summer working together—which is why they come back year after year.

Do you have a favorite performance from Shakespeare at Winedale?

It is really hard to choose. The first performance I saw was "Romeo and Juliet." It was so perfect because it is about young people and is performed by young people. The same is true for "Henry V." I'm sure this year there will be a new favorite.

What are your hopes for the Shakespeare at Winedale Excellence Endowment?

I want to see the program continue to grow and give students this special opportunity. It is a jewel that more people need to get involved in and continue to support.

Tell us about your experience as the “Midsummer Night at Winedale” gala auction chair.

The “Midsummer Night at Winedale” gala is a fundraiser for which I’ve been auction chair for the past three years. It is a little bit different from what you would expect a gala to be. My husband came up with the idea of cutting out a wooden longhorn and having the kids from the summer program paint it. It is about three-quarters of a life size longhorn. For the past two years, Virginia Elverson and Dean Richard Lariviere have gotten into a bidding war for the longhorn. Virginia has been victorious both years, but it is all in good fun.
James Roach Endowed Fund in American Foreign Relations

Dr. James Roach, professor emeritus in the Department of Government, has had a profound impact on the lives of countless students. In return, a number of his former students have begun the James Roach Endowed Fund in American Foreign Relations to support undergraduate students in the area of American foreign relations with an emphasis in Southeast Asia.

To contribute to this endowed fund, contact Clare Hudspeth at chudspeth@mail.utexas.edu or 512-471-8861.