LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thomas Edison once said, “There’s a better way to do it—find it.” No matter how far innovation and technology may take us, Edison’s words will always remain true. Every great breakthrough is just waiting for a brilliant, inquiring mind to take it even further.

This sentiment was personified in Fred Pirkle, an SHSU alumnus and inventor whose $25 million gift is changing the landscape of our campus and the futures of our students. If you haven’t seen it yet, the Fred Pirkle Engineering Technology Center is an astonishing, four-level learning environment loaded with cutting edge labs and equipment. Pirkle’s vision was to “inspire the mind,” and he certainly accomplished it.

Nearing completion, the center has also opened new doors to academic program innovations. Quanta Services and the Department of Agricultural Sciences and Engineering Technology have entered into a multi-million-dollar partnership that combines hands-on experience with core engineering technology courses in a very unique and meaningful way.

There is a rich history of innovation at Sam Houston State University and, as evidenced by the pages of this edition of the Heritage, that spirit is being carried forward by our students and alumni. From life-saving medical solutions to fan favorites like the foam finger, Bearkat ingenuity helps change the world.

At SHSU, we seek opportunities to “make things happen.”

Dana G. Hoyt
President
Suffering from Lou Gehrig’s disease, alumnus Fred Pirkle realized his days of inventing and problem solving would be coming to an end. In 2011, he made a $25 million commitment to Sam Houston State University, to date, SHSU's largest donation from a single alumnus. His gift is now changing the lives of students and faculty and transforming the science and engineering technology programs at SHSU.

Pirkle’s vision was to “inspire the mind and get the mind thinking beyond what’s expected,” said Stanley Kelley, chair of the Department of Agricultural Sciences and Engineering Technology. His legacy is accomplishing that mission by providing scholarships for engineering technology students, supporting faculty enrichment and building a state-of-the-art academic building where science, agriculture, and engineering technology converge, forever changing the landscape of SHSU and paving a future of greater possibilities for SHSU graduates.

'Engineering' a College

Pirkle’s pledge played a part in the decision to change the name of SHSU’s College of Sciences to the College of Science and Engineering Technology.

“We decided to rename the college to recognize the investment in the engineering technology program from our alumni and corporate sponsors and as a branding exercise,” said John Pascarella, dean of the college.

“Without ‘engineering technology’ in our name, our college often wasn’t showing up in Apply Texas, the system that students use when choosing majors and applying for college enrollment in Texas,” Pascarella believes the college’s new name and the completion of the Fred Pirkle Engineering Technology Center will generate deserved attention and make SHSU a top choice for engineering technology students in Texas.

A Center Like No Other

When Pirkle decided $10 million of his gift would be used to provide a new learning facility at SHSU, Kelley made a trip to Pirkle’s Warminster, Pennsylvania, home to visit with him about the design and functionality of the new building. Having met Pirkle only once before—when Pirkle made his first trip back to SHSU after 35 years to celebrate the Centennial Anniversary of the Department of Agricultural and Industrial Sciences in 2009—Kelley did not know what to expect; the once-vibrant inventor was now wheelchair bound and growing weak.

“What was remarkable to me was not only his positive attitude but that his mind was still working and he was still trying to develop new patents,” Kelley said.

During that two-day visit, Pirkle and Kelley defined a vision that would lead to the construction of a building like no other at SHSU. The technology-based, four-level learning environment will consist of an innovations lab, electronics and robotics labs; a design and development lab; and an alternative energy/sustainability lab equipped with a wind tunnel.

“Students will be able to take solar panels and wind turbines to the patio and
FAX# 215-674-8594

outdoors, where they are able to connect with the local community and showcase their skills. 

The Vocational Agriculture Club is organized.

100 acres is changed to Industrial Arts.

Land and structures adjacent to campus—the site of the current Sam Houston Memorial Museum—are used by the Agriculture Department to teach vegetable production and modern agriculture practices.

The Agriculture Department sponsors the first State Leadership Contest for the Texas Association of Future Farmers of America.

In 1938 the Horticulture Center is established. As of 2016, the center remains at its original site.

The making of a guru

Pirkle grew up in the Texas Hill Country and graduated high school in 1964. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in industrial arts in 1970 from SHSU and a master’s degree in industrial technology in 1974. He moved to Pennsylvania in 1979 and started Therm-Omega-Tech, Inc., in 1982. His company provides a number of products to railroad companies and pharmaceutical firms. He received patents on at least 20 inventions, several of which will be featured in the museum.

One invention on display will be the GURU Valve, which became the North American standard for locomotive freeze protection. The GURU Valve senses the temperature of the engine’s cooling system and trips open to drain before the coolant freezes and causes damage. Visitors will also get a firsthand look at his BBQ GURU P’timtender, an automated fan for barbecue smokers that can control, or stoke, a fire.

People who knew Pirkle say he may have loved barbecuing as much as inventing.

If you never had the opportunity to meet him,” you are going to walk away and know who Fred Pirkle was,” Kelley said.

Enriching educational standards

Fred Pirkle’s 1982 donation to SHSU marked the beginning of a broader philanthropic effort. It inspired the creation of the Pirkle Scholarship Fund with $10 million of his donation.

Among students receiving scholarships for the 2015-2016 academic year were Melissa Spencer, who earned a degree in engineering technology, with an emphasis on safety management, in May, and Shadai Turner, who will graduate in December with a degree in engineering technology design and development.

"Receiving this scholarship meant that I could finish college; it really helped me out financially," Spencer said. "In my

The building itself will be a work of “living art.”

advanced than we are in industry," Kelley said. "We can have these students more prepared and ready. It will help me as a department chair attract exceptional faculty who are excelling in whatever area we are focusing on—maybe it’s electronics, maybe it’s construction management."

“There is a wide range of things this money could be used for,” Pascarella said. "It could be used to supplement faculty during the summer, to help with research projects and to assist with equipment needs.”

Paying it Forward

Undergraduate and graduate students studying engineering technology also are benefiting financially from Pirkle’s commitment to SHSU.

The alumnum funded The Frederick L. Pirkle Scholarship Fund with $10 million of his donation.

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"Receiving this scholarship meant that I could finish college; it really helped me out financially," Spencer said. "In my
classes, we had been learning about Mr. Pirkle. It made me feel special to receive the scholarship, knowing what he stood for and who he was."

In one of her classes, Spencer also had the opportunity to review the blueprints of The Fred Pirkle Technology Center. "I was really fascinated by all of the new things going into it," she said. "People who are interested in the field, I think, will be drawn to Sam Houston. They will say 'there are new things happening at Sam Houston and that's a place I want to be.'"

Spencer now is working in the industry and hopes to further her career in the safety department of a large-scale construction company.

Turner, who graduates this semester, is hoping to start her career in residential design. Receiving the Pirkle Scholarship, she said, made it much easier for her to focus on her studies rather than how to pay for college.

"It meant a great deal, as my family does not have the financial means to pay for college. I am very grateful that he started this scholarship, as it has opened a lot of doors for me," Turner said. "I am sorry I did not get to meet Mr. Fred Pirkle, and I am honored that I was chosen to be a recipient of his scholarship."

Looking into the Future

Sam Houston State University continues to promote growth within the College of Science and Engineering Technology with the construction of a new biology laboratory building and plans to expand Gibbs Ranch. Construction began on the biology laboratory building, which will be located south of Bowers Boulevard, between Avenues I and J, in June.

"It will relieve space limitations on many freshman labs, particularly human anatomy and physiology and pre-nursing micro-biology, and will provide dedicated research labs for faculty. We currently lack capacity in these classes and cannot hire faculty due to lack of research space," Pascarella said.

SHSU is using Tuition Revenue Bonds and system bonds to build the biology laboratory building, but funding is needed to fulfill plans for Gibbs Ranch.

The design plans include building an equine academic center and multi-purpose indoor arena, plant science labs, and meat science labs.

"Current facilities are outdated and need extensive deferred maintenance, so the new buildings will enhance teaching and research efforts," Pascarella said. "This will allow the I-45 Agricultural Center to relocate and allow other uses for that site."

While Kelley will oversee future progress at Gibbs Ranch, today, he is anxiously awaiting the grand opening of the cutting-edge Fred Pirkle Engineering Technology Center.

The building will serve as a reminder to students of how someone can "make it happen" when they think "beyond what's expected" and will show the country that SHSU is leading education in science and engineering technology.

"I have taken such an emotional role in trying to make certain his (Pirkle's) wishes were fulfilled in the building," Kelley said. "I think he would be speechless. I hope he would say that this is exactly what he wanted."

Biology Laboratory Building

"I have taken such an emotional role in trying to make certain Pirkle's wishes were fulfilled in the building. I think he would be speechless. I hope he would say that this is exactly what he wanted."
GERAL FAUSS—
GIVING US THE (FOAM) FINGER

Standing in a crowded, roaring stadium, you watch two teams collide—in one hand, your favorite beverage, and on the other, a commemorative foam finger. The brainchild of 1969 and 1972 graduate Geral Fauß, the foam finger was designed from signs created in 1977 that Fauß and his Cypress-Fairbanks students used to cheer on the football team and was first devised out of Masonite to sell at the 1978 Cotton Bowl. The novelty’s success led Fauß to venture into the sports merchandising business, and through his Spirit Industries, he began producing the polyurethane foam version we know today. Almost 40 years later, the hands still appear at sporting events and even places such as political rallies, proving the product is No. 1 in the hearts of fans.

(Read more about Geral Fauß in the “Where Are They Now” vignettes on page 33).

HARRY WESTMORELAND—
AN OVERFLOWING PASSION

Harry Westmoreland’s faith and his love for helping the less fortunate flowed as unbounded as the earth’s waters. When his drill bit manufacturing company took the ’71 and ’74 alumnus to Peru, he encountered a missionary who was drilling wells for locals who lacked a clean, safe source of water. Inspired, Westmoreland devised a new, lightweight, portable drilling rig in 1989 that could be set up and broken down in minutes, as well as carried to areas inaccessible by conventional portable drilling machines. Because of the LS 100, LS 200 and LS 300 and Living Water International, founded by Westmoreland and fellow parishioners, almost 4,000 water projects in 21 countries were completed, providing millions with both clean water and the “living water” of God.
ELIZABETH STHRESHLEY TOWNSEND—A NEW TYPE OF COMMUNICATION

Elizabeth Sthreshley Townsend was likely just a young girl when the first commercially successful typewriter was invented in America in 1868. But after graduating from Sam Houston Normal Institute in 1886 and accepting a position at the Texas Institute for the Blind, she invented a machine that would enable her, and others, to communicate in writing with the visually impaired. The punctograph, an “improvement in machines for the production of writings for the blind,” was patented in 1889 and produced documents written in braille, allowing those with whom Townsend worked to read typed materials.

LES ANTALFFY—DRUMMING UP SECURITY

When FLUOR’s now executive process director and senior fellow Les Antalffy began working on oil refining projects in the 1970s, the delayed coking process was dangerous during the drum deheading cycle. When the unit’s drums were deheaded for removing coke, a product of crude upgrading, coke within the drums would occasionally cave in, spilling tons of coke onto the deck; manually removing the drum head also had the potential of injuring or scalding the deheading operators who had to work close by. The 1980 MBA graduate made the deheading process safer through an invention that mechanically supported, then lowered, drum covers out of the way. The device was installed in numerous refineries in several countries; it allowed refiners to enhance their workers’ safety and minimize lost production associated with spills. Antalffy has since continued to engineer other safety improvements. He and his team have received 12 U.S. patents and a 13th is pending. All of these have been related to improving safety in delayed coking.

The Departments of Agriculture and Industrial Education and Technology become part of the College of Education and Applied Science.

Country Campus is sold and 1,740 acres of land is purchased north of Huntsville. The Ag Farm is moved from Country Campus to what is known today as Gibbs Ranch.

Ag Mechanization is moved from the Farm Shop to a new facility, known today as the William R. Harrell Agricultural Engineering Technology Center. Soon afterward, Industrial Technology is moved into the ITB Facility.
BARRY DRAGER—SPRINGING INTO ACTION

Springs may be a small component of a piece of equipment, but they also are critical. This is the case for those found in 1991 graduate Barry Drager’s 2010 patent for a lift assist apparatus for railway man covers. Man covers grant operators cleaning and inspection access to tanker cars that are used to transport liquids; because covers can be heavy, federal regulations require the force needed to lift the covers be no more than 50 pounds. Thanks to the mechanical advantage provided from Drager’s system, operators can now lift covers without worry of injury. The patent is one of six for Drager, whose Draco Spring Manufacturing Co. caters to 4,000 customers worldwide, including NASCAR’s purple racing springs and the New York Subway System. It also has made a “world” of difference for NASA’s moon buggy.

TAREK O. SOURYAL—BOOSTING MEDICAL SAFETY

When you go to the doctor, you may take for granted that the injection you are given contains the medicine you need, even though the medicine bottles and labels often look the same. But in an emergency situation, when confusion can run high, the likelihood of a mistake can become alarmingly increased and potentially deadly. Thanks to the work of 1977 biology graduate Dr. Tarek O. Souryal, however, cancer patients do not have to worry about a life-threatening mix-up. In 1995, Souryal patented his idea of color-coding dangerous injectable medicines, a process achieved by adding harmless coloring materials to the bottles. The process was licensed by Bristol-Myers Squibb for a highly toxic cancer drug, and the technique has likely saved lives. (Read more about Tarek O. Souryal in the “Where Are They Now” vignettes on page 32).
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(Read more about Tarek O. Souryal in the "Where Are They Now" vignettes on page 32).

The agriculture program launches its second master’s degree in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Environment, with a 100 percent online curriculum, the first of its kind in Texas.

The first Fred Pirkle Scholars are identified and receive scholarships.

The department celebrates 100 years of teaching Agriculture and Industrial Technology.

Ground breaking for the Fred Pirkle Engineering Technology Center takes place.

The Departments of Agricultural Sciences and Industrial Technology merge and form the Department of Agricultural and Industrial Sciences.

The department is moved to the College of Arts and Sciences.

The Industrial Technology Building facility name changes to the Harry L. Westmoreland Engineering Technology Laboratory.

The College of Sciences changes to the College of Science and Engineering Technology.

Sam Houston State University psychology professor Rowland Miller has been named a recipient of the prestigious Piper Professor Award for 2016. The Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation annually awards 10 professors $5,000 each for superior teaching at the college level. Selection is made on the basis of nominations submitted by each university in the state of Texas. Begun in 1958, with eight awards, the roster of Piper Professors includes outstanding professors from two- and four-year colleges, public and private. Miller is the 14th Sam Houston State Foundation Recognizes Miller’s Passion For Teaching State University professor honored since the program’s inception. Miller was hired as an assistant professor of psychology in 1978 in what is now the SHSU College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Since coming to SHSU, Miller has been promoted to full professor and has been active in service, including chairing the psychology and philosophy departmental promotion and tenure committee and serving on the College of Humanities and Social Sciences dean’s advisory committee on promotion and tenure. He currently serves on the editorial boards of the
SHSU professor’s work selected as a 2016 Pulitzer finalist

SHSU received exciting news this spring when "Marching Home: Union Veterans and Their Unending Civil War" by assistant professor of history Brian Matthew Jordan was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in History.

"We are beyond thrilled that Dr. Brian Matthew Jordan and his important work on a neglected aspect of Civil War history were recognized by the Pulitzer committee," said Abbey Zink, dean of SHSU's College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

"Brian exemplifies the teacher-scholar model to which we aspire in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. He is a wonderful historian, teacher, and colleague, with an incredibly bright future. I enjoyed his book, and he is one of the best lecturers I've ever heard. We couldn't be happier for or prouder of him."

As a young man growing up in Akron, Ohio, Jordan loved learning about the Civil War. A close friend had crisscrossed the Midwest, seeking out the last surviving Civil War veterans, and he imparted the stories he was told to Jordan.

"He was actually a pen pal with the last surviving veteran of the Union Army, Albert Woodson," Jordan said. "He had these amazing stories to tell me. But there was one overall message that connected everything—these veterans had always been set apart from society, even after almost a century since the war finished; they were deeply troubled by what they had lived through. I never really forgot that."

This concept later inspired Jordan’s dissertation topic at Yale University that went on to become “Marching Home: Union Veterans and Their Unending Civil War.” The book centers on the challenges Union veterans faced at the completion of the war. According to Jordan, while civilian society was more than prepared to transition into the post-war era, veterans of the conflict struggled to move past the atrocities that had forever changed them.

As a result, they could not enjoy the reconciliation the rest of society did, and they forever faced a conflict between their inner turmoil and their peacetime surroundings.

"In some ways, echoes of this struggle still reverberate with the men and women who serve our country today. Jordan hopes that the book will help continue the conversation about veteran’s issues. The Civil War accomplished a lot, but it also cost a lot," he said. "Even today, with today’s veterans and the progress we’ve made with problems like PTSD and the trauma of combat, there is room for improvement about acknowledging the costs of war.”

The 2016 Pulitzer Prize in History winner was "Custer's Trials: A Life on the Frontier of a New America" by T. J. Stiles.
A rare opportunity to examine amber-entombed lizards led biology professor Juan Diego Daza to uncover unprecedentedly preserved fossils from a time when dinosaurs still roamed the earth.

Finding proof where very little exists is among the jobs of a scientist.

Sam Houston State University assistant professor of biological sciences Juan Diego Daza’s quest to learn about and reclassify species of lizards has allowed him more than just the rare opportunity to examine proof that lizards existed 100 million years ago—it has allowed him to find something groundbreaking.

Daza was a post-doctoral fellow at Villanova University, located near Philadelphia, when he received what would become a once-in-a-lifetime offer.

David Grimaldi, an entomologist at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, was reaching out to Aaron Bauer, the researcher with whom Daza was completing his fellowship, regarding a collection of rare fossils trapped in amber. He was looking for lizard experts to help him examine the collection.

A herpetologist by training, Daza had written only one paper on animals trapped in amber, but he jumped at the opportunity. Studying animals trapped in amber is considered a “cool new field” because technological advancements have allowed scientists to better examine the trapped animals.

“With CT scans, we can do 3-D models of the animal,” Daza said. “Looking through the amber is fine, but if you’ve ever looked at something through glass or that is embedded in glass, the image can be distorted. But X-rays pass through the amber and are able to give us a sharp image.”

Upon arriving in New York, Daza began what would become a two-year project examining the Myanmar specimens, comparing the tiniest of details from the amber scans to previously known fossilized lizard groups, as well as to living species, in an effort to identify and classify the 12 Myanmar fossils.

“When you find something that’s strikingly different from known lizard groups, you start realizing that there is something that doesn’t match, and you can be confident that you might be facing a new species,” Daza said. “Finding the position of these fossils in the lizard tree of life is not a matter of opinion. You need to sit down and go through a long list of reptile features, then you do a Phylogenetic analysis and the computer calculates the best placement on the tree.”

What the researchers found was that the Myanmar fossils were the oldest, most diverse assemblage ever encountered of fossils trapped in amber, dating back 100 million years to the middle Cretaceous period, the same time when dinosaurs still roamed the earth.

Not only that, but the lizards were extremely well preserved, and the researchers encountered never-before-seen details, such as visible skin pigment and the lizard’s scales.

“Scales are soft tissue and they decay fast, normally what you recover in a fossil is the skeleton, but in this case, we have scales,” Daza said. “One even has a tongue! When it was trapped, the tongue was sticking out and you can see the details of the tissue covering the surface of the tongue. It’s amazing!”

Before this publication, there was only one fossil described and it was described as a gecko, but what was represented in that was only a piece of a tail and a leg, enough to tell you something but it was not very complete,” he said. “When we started finding more animals in a better state of preservation, it was like a trip to the past that has allowed us to see things nobody has seen before. Everything that we kept finding was something new.”

Ultimately, the research found that the Myanmar fossils contained lizards that are among the closest relatives to geckos and chameleons, as well as one lizard that resembles the inferred ancestor of all lizards.

“Now, not only can we predict that they were present, but there is a specimen that actually represents how geckos looked in the past,” Daza said.

When Daza and his peers published their findings, it took the science world by storm. As the principal investigator, Daza received interview requests from journalists around the globe, and his abstract was read by more than 17,000 scientists and science aficionados, including large concentrations in Japan and the United Kingdom.

“Normally when I write a paper, only 20 or 30 specialists would read it, but 17,380 people have read this paper,” he said. “That’s pretty unusual for any field in science.”

The project also is the gift that keeps on giving. Not only is Daza’s student team at SHSU continuing to work on aspects of the fossils by writing more descriptions and using 3-D printing to recreate the skeletons of the fossils, but he’s working with a paleo-artist to provide renderings of what they’re working on.

“There are still newer things we’re learning,” Daza said. “We have more ongoing projects, we’ve started getting more and more material, so there is more coming from this; it’s very exciting. We’re going to be occupied for the next 10 years.”
Janine Kuwahara (bowling), Maddie Mortimore (tennis) and Josh Reynolds (football) compiled perfect 4.0 career grade point averages during their careers at SHSU. This year, each earned recognition as College Sports Information Directors Association NCAA Division I Academic All-Region selections.

"Only 12 student-athletes from a nine-state area that includes teams from the Big 12, SEC, American, Athletic, Conference USA, Sun Belt, Big Sky, and Southland leagues receive this high honor in each sport," associate athletic director Chris Thompson said. "To have three student-athletes from Sam Houston all be voted Academic All-Region in the same school year is fantastic." Just 11 Bearkats have received Academic All-Region honors a total of 13 times during SHSU’s 29 years of NCAA Division I competition.

The trio’s honors came during a school year in which the 415 student-athletes at SHSU compiled a fall department grade point average of 3.22 (a school record) and a spring mark of 3.11 (third highest semester GPA in SHSU history). Bearkats student-athletes have combined to produce 3.0 GPAs or higher eight of the last nine semesters.

"A 4.0 grade point average represents perfection, flawless and complete," Thompson said. "Janine, Maddie and Josh all have defined the term ‘student-athlete’ since they arrived on campus. They are gifted in their athletic careers, and each has earned their undergraduate degree and is moving on to work on a master’s.”

As a final honor for the 2015-16 season, Reynold, Kuwahara and Mortimore all were recognized as the winners of the Fred Gibson top male and female Scholar Athlete Awards at the Night of Champions celebration in May.

Kuwahara, an accounting major from Davao City in the Philippines, was home-schooled by her mother, Tevian, from fifth grade. As a successful international bowler for the Philippine Youth National Team, she never imagined she would be able to attend college and bowl at the same time.

“When I got the offer to bowl in America, everything changed for me,” Kuwahara said. “I was thinking it would be hard coming from a different country, but everyone has been friendly and my teammates are awesome. They are my roommates as well. They have been good friends.”

Fourteen time zones away from her home, Kuwahara has fit in well. In her freshman season she helped lead the Kats to the NCAA championship. This season she earned All-American and team “Most Valuable Player” honors on a squad that finished with a No. 5 national ranking after the program’s fourth NCAA Championship berth in five years.

Additionally, Kuwahara was voted to the 2016 CoSIDA Academic All-America honor squad and received the coveted NCAA Elite 90 Award at the NCAA Women’s Bowling Championship in North Brunswick, New Jersey. The Elite 90 honor is presented to the top academic student-athlete at every NCAA national championship event.

Mortimore also crossed an ocean to come to Huntsville. The economics and international business major from Farnham, Surrey, in England, was the lone senior on the 2016 women’s tennis team. With 63 career singles wins, she owns the third highest victory total in program history. The two-time All-Southland performer claims she will always remember her first impression of Texas.

“It was very hot,” Mortimore said. “Going from the air terminal to the car park, I was sun burnt already. My first day, I was wearing red shorts. I just remember being the same color as the shorts.”

Active off the court as well, she has served as an officer for the Sam Houston Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and as a tutor in the SHSU Learning Enhancement Center.

“SAAC definitely has been a lot of fun. I really enjoyed those activities just as much as tennis and school,” Mortimore said. “I love tutoring, too, giving back by using the knowledge I’ve gained in four years to help other student-athletes. It’s fulfilling when you help someone develop the skills and habits that help them succeed. I’ve enjoyed time here. Those who know me probably say I haven’t been ‘Americanized’ that much. But there are definitely parts of Texas culture that I have incorporated into my life.”

Reynolds, who earned his bachelor’s degree in mass communication, has a back story that reads like the script from the 1993 movie “Rudy,” about an undersized high school player who walks on at Notre Dame and finally makes the field for the big game.

Five feet, 10 inches tall and 145 pounds as a senior from the community of Axtell, he never really got a look from college recruiters. He joined the Bearkat football team as a freshman in 2012 and followed up by trying out to play on the scout team.

“When K. C. Keeler and his new staff took over the program in 2014, Reynolds stepped into a role of reserve wide receiver. He scored his first touchdown as a junior against Incarnate Word and caught two passes for 32 yards in front of more than 50,000 fans in Lubbock in last year’s season opener at Texas Tech.

“All the hard work was worth it,” Reynolds said. “There’s a lot of stuff we do behind the scenes, but Saturday, on game day, it pays off.”
RYAN BRIGHT
Ryan Bright, one of Sam Houston State University’s most honored men’s basketball student-athletes, believes he has come full circle in his career. “It hit me while I was coaching at a youth camp this summer,” the Deer Park native said. “I told the youngsters that when I was their age, I was sitting right where they were, learning basketball fundamentals. Now I’m the coach working in the same gym. It’s neat to be back in that kind of role.”

Bright is a physics teacher and coach at Deer Park High School, where in 2003 and 2004, he earned All-District basketball honors. Signing with SHSU, Bright helped lead the Bearkats to an 84-29 win-loss record from 2005 to 2008. He stands as, learning basketball was sitting right where they were, teaching something I always wanted to do. I have a passion for working with kids. I feel fortunate to have a job I love.”

CHARLES BOYCE
As a sophomore starter at cornerback in an inexperienced defensive secondary, Charles Boyce was part of a Bearkater football team that went 3-8 in 1989. Battling through early adversity, the DeSoto product went on to earn All-Southland Conference honors three years in a row. His senior season, the Kats won their first Southland football championship following an 8-3-1 campaign that ended with the university’s second NCAA playoff berth. SHSU athletic director Bobby Williams, who then tutored the secondary for head coach Ron Randleman, remembers Boyce and his teammates. “That was a young group that could have hung their heads and given up,” Williams said. “But they came together and became one of the best defensive backfields we’ve had here.”

In Boyce’s senior year, the SHSU defense ranked third in the nation in scoring defense, allowing opponents just 12.3 points per game, the lowest total by any Bearkat squad in the program’s 29 years at the NCAA FCS level. Boyce completed his career with 10 interceptions (the fifth all-time highest total at SHSU) and 159 tackles. “That was a young group that could have hung their heads and given up,” Williams said. “But they came together and became one of the best defensive backfields we’ve had here.”

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Boyxce also was an Academic All-Southland Conference honoree for the Bearkats. “Sam Houston gave me my start in higher education,” Boyce said. “The recognition and pride we received as student-athletes who excelled in the classroom put us on the right track as well.”

“Being a student-athlete is challenging, but with hard work and dedication everything is possible.”

ROSHUNDA BETTS
In 2006 Rosshunda Betts became only the second Bearkat woman to earn All-American honors in track and field. Originally coming to SHSU as a women’s basketball player, Betts switched to track and field in 2005. “I kept wishing I had a javelin in my hand.”

“Being a student-athlete is challenging, but with hard work and dedication everything is possible,” Betts said. “I am so grateful to my coaches, the athletic administrators and the teachers at Sam Houston for pushing me to succeed. They taught me life lessons.”

JENNY SELLW
Jennie Sewell says she is reminded of SHSU track and field every time she looks down at her ankles. “My right ankle is about two times bigger than my left,” said the All-American and seven-time Southland Conference pole vault champion from Rockwall. “On one of my last vaults at the 2005 conference championships in Huntsville, I sprained my ankle. I was on crutches, but it turned out to be a great day, as we won the team championship. I remember my teammates carrying me around the track on our victory lap.”

Sewell now works as a marketing coordinator and rental-bank manager for a collision repair equipment company and coaches at the Bayes Achievement Center. She also owns and operates S.T.S., an athletic training studio in Huntsville. “Being a student-athlete is challenging, but with hard work and dedication everything is possible,” Betts said. “I am so grateful to my coaches, the athletic administrators and the teachers at Sam Houston for pushing me to succeed. They taught me life lessons.”

JENNY PENCE
Jenny Pence, two-time All-Southland Conference goalkeeper for the women’s soccer team, is another Bearkat who has achieved recent post-graduate success.

Pence produced a school-record goals-against average of 1.53 from 2007 to 2010. “I’m excited to be headed to Colorado,” Pence said. “There are lots of awesome outdoor activities to do there, like skiing and hiking. And maybe I’ll dust off the old soccer cleats every once in awhile.”

The Kingwood product, who produced a school-record goals-against average of 1.53 from 2007 to 2010, has earned her Master of Physical Assistant Studies degree from the University of Colorado at Rocky Mountain. “After spending some time in Austin getting my prereqs and patient care hours, it was a thrill to complete my degree,” Pence said. “I plan to practice Primary and Urgent Care at Rocky Mountain Family Practice in Leaveld, Colorado.”

Pence played in 75 matches during her Bearkat career while maintaining a 3.88 overall grade point average as a biology and chemistry double major. She was honored as an NCAA Division I Academic All-Region selection, voted to the NSCCLA All-South scholar athlete team and was a three-time Academic All-Southland team member.
a high school outside of Chicago. The only Bearkat to win a gold medal at the Texas Relays and the 2007 Southland Conference women’s outdoor track and field “Student-Athlete of the Year” lived in the south of Germany for two years before returning to the United States. “I would never have made it to any level of competency in athletics or life without the direction and help of my coaches, family and friends,” Sewell said. “My athletic scholarship at Sam Houston gave me the opportunity to discover my talents and push myself to levels of achievement that I hoped were possible but wasn’t sure I believed in.”

MATT DOMINGUEZ

SHSU’s all-time leading receiver Matt Dominguez has had it rough since graduation. So rough, in fact, he will be inducted into the Saskatchewan Roughriders Hall of Honor this September. The Georgetown product caught 211 passes for 3,273 yards and 27 touchdowns in his four years as a wide receiver for SHSU in 1997 to 2000. He joined the Roughriders in 2003 after spending two seasons with the NFL’s Denver Broncos. In 59 regular-season CFL games, Dominguez caught 250 passes for 3,741 yards and 19 touchdowns. He added 25 catches for 440 yards and three scores in six playoff games. He was a West Division all-star in 2006 and was a member of the 2007 Roughriders team that won the Grey Cup. He never played on a losing team in his six seasons as a Rider. “When I first got here, my thinking was, ‘just try to make the team.’ I wasn’t thinking about making a career here,” the 37-year-old said. “But looking back, it’s been a thrill to have been a part of the resurgence of this franchise.”

Dominguez now works in real estate for Better Homes and Gardens Prairievew in Regina, Saskatchewan. He and his wife Jennifer, who met at SHSU, have three children, Matthew, Victoria and Marcel. Playing on two successful teams has been exciting, but Dominguez says his best memories have been the relationships with his teammates. “You remember a lot more than the wins and the losses,” Dominguez said. “It’s those relationships that you build within the locker room—going through practice, in the meetings, sharing your career with people—those are the things that you really recall for a while.”

GREG SPROWLS

Growing up as an all-sport athlete, if Greg Sprowls wasn’t playing sports, he was watching his favorite team on TV. “My parents really encouraged me to focus on academics, and I ended up finding my niche in the classroom, as well,” he said. “The choice to pursue medicine, in particular orthopedic surgery, was sort of a natural progression, as I combined two things I was passionate about—athletics and academics.”

Sprowls grew up in Illinois and graduated from Claremont High School in California before attending to Shippensburg University for football and pursuing a pre-med degree in biology. His academic and athletic responsibilities. In fact, he was named the recipient of the Elite 89 award for the 2012 NCAA Division I Football National Championship. The award is presented to the student-athlete with the highest cumulative grade point average participating at the finals for each of the NCAA’s championships. Following his graduation in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology and a minor in health, Sprowls married fellow Bearkat Jessica Stephens and began medical school at the Texas A&M Health Science Center College of Medicine in Temple. They became parents of a baby boy, Keller, this February. Sprowls is currently entering his fourth and final year of medical school. His next step is to be accepted into an orthopedic residency program and complete his medical training. “I’m looking forward to growing in my faith, becoming a reliable and compassionate physician, and making memories with my wife and son as we continue to expand our family,” he said. “Eventually, we plan to set our feet where God takes us and establish ourselves within a community. We also plan to stay involved with the athletic program at SHSU for a long time to come.”

2016 SHSU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION TAILGATES

The 2016 SHSU football season is fast approaching! The Alumni Association is proud to be a part of this honored tradition and look forward to you joining us in the excitement for both home and away games.

The Alumni Association provides food and beverages to alumni, students, and friends before each game to encourage a great Bearkat tailgate atmosphere.

For more information visit alumni.shsu.edu. GO BEARKATS!
Multimillion-Dollar Partnership To Train Students For Success

It’s no secret that students at Sam Houston State University are in a class all their own. Graduates are establishing the leadership ability, academic background and impeccable work ethic that make them valuable assets to the future workforce, as evidenced by the recent multimillion-dollar partnership established between SHSU’s Department of Agricultural Sciences and Engineering Technology and Quanta Services. The largest specialty contractor in North America, Quanta Services provides planning, design, construction, maintenance, and technology services for the electrical and oil and gas industries. Safely supporting the transmission/distribution lines, the one-of-a-kind Lazy Q Ranch facility encompasses more than 2,100 acres in La Grange and includes pressurized pipelines and testing facilities, a live substation, and transmission/distribution lines. The self-powered system enables a variety of training programs in a safe and contained environment.

The Quanta Services partnership will touch the entire SHSU student’s academic experience by combining additional resources, hands-on experience, and industry-enhanced materials in core engineering technology courses, which will allow students to graduate from the program with an increased applied knowledge base and a better understanding of industrial and field operations.

Additional Resources
“Quanta Services will fund two additional professor positions that will work closely with Quanta managers to develop curriculum in energy systems management, during which engineering technology students will have actual hands-on working experience in a safe and controlled environment at Quanta’s state-of-the-art power and pipeline training facility, Lazy Q Ranch, before they graduate,” said Traci McCready, senior director for Alvarez and Marsal Business Consulting. “The partnership will also fund several thousand dollars of supplemental lab equipment.”

Hands-On Experience
This hands-on experience will come in the form of an industry immersion experience unlike any other. Beginning as a pilot in the spring 2017 semester, the Lazy Q Ranch student experience will provide a highly interactive case study for students enrolled in the minimester course by exposing them to the end-to-end process of managing a project in the field. Built with the vision of the company’s founder, John Colson, the one-of-a-kind Lazy Q Ranch facility encompasses more than 2,100 acres in La Grange and includes pressurized pipelines and testing facilities, a live substation, and transmission/distribution lines. The self-powered system enables a variety of training programs in a safe and contained environment.

In addition, the program will include the creation of a structured internship program beginning the following summer.

Enhanced Materials
To establish the curriculum for the program, Quanta Services collaborated with members of the SHSU faculty to enhance three core courses currently offered in the engineering technology department. The courses—two freshmen level and one upper level—have been enriched to increase exposure to the utilities industry and provide students real-world connection to technical theory. “We asked Quanta Services and current mid-level managers to answer the question, ‘What makes a good candidate for employment?’ said project manager Lindsay Knaub, adding that 52 competencies were identified in categories such as technical, role-based, cultural, and style. “They narrowed the 52 competencies into 22 areas to focus on enhancing curriculum without altering the fundamental purpose of the courses.”

The Results
Through the partnership, Quanta will have access to qualified applicants with the experience and skills necessary to be successful upon their graduation from SHSU. “The Quanta Services partnership with SHSU is a unique, multi-dimensional partnership that will enrich the academic course offerings in the engineering technology program with academically and scholarly recognized faculty committed to innovative research and enlighten advanced industry-driven course offerings,” said agricultural sciences and engineering technology department chair Stanley Kelley. “The work ethics and reputation of engineering technology students and graduates—coupled with a quality education and well-defined curriculum with a strict, structured, internship program—were key elements that heightened SHSU as the ideal academic partner for Quanta Services.”
Traveling Bearkats

Explore with us...

NEW YORK ALUMNI & FRIENDS TRIP
4 Days – 3 Nights
December 13 – 16, 2016
Highlights: Experience NYC during the holiday season. Includes round trip air and limo transportation, lodging at the Sheraton NY Times Square, Bearkat welcome reception on December 13 and reception and dinner at the ‘21’ Club on December 14.
Travel By: SHSU Alumni Association

SOUTH PACIFIC WONDERs
18 Days – 23 Meals
March 14 – 31, 2017
Highlights: Dinner cruise of Sydney Harbour, visit to a Canterbury farmyard to observe a sheep shearing demonstration, scenery of the New Zealand fjords on a cruise of Milford Sound, excursion to the Great Barrier Reef, City Tour of Sydney, explore New Zealand, Mount Cook, and more.
Travel By: Collette Vacations

THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST’S COASTAL TREASURES
5 Days – 13 Meals
June 18 – 26, 2017
Highlights: Seattle, San Juan Islands, Friday Harbor, Victoria, Port Angeles, Olympic National Park, Hoh Rain Forest, Hurricane Ridge.
Travel By: Collette Vacations

SPOTLIGHT ON BARCELONA
7 Days – 8 Meals
October 7 – 13, 2016
Highlights: Barcelona, parc Guell, La Sagrada Familia, Choice of Gothic Quarter & Cathedral or La Boqueria Open-air market and Guell Palace, Penedes Wine Region, Cooking Class, winery tour & tasting.
Travel By: Collette Vacations

Distinguished Alumni

Duke Austin

Distinguished Alumni

As CEO and COO of Quanta Services, Earl “Duke” Austin manages his business in the same way he manages every aspect of his life—with integrity, humility and grace. A 1992 recipient of a Bachelor of Business Administration in management degree, Austin served as president of North Houston Pole Line until it was acquired by Quanta Services in 2001. He was named chief operating officer and president of Quanta’s Electric Power and Natural Gas and Pipeline divisions because of his strong leadership abilities. In 2016, he was promoted to chief executive officer. Austin has remained an avid supporter of Sam Houston State University by contributing to numerous projects and programs and as a Life Member of the Alumni Association. “For more than 25 years, Duke Austin has been an exemplary representative of Sam Houston State. He has typified SHSU’s tradition of excellence and brought credit to the university by his personal accomplishments, professional achievements and selfless support,” a nominator said.

In addition to his contributions to SHSU, Austin is actively involved in fundraising for projects at the John Cooper School in The Woodlands, is a member of the Young Presidents Organization, serves on the calf scramble committee for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, and is a board member of The Junior Achievement. “Duke prefers to fly under the radar. He has contributed to numerous schools, charities and organizations, but rarely desires recognition,” a nominator said. “He has risen to the pinnacle of the public corporate world and has done so with intelligence and integrity.” Austin has four children and lives in Houston with his wife, Sanette.

*Single room and triple room rates also available.

For more information visit alumni.shsu.edu or call the Office of Alumni Relations at 936.294.1841
JAMES LOPES
Distinguished Alumni

Although he hasn’t played football since his days as a wide receiver for the Bearkats, James Lopez has been scoring touchdowns in the entertainment industry for more than 20 years. He graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in 1991 as a first-generation American to Peruvian parents. He landed his first job at Madonna’s record label, Maverick Records, where he was able to enhance his skills. This opportunity led him to Atlantic Records, where he worked as senior director of marketing before being promoted to senior vice president of marketing. He has played an instrumental role in developing and overseeing the marketing campaigns for many platinum artists, including T.I., Bruno Mars, Flo Rida, Sean Paul, and Big Boi.

“In my opinion, James has distinguished himself through personal and professional achievements and has brought honor and distinction to our university,” a nominator said. Lopez transitioned from music to film and joined Screen Gems, a division of Sony Pictures Entertainment, in 2010. In this position, he oversees some of the company’s highest-grossing projects, such as “Think Like A Man,” “Think Like A Man Too,” and “The Wedding Ringer.”

He was named one of 2013’s Imagen Foundation’s Most Powerful and Influential Latinos in Entertainment for 2012, 2013 and 2014 and spoke as a featured guest at the Hollywood Black Film Festival. He also was featured in Ebony Magazine’s Power 100 issue in 2014. Lopez recently was named head of motion pictures for Will Packer Productions, where he is responsible for developing and overseeing production on all film projects through the company’s first-look deal with Universal Pictures.

He currently lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Andrea, and children Hannah and Victoria.

MIA GRADNEY
Outstanding Young Alumna

Whether she’s reporting on hurricanes or Hollywood stars or suiting up local women for job interviews, Gradney has dedicated her life to serving the city of Houston. The three-time Emmy award-winning anchor/host, reporter, and producer graduated from Sam Houston State University in 1998 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in mass communication and a concentration in radio and film and began her career as a writer and production assistant for the Debra Duncan Show at Houston’s KTRK Channel 13 news station.

She spent 10 years as a lead anchor at Kiah in Houston, where she filed reports from Reliant Park in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina evacues first arrived at the Astrodome. Weeks later, she documented the evacuations across Texas in response to Hurricane Rita.

Today, she is a news reporter with KHOU, where she keeps Houston informed about the city. In her spare time, she is a volunteer with Dress for Success, an organization dedicated to providing low-income women with professional interview attire. In 2003, she teamed up with a fellow volunteer to co-found Women of Wardrobe, the young professionals group designed to support Dress for Success.

In addition to her volunteer work, Gradney hosts a monthly movie night at Studio City Movie Grill in Houston’s City Centre.

JERRY STREATER
Service Award

Being a public servant is much more than just a job to Jerry Streater—it is the essence of his being. He graduated from SHSU in 1961 with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree and, in 1972, began selling cars, kick starting what would become a very successful career in the automobile business. He is now owner of Streater-Smith Nissan and Honda in Conroe.

Streater was elected to serve on the Conroe City Council for eight years, during which he served as chairman of the city’s finance and personnel committees. He also served as vice-president of the Montgomery County Performing Arts Society and chairman of the board of the Lake Conroe Chamber of Commerce.

“Throughout his life, Jerry has demonstrated a sincere interest in and commitment to public service,” a nominator said. “He has provided strong leadership as a business owner, in working with civic organizations, as an elected member of city government, and through philanthropic activities.”

Prior to enrolling at SHSU, Streater played baseball and football at Navarro College on a scholarship. When he moved to Huntsville, he gave up his favorite sport in order to work to pay for college. Because of their love of Bearkat baseball, Streater and his wife, Sandra, established an endowed fund to provide scholarships for Bearkat baseball players.

“Jerry and his wife, Sandra, have been generous supporters of the university, including previous Capital Campaign efforts,” one nominator said. “They are members of Saint James Episcopal Church, where he served as a member of the vestry, and he currently serves on the finance committee and the long-range planning committee.” Streater and his wife have four children, nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

DR. NAN MCRAVEN
Service Award

Each student who graduates from Sam Houston State University is ingrained with the school’s motto, “The measure of a Life is its Service.” Dr. Nan McRaven is no exception, as she has worked tirelessly throughout her life to better the lives of others. From her 13 years on the Austin Community College’s Board of Trustees to her work uniting the breast cancer community in Austin, the 1973 graduate has exemplified the values taught at SHSU.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in government, McRaven earned a Master of Public Affairs degree from the University of Texas at Austin and began her career in government service. She has worked for more than 25 years in media and public relations, government relations, strategic issues management, public policy development and advocacy, and fundraising.

“Nan has been a trustee at Austin Community College for more than 13 years,” one nominator said. “She has helped lead the college through many changes and helped to make it one of the premier colleges in Texas.” She also worked with the Breast Cancer Project and the Breast Cancer Resource Center to bring representatives together to share information and best practices. Because of her hard work and dedication, she was appointed to the BCRC board, where for three years she helped to raise the group’s visibility in the community.

She received her doctorate from the University of Texas in 2015.
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

ROGER SEIDERS

Roger Seiders made lifelong friends and received the foundation for what would become his professional acumen in SHSU’s industrial arts program.

Originally a business major, Seiders found a home at SHSU after taking his first IA class and falling in with a group that included Fred Pirkle, Geral Fauss, Tim Horie, Ed Denison, and Bill Hand, most of whom also would become prolific inventors and businessmen.

“It was a really funny little group,” the ‘69 and ‘73 graduate said. “We were all buddies right off the bat.”

So close were they that following graduation, Cypress-Fairbanks’s Forest Foundation was born. Seiders was the first IA class and received the foundation for what coating he sold died following a car accident after receiving the wrong injection.

He was perfectly fine, but an experienced EMT accidentally gave him the wrong drug,” the 1979 SHSU alumnus said. “He meant to give him sugar, which is innocuous, but he ended up giving him Lidocaine, which causes seizures, and the guy died.”

A leading orthopedic surgeon who has practiced medicine for 33 years, Souryal thought to himself, “I really think hunting and fishing is a lifestyle for us. We call Flex Coat and YETI Coolers a lifestyle business; they’re related to our lifestyle.”

He recently stepped down as head physician for the Dallas Mavericks after 22 seasons and as president of the NBA Physicians Association, he hosts the “Inside Sports Medicine” show on ESPN 803.3 FM and is a consultant for several newspapers as the Boston Globe, LA Times and USA Today.

Today, Spirit Industries, Inc., still a family-run business, can produce 36,000 hands per day. The smallest hand he’s ever produced is 3 inches tall, the largest, 17 feet and 6 inches. A foam hand from the 1983 Super Bowl even hangs in the NFL Hall of Fame.

Fausst attributes some of his success to his education and friends at SHSU, where he also met his wife of 40 years.

“I had to educate myself in screen printing, die-cutting and marketing. Business was not my major, so it was all new to me,” Fausst said. “The first hands were made in my garage, which I knew could not last. My dad had an old metal building behind his house that had once housed his sheet metal business. It was full of junk and cats, but I managed to carve out an area inside to set up shop.”

Sports have always been a big part of life for 1969 and 1972 graduate Geral Fauss.

A high school quarterback and an eventual junior high school sports coach, Fauss’s enthusiasm was nothing less than “avid.”

So in 1976, when the Cypress-Fairbanks High School football team—one of the best in the region— needed a deal was reached that allowed him to resign his teaching position by 1979 and put the revenue from his sales into a business.

“Hunting and fishing was a big part of life for 1969 and 1972 graduate Geral Fauss.”

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While testing out the merchandise with a favorite family hobby—fishing—Seiders and his sons began looking for a better cooler for their boat, but to no avail. So his sons followed one of their father’s philosophies—“if you can’t find what you want, make it.”

“I’ve always been really quick to jump on an idea, I started making prototype YETI Coolers by simply taking an existing cooler, like an Igloo, and putting a piece of plywood on top to make it stronger, so we could stand on it to look for redfish,” he said. “The boys took the ball and ran with it.”

The success of the two companies has allowed Seiders to stay involved with Flex Coat, while doing “as much hunting and fishing as I possibly can,” he said.

“I really think hunting and fishing is a lifestyle for us. We call Flex Coat and YETI Coolers a lifestyle business; they’re related to what we love,” he said. “I always encourage people to get into things they love.”

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Where are they now?

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
CLASS NOTES

Cari Owens, '68, was inducted into the Texas Basketball Hall of Fame in May. Photographed with Owens (from left) are former teammates Bill Methens, '68, and Mike Smith, '69, who was inducted in 2015.

On June 2, Alvin ISD broke ground on its 17th elementary school, named Shirley Dill Brothers Elementary in honor of Shirley Dill Brothers, '71. Brothers, who retired from Alvin ISD in 2012 after 40 years of service, is 15 of which she served as a special education teacher and 25 of which she served as the district’s first director of communications.

Gary Pickes, '72, is the county commissioner for Tarrant County.

Judge Albert M. McCaig Jr., '72, and Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Richard W. Mills, '74, were among the first group inducted into the U.S. Army National ROTC Hall of Fame in June. The Hall of Fame honors graduates of the Army ROTC who have distinguished themselves in military or civilian pursuits. The ceremony was held in Fort Knox, Kentucky, in connection with the U.S. Army Cadet Command 100th Anniversary.

Joop DeJonge, '74, is retired from the Washington State Department of Corrections. DeJonge began his career as a correctional officer and worked in many capacities prior to his retirement as the prison superintendent.

Lynn Redden, '75, is the superintendent of schools for Onalaska ISD. Redden is married to Laura Lorfing Redden, '87, who was married for 39 years to Kenneth Allen, an officer in Tyler County for 24 years. She has two daughters: Jodi Duncan-Lundquist, '94, who appears in a supporting role in "Office Space" and "The New Guy." The Indirect Auto Dealer event in New York City. She married Nicholas Johnson, '71, and they have a daughter who is "absolutely perfect" and a future Beatnik.

Rebecca Cansler, '13, received her master’s degree in criminology from the University of Houston-Clear Lake in May and has begun working as a juvenile supervision officer with the Texas Department of Juvenile Probation. She and her fiancé Robert, an SFA alumnus, plan to marry as early as next spring.

Lauren Haywood Graham, '13, is a loan officer for Texas Credit in Plano, where she helps finance farms, ranches, and rural lifestyles, helping to keep agriculture alive in Texas. Graham and her husband also welcomed their first child in July 2016.

Miranda Lundsman, '13, is currently a reporter for the Regional News Network in New York City after previously working as an anchor/reporter in Corpus Christi. Her younger sister Sarah graduated from SHSU in August and her younger brother Anthony started his first semester at SHSU in January.

Weldon Whitt, '13, is currently the vice president of commercial lending at Plains Bank in Conroe.

Doug Champion, '14, recently opened Crossfit Hville to highlight the benefits of a healthy lifestyle within the Huntsville community. Champion thanks agricultural business professors Weisblitz and Mills for giving him the tools and “know-how” to run a business and become an entrepreneur.

Hunter Pirtle, '15, started his professional career three days after graduating in December as an adult probation officer in Brazoria County.

Patrick Volfmer, '15, has been accepted into the full class at the University of St. Thomas School of Law.

Laurn Lueken, '16, gained employment with the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida, where she works in the cast activities, events and recognition department as a special events coordinator, planning events and activities for Disney’s 70,000 Florida-based employees.

Patricia Porter, '10, is currently working as a billing specialist in Houston for a construction supply company.

Amber Samuel, '10, is an elementary teacher and a writer, whose blog, peppermint-sunshine.com, showcases her various stories.

Suzanna Hernandez Bachman, '11, married Trevor Bachman in February. Their Beatrak alumna Lindsay Vinyard, '11, with Make Moments Last photography, captured all of the special moments.

Ashley Tucker-Johnson, '12, will be teaching seventh-grade math at Cinco Ranch Junior High in Katy ISD. She married Nicholas Johnson, '11, and they have a daughter who is "absolutely perfect" and a future Beatnik.

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IN MEMORIAM – PAUL RUFFIN

A celebration of the life of Paul Ruffin—2009 Texas State Poet Laureate, Texas State University System Regents’ Professor and SHSU Distinguished Professor of English—was held in the Evans Complex on campus in April, following his death at the age of 74.

An award-winning, well-known and respected editor, publisher, writer and poet, Ruffin often relied upon his experiences growing up in the South as inspiration for his stories.

Shortly after he came to SHSU in the mid-’70s, he founded The Texas Review—an international literary journal—and Texas Review Press, a member of the Texas A&M University Press Consortium. Throughout the years, Ruffin worked tirelessly to promote the press and its authors.

“Paul’s impact on creative writing at SHSU was indeed profound,” said Bill Bridges, former chair of the SHSU Department of English. “The work he did in building The Texas Review and Texas Review Press into a premier journal and university press was substantial.”

During Ruffin’s extensive writing career, he published more than 1,500 poems, 100-plus stories, and more than 90 essays in magazines and journals. His work also has appeared in numerous anthologies and textbooks. In addition, he wrote a weekly column that appeared in several newspapers in Texas and Mississippi.

In a 2009 article in SHSU’s Heritage Magazine, Ruffin was described as someone who “loves football, shooting, riding his tractor, maintaining his truck, and doing his own carpentry, electric and plumbing work. ... not exactly the stereotypical image of a person who loves words and is a master of arranging them into beautifully crafted poems and other literary works.”

Ruffin is survived by his wife Amber and his three children.
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HOMECOMING 2016
HEROES WILL RISE
BEARKATS VS. ABILENE CHRISTIAN
OCTOBER 15, 2016