

# FLORIDA

Magazine of The Gator Nation®

## Gone to the Dogs

How alumni Tom and Tami Thurston left the rat race and found happiness on a dog sled.



**UF** UNIVERSITY of  
**FLORIDA**

Fall 2009

[www.ufalumnimagazines.com/florida](http://www.ufalumnimagazines.com/florida)

# New Design

You loved it. You despised it. Reaction to our new look was polarized and voluminous. Letters have been edited for length and clarity.

I want to applaud the new look of your magazine. Mom always said it's what's inside that counts, and the content, as always, is interesting and well written.

— Laurie Tenace (MHSE '91)  
Tallahassee

The first thing that comes to mind after opening, reading and thinking about our "new" magazine is the word "Tropicana." If you're not familiar with that recent redesign/marketing fiasco, then you might want to look it up. I think the decision here is equally detestable. I am really thinking that whoever decided to change the format of our alumni magazine from classy to trashy must be a covert FSU fan. The new magazine is unbecoming a university of our prestige.

— Harry Averell (BA '85, JD '88)  
Gainesville

I like the smaller format and appreciate the environmental concerns. I find your content very informative and readable. I love hearing how/what UF and its graduates do for the world.

— Karen Dils (BSPE '69)  
Buena Vista, Colo.

Previously, I placed my copy of *Florida* in the waiting area of my office. I was too

embarrassed to have people see this edition. It is in recycling, where it belongs.

— Brent Shore\* (BSBA '69, JD '71)  
Atlantic Beach

## The Biscuit

This letter concerns the article "Special Delivery" (summer '09 *Florida*). The biscuit was probably made by my grandmother, Sally Swanson. She was not noted for her "flaky biscuits." Mrs. Swanson was the matron in charge of the mess hall at UF from 1905-1925. She was a widow with three small sons, Joe, Frank (my father) and Bob, who wrote the song, "We are the Boys." All three sons attended and graduated from the university.

— Marion Swanson Wattenbarger  
Gainesville

This ... story (Special Delivery) ... reminds me of a family story that we used to hear years ago. My father, while at the University of the South in Tennessee, mailed a similar biscuit to his mother in Tampa around 1910. She did receive it in the mail. I worked in the post office in service and we saw more bizarre things than a biscuit come through the mail.

— Joe Knight\* (BSA '52)  
Largo

## FLORI-DUH

Gremlins crept into our redesign of *Florida* this summer, wreaking havoc among otherwise nice, orderly pages.

The trouble started on page 27 where a last-minute shuffle made Hitting the Bricks look nicer. Good idea, bad execution — we forgot to subsequently shuffle the dates with the corresponding photos.

For the record, Robin Williams headlined UF's most infamous Gator Growl in 1982, while Jim Gaffigan was here in 2006. Bob Hope came in 1976, 1979 and 1983 with mixed reviews. Jeff Foxworthy entertained in 1990, and Jon Reep headlined in 2008.

The mischief also spread to page 17 where, in one spot deep in the story, we suffered a case of mistaken identity. We meant to refer to 4-H member Tiffany Banner, but instead used 4-H member Nicolas Green's last name.

Once again we've proven that editors shouldn't be exposed to bright light, should not get wet and should never, ever be fed after midnight.

So where will we goof this issue? We have no doubt many of you can't wait to find out. Please point out our foibles by sending your comments and corrections.

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**On the Cover:** Tom Thurston is pictured here near a restart point of the 2009 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in Willow, Alaska. His — and his dogs' — participation in the 1,151-mile race is the culmination of a five-year plan that rescued Thurston (BSBA '92) and his wife, Tami Eggers Thurston (BSR '93), from corporate jobs and sent them on an outdoor adventure in Colorado and beyond. Find out how — and why — they did it on page 16. Photo by Jim R. Kohl/AlaskaStock.com.

## Write Us

Send your corrections, story suggestions, letters or address changes to:

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**UF** UNIVERSITY of  
**FLORIDA**

*The Foundation for The Gator Nation*

# FLORIDA

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## 14

Lisa Nackers (MS '08) of Gainesville spruces up the landscaping around A Girl's Place on 39th Avenue in Gainesville. She and hundreds of other Gators nationwide took part in International Gator Day by spreading their Gator spirit through volunteer activities.

[www.UFalumnimagazines.com/Florida](http://www.UFalumnimagazines.com/Florida) | 3



CHARITY CHALLENGE: This summer, players took time to help Shands at UF-related charities. Called the Gator Charity Challenge, the second annual event drew about 2,500 fans before rain ended activities just one

event away from completion in Ben Hill Griffin Stadium. (From left) Brandon Spikes, Christopher Coleman, Mike Pouncey, Maurkice Pouncey and Tim Tebow were among the players who divided into six teams — each repre-



Jim Burgess (BEE '63)

senting a charity — to compete in the strongman challenge, tire push, sled push, obstacle course and other events. Charities represented were the American Heart Association, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Susan G. Koman

Breast Cancer Foundation, American Cancer Society, March of Dimes and Children's Miracle Network. The Cystic Fibrosis team, led by wide receiver Cade Holliday, won the competition with 11 points.



WELCOME TO THE GATOR NATION: More than 2,300 freshmen converged on Emerson Alumni Hall Aug. 24 for the fourth annual Welcome Reception. Hosted by UF's Student Alumni Association, the event is held on

the first day of school each fall to give students an opportunity to meet others and learn about all the benefits of membership in the SAA. The event featured a JanSport backpack fashion show, an "F Book" trivia contest, and,



Steve Johnson (2/10)

of course, free food. The class of 2013 played carnival games and competed for prizes ranging from football T-shirts to free textbooks to passes to Busch Gardens in Tampa. Learn about the various Student Alumni

Association benefits offered online at [www.ufalumni.ufl.edu/SAA](http://www.ufalumni.ufl.edu/SAA), visit the Welcome Center in Emerson Alumni Hall, or call 888-352-5866.

# Evolved Thinking

UF professor V. Betty Smocovitis has spent her career seeking harmony among scientific disciplines. Now she hopes to get in tune with alumni, too.

A historian of science, V. Betty Smocovitis (smoke-oh-VEE-tus) has a special interest in how our modern theory of evolution evolved. She was recently selected by the UF Alumni Association as its Distinguished Alumni Professor for 2009-2011, which includes a \$20,000 award and the opportunity to serve as a faculty ambassador to alumni.

**You created a lecture that explores how society has received Darwin's evolution theory through music. Why?**

There is usually something about evolution that disturbs some people. It's about life. Anytime you get up in front of an audience and talk about it, people can misconstrue your words with political undertones or religious beliefs. But you can tell the whole history of evolution by looking at the history of music. There is something elevating and edifying about it. Music tends to be disarming. Hearing all the different musical ways Darwin is interpreted, you appreciate that there are many different responses. And you get a sense of how complicated the history of evolution has been.

**How did you connect the dots between Darwin and music?**

I was a graduate student at Cornell in the mid-1980s when I came across a provocative piece of American sheet music dated 1874 ("Too Thin; or Darwin's Little Joke"). It linked evolution to racist and anti-immigration attitudes prevalent in post-Civil War America. In the 20 years since



Learn more about Betty Smocovitis, UF's new Distinguished Alumni Professor at [www.web.clas.ufl.edu](http://www.web.clas.ufl.edu) and search "Smocovitis."

then, I have been collecting materials on Darwin, evolution and American popular culture.

**What genre(s) did you find?**

Nearly all musical genres from the 1860s until the present. Some songs were celebratory, honoring Darwin and his theory. Others were songs of protest, like those written around the time of the 1925 Scopes "monkey" trial, with titles such as "You Can't Make a Monkey Out of Me." Some linked Darwinian themes to feminism. Still other songs were silly. More recent genres include rock 'n' roll, punk, grunge and new wave.

**How did your audiences react to your approach?**

It isn't often that historians of science deliver lectures to toe-tapping, head-bobbing people of all ages and educational levels. For a subject considered weighty, disturbing and all too frequently contentious, the "musical" Darwin left opponents with a very different view of Darwin and the implications of his theory.

**Why is it important to understand the synthesis of evolutionary theories?**

My primary research area is understanding how all the various theories about evolution

interact and affect biological science disciplines. At an earlier period of time ... the disciplines and individuals within those disciplines were incompatible. For instance, geneticists were not getting along with natural historians. People in these communities came together between 1920 and 1950 to create what we call the Modern Synthesis. I'm watching the same process taking place here. We've got people in biochemistry. They have a particular view of biology that's not necessarily in line with the ecologists' view.

**What does Evolutionary Synthesis mean to society?**

The synthesis is now alive and well in what I have called applied evolutionary biology. We've got concrete instances of where science is informing and being used to understand processes such as antibiotic resistance or the spread of infectious disease. The guy down the hall from me right now is an evolutionary biologist. He works on malaria. There is an applied component to evolutionary biology. That is the synthesis. It's not just purely abstract theory.

**How will you be an ambassador for the alumni association?**

I intend to meet with various Gator Clubs® and other alumni groups to bring them up-to-date on developments at UF, especially with respect to the generation of new programs in the life sciences. This part of the university is growing for a good reason, so I hope to convey some of that excitement.

# 2008 NATIONAL CHAMPIONS



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**"It's not really about me. It's a sign of where engineering has to go in the future."**

**Cammy Abernathy**, UF's first female College of Engineering dean and its ninth dean in 100 years.



**"We look forward to a long, productive and starlit future."**

**Joe Glover**, UF provost, at the dedication of the Gran Telescopio Canarias (the world's largest telescope) in La Palma, Canary Islands, off Africa's northern coast. UF owns 5 percent of the \$180 million telescope and built several of the telescope's main components.



**"I think we're going to give farmers a way to make money again."**

**Teri Gevinson**, Ag-Oil founder, about the energy potential of jatropha, a plant that UF researchers have determined can produce more biofuel than corn or soybeans. UF ag experts helped Gevinson obtain jatropha seeds from India, Mexico, Indonesia and Haiti.



**"It's clearly one of the most important events in the history of the University of Florida."**

**Win Phillips\***, vice president for research, concerning a five-year, almost \$26 million grant the university received from the National Institutes of Health that will help convert scientific discoveries into new medical practices.



**"The purpose of this exercise is to discern appropriate strategies for responding to a zombie attack ..."**

A **"zombie attack plan,"** posted on UF's E-Learning Web site. The plan, which has been taken down, was posted to "add levity," the Web site's director says. So far, no "life impaired" visitors have been found on campus.

## GLOSSARY DIFFERENTIAL • dif-fer-ren-shel adj.

Displaying a difference between comparable individuals or, in UF's case, universities. UF's tuition has long looked different from that of its peer institutions — \$2,669 a year for a Florida resident compared to a national average of \$6,585 a year. The Legislature therefore approved a differential tuition increase for all state universities, allowing individual boards of trustees to increase tuition up to 15 percent a year until their schools catch up to the national average. The increase this fall equated to about \$400 per student.

# Take Note

**Gotta Have It** Yet another reason for students to beg parents for an iPhone? It's mandated. Incoming pharmacy students this fall were required to have either an iPhone or an iPod Touch. "We want our students to become adept at using these mobile devices early on because we see this as the future in pharmacy practice," Pharmacy Dean William Riffe says.

**500,000** People in the United States who have end-stage renal disease, or permanent kidney failure. Of those, half are over the age of 60.

**46** Percentage of kidney patients age 60 and older who die while waiting for a deceased-donor organ, according to a new UF study. Researchers therefore recommend that older patients find a living kidney donor.

## Snakes From a Plane

In response to a South Florida infestation of exotic snakes, UF researchers are developing mini-drones that — from the air — can detect heat given off by pythons. Data collected could impact how many snake-hunting permits are issued by the state.

## Nothing to Sneeze At

By mid-fall, UF's Student Health Care Center reported its staff had tended to about 450 suspected cases of H1N1 virus, also known as swine flu. Provost Joe Glover says if the number of cases increases, UF will activate a system to record classes in 10 of the largest lecture halls to prevent further spread of the virus. Learn how UF is handling this issue at [www.ehs.ufl.edu/H1N1](http://www.ehs.ufl.edu/H1N1).



Pharmacy students (from left) Christy Austin (3PD), Victoria Montoya (3PD) and Nicole Kitts\* (BSA '07, 3PD) use candy to teach students about the dangers of mixing prescription drugs. Learn about the Generation Rx program by contacting Linda Homewood at [homewood@cop.ufl.edu](mailto:homewood@cop.ufl.edu) or 352-273-6873.

# Drug Interactions

Pharmacy students share their knowledge — and candy — to help stop prescription drug abuse.

**S**purred to action by a personal tragedy, the College of Pharmacy's class of 2010 is taking a novel approach to tell high school students about the dangers of prescription drugs. They're talking to the kids on their level — and using Skittles candies to reach them.

"We want interaction," says Erica Fernandez (AA '05), one of the founders of Generation Rx. "We're not telling them what to do. We're treating them as peers."

Generation Rx, now entering its third year, was inspired when a friend of Fernandez's younger sister died of a prescription drug overdose. The high school student's death became a rallying point for the pharmacy students.

In the two years since, Generation Rx presenters have spoken to thousands of high school students about the dangers — and illegality — of prescription drug abuse.

While many drug-education programs

are heavy on scary statistics, Generation Rx programs are structured to be less of a lecture and more of an interactive experience, with pharmacy students sharing knowledge in the same way they might talk to younger siblings, participants say.

"We don't want to seem like young professionals talking down to teens about drug abuse," says Ryan Rodriguez (4PD).

Every program comes with a tasty visual aid. Skittles serve as stand-in drugs, with each colored candy representing a random sampling, and the pharmacy students explain facts they have learned in their own classes about how such drugs affect the body. They also talk about the dangers of mixing different drugs together, or with alcohol.

Last spring the students were able to talk to students at six high schools. As they all prepare for graduation, however, the members' hope is to expand the program

to other pharmacy schools — and by extension, more high schools — across Florida.

It could work, based on what local teachers have said about the impact they've seen.

"The presentation was outstanding," says Maria Randell, a teacher at Oak Hall School in Gainesville who said she'd like to see the group come into her school more often. "They were extremely comfortable and receptive to the students' questions."

## NOT SO CHILDPROOF ...

- ▶ Among American teens, only marijuana is abused more than prescription drugs. But trends indicate the gap is shrinking.
- ▶ More than 2.1 million teens ages 12 to 17 admit to abusing prescription drugs.
- ▶ More than three in five teens say they have access to prescription pain relievers from their parents' medicine cabinets.

Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health

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During the past two seasons, forward Dan Werner has started 71 of 72 games. Described as a strong 3-point shooter and rebounder, the Middletown, N.J., native was honored with his state's Mr. Basketball title following his senior high school season. He is majoring in event management.

# Best Foot Forward

Senior Dan Werner reflects on UF's basketball glory days. He hopes to taste them again.

**I**t's here, way too fast and jostled by speed bumps. It's here, the end of a career that has seen ups, downs and sideways. It's here, Dan Werner's final season.

Oh, the sights he's seen.

Werner (4HHP), a 6-foot-8 senior forward, came to Florida after signing with North Carolina State. A coaching change allowed Werner to change his mind, and he stepped into UF history.

Werner was a seldom-used reserve when Florida won its second of two straight national titles in 2007. Life was good.

Then, it got hard.

"I went from on top of the world to having to work our way back up," he says. "Every year I've got teammates leaving me. Maybe it's me."

It started after that freshman year when the players known as the Oh-Fours took their basketballs and went to the next level after their junior seasons. The following year, it was Marreese Speights ('06-'08) leaving early. Then last season, it was Nick Calathes ('07-'09).

**"There were times I could have given in. But my parents taught me to push through it. I've never quit anything in my life."**

**— Dan Werner**

"We think we have the pieces together and guys leave," Werner says.

As a result, the last two years have been difficult. Werner has had to play out of position, and Florida has found itself in back-to-back NITs.

But in the end, Werner says, the highs and lows will help make him better.

"That first year, I kind of rode the easy train," he says. "But before the next season I lost 27 pounds."

"After we lost to Alabama in the SEC Tournament, we had the toughest workouts I've ever been through. Some guys

couldn't do them. There were times I could have given in. But my parents taught me to push through it. I've never quit anything in my life. And this all has made me a stronger person than when I got here."

And so it's here. One last chance to leave a legacy. One last opportunity to return to the NCAA Tournament that Florida once owned.

Werner is only the 13th four-year senior since Billy Donovan\* took over as the Florida basketball coach 14 years ago. He wants to make the best of his final season as a Gator.

"It's amazing. I remember coming here four years ago, and Joakim Noah ('04-'07) told me that I wouldn't believe how fast it would fly by," Werner says. "I remember thinking that I had four years, but it really has flown. It really goes by quickly.

"It has been great. I have learned a lot. Everybody from the managers to trainers to the video guys have been great to be around. The relationships we've built will last forever."

**— Pat Dooley (BSJ '76)**

# Test Your Knowledge



A UF study determined that having confidence in your memory actually improves your memory. To that end, psychology researchers recommend keeping your mind sharp by playing puzzle or word games. This time around we'll see how much you remember about the life of female students at UF with some help from UF historian Carl Van Ness (MA '85). Sharpen your pencil and come play.

**1. In what year were women allowed to become full-time UF students?**

- (a) 1909 (b) 1925 (c) 1947

**2. What publication provided rules and tips for women students in the 1950s and 1960s?**

- (a) Coedikette (b) "F Book"  
(c) *The Orange Peel*

(Left) When women were finally able to join UF's student body, they were subject to strict conduct standards and other requirements, including dress codes and curfews. Riding alligators, however, was apparently OK.

**3. Until the late 1960s, what times were women required to be in their dorms on a weeknight?**

- (a) 10 p.m. (b) 11 p.m. (c) 1 a.m.

**4. What was the penalty for a coed who failed to sign out of or into her dorm after 7:30 p.m.?**

- (a) Loss of visitation privileges  
(b) Weekend restrictions  
(c) Sent to bed without dinner

**5. In what year were women students first allowed to wear Bermuda shorts to classes?**

- (a) 1947 (b) 1958 (c) 1966

## Get Inventive

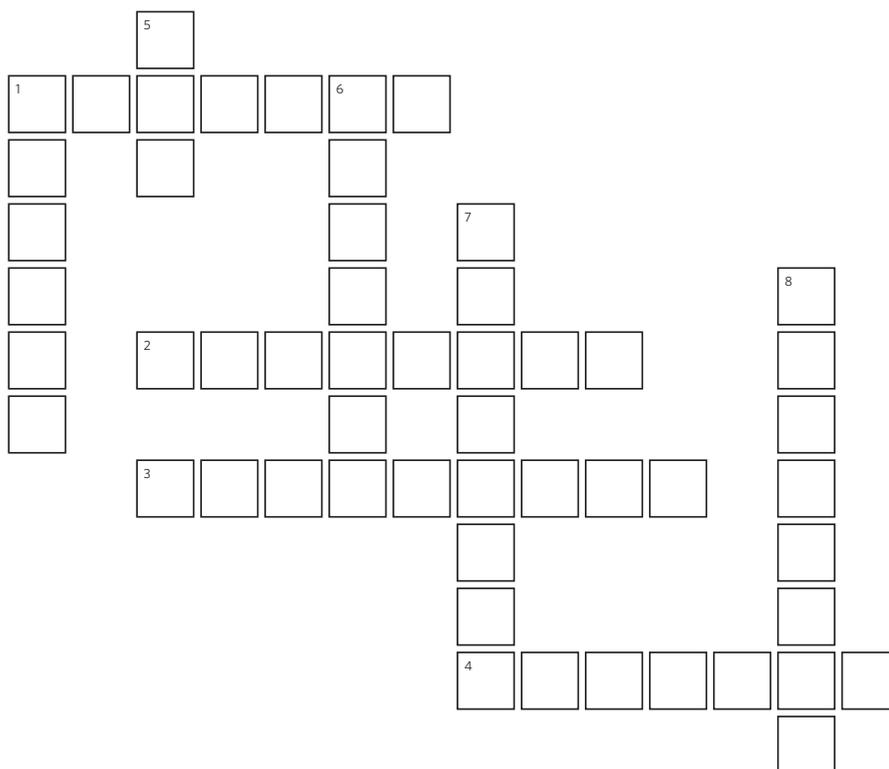
### Across:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Gold, brand name used for UF's low-carb potatoes
- The thirst quencher
- Termite control system used in homes and the Statue of Liberty
- Mouth-care product used to "rebuild" teeth

### Down:

- Brand of slurry used for polishing semiconductors
- \_\_\_\_\_ Guard, a tray that keeps insects out of food bowls and potted plants
- Glaucoma treatment
- Cut of steak
- Peanut variety that is rich in heart-healthy oleic fatty acids

Not all research remains in a laboratory — UF has a rich history of success stories that have made it into everyday use in homes, hospitals and industries. See if you can identify a sample of UF's breakthroughs below. Need help? Many — but not all — answers can be found on the Office of Technology Licensing's Web site at [www.research.ufl.edu/otl/success.html](http://www.research.ufl.edu/otl/success.html), or by searching [www.ufl.edu](http://www.ufl.edu).



Crossword: Across: 1. Simit, 2. Sunlite, 3. Sentricon, 4. Novamin, 5. Ant, 6. Trusopt, 7. flat iron, 8. Sundoleic

Trivia Questions: 1. c, 2. a, 3. b, 4. b, 5. b



The Alamo City Gator Club® in San Antonio helped host a Wounded Warrior Mini-Try-Athlon. These soldiers traveled from Canada to participate.

# Gators Give Back

Gators spread goodwill last spring as part of the 11th annual International Gator Day.

Some came in wheelchairs. Others donned artificial legs or braces. All were beaming with smiles and anticipation. These Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans were set to compete in the second annual Wounded Warrior Mini-Try-Athlon in San Antonio.

Designed to challenge wounded service men and women who are recovering from major injuries sustained during active duty, the event marked a milestone for each participant in his or her process of adapting to life after injury. Family members and friends weren't the only ones cheering for the veterans, however. More than 50 members of the Alamo City Gator Club® were there to offer encouragement and assistance to participants, and to help run the race.

The club's efforts were its contribution to International Gator Day, an annual event organized by the UF Alumni Association to spread Gator spirit around the world. Chaired this year by Danny Wuerffel (BSPR '96), about 65 Gator Clubs® participated on May 16 by hosting various forms of community service projects in their areas.

U.S. Air Force Ret. Maj. Ray McHale\* (BSPE '70), president of the Alamo City Gator Club, says San Antonio Gators were honored to take part. His members helped transport, escort and assist the vet-

erans at transition points along the course. While the club helped the 30-plus veterans who participated in last year's event, this year the race hosted 110 participants from several military bases.

"This event is both a physical and mental challenge, and helps the Wounded Warriors change their mindset from what they can't do — because of their injuries — to what they can do despite them," McHale says.

Wuerffel, who works with Desire Street Ministries based in Atlanta, says it's events like this that show the breadth and depth of The Gator Nation.

"While we share a common bond of being part of the University of Florida family, we share an even greater commitment to the betterment of society," Wuerffel says.

Among the numerous projects undertaken by Gator Clubs this year, some included blood drives, animal shelter volunteer projects, Habitat for Humanity home building projects, litter collection parties, canned food drives, park clean-ups, care package preparation for troops overseas, beach clean-ups, preparations for sea turtle nesting season and car washes.

Visit [www.ufalumni.ufl.edu/GatorClubs](http://www.ufalumni.ufl.edu/GatorClubs) to see a list of clubs that participated. To find a Gator Club near you, contact Virginia Horton\* at 352-392-9597 or [vhorton@ufalumni.ufl.edu](mailto:vhorton@ufalumni.ufl.edu).

Courtesy of Alamo City Gator Club®



1



2

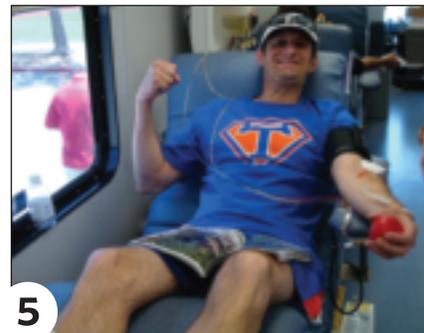
1) Gainesville alumni and friends spruced up Girls Place Inc. in Gainesville. 2) Gator Club® of Volusia County worked on houses with Habitat for Humanity. 3) Lone Star Gator Club® in Austin, Texas, volunteered at its local Ronald McDonald House. 4) Panhandle Gator Club® volunteered at a car wash for the Humane Society of Bay County. 5) The San Francisco Bay Area Gator Club® partnered with the Blood Centers of the Pacific for its third annual blood drive. 6) Music City Gator Club® of Nashville, Tenn., held a fun day for teenage boys at the My Friend's House Family & Children Services group home. 7) Dallas Gator Club® hosted a bingo night for its local Ronald McDonald House. 8) Marion County Gator Club® hosted a Gator Happy Hour at a rehabilitation center in Ocala. 9) New England Gator Club® of Framington, Mass., helped Cradles to Crayons provide clothing, shoes, school supplies and other items to needy children. 10) Seattle Gator Club® packaged food at Washington state's largest food bank distribution center.



3



4



5



6



7



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9



10

Courtesy of UF Alumni Association



Tom Thurston and his team of trained athletes take on another leg of the “Last Great Race on Earth” at the 2009 Iditarod restart point in Willow, Alaska. While some relate the Iditarod with Siberian Huskies, Thurston and some other mushers prefer Alaskan Huskies. The slightly larger breed got its start when Alaskans bred and trained the strongest village dogs.

# GONE TO THE DOGS

How alumni Tom and Tami Thurston left the rat race and found happiness on a dog sled.

By Cindy Spence (BSJ '82)



Jim R. Kohl/AlaskaStock.com

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**T**

o Alaskans, Iditarod means “far-off distant place.” Likewise, the sled dog race that follows the Iditarod Trail is a world away from UF.

Yet, last March found UF graduates Tom Thurston (BSBA '92) and Tami Eggers Thurston (BSR '93) in Anchorage, with Tami seeing Tom off on the 1,151-mile Iditarod Trail

Sled Dog Race — a feat so challenging that fewer than 700 mushers have completed the race since it started in 1973.

Count Tom among them. His time: 14 days, 3 hours, 36 minutes, 22 seconds — a very respectable 44th place finish for a musher who has been racing only three years.

The path to the finish line in Nome was anything but straight. After Tami's graduation, the couple headed for business careers in Orlando. By 1994, they had soured on the corporate world and decided to take a year to roam the United States.

“I wasn't happy wearing a suit, so we decided instead to find a place to live and then find a job,” Tom says.

They loaded their VW van and headed west. They got as far as Oak Creek, Colo., just outside Steamboat Springs, before they ran out of money, and that was just as well. They had found a place to call home.

Tom traded suits for jeans and overalls and began working with his hands, doing carpentry and building houses, eventually becoming a general contractor. When they found their 40-acre spread, Tom built nearly everything on it. He fell in love with the back country and rock-climbing.

And then came the dogs. Tom was taking two house dogs to a kennel when some sled dogs caught his eye. Tami says he asked dozens of questions, and she could see an idea beginning to gel. When Tom broke his back and couldn't work construction for a while, the Double T Kennel became a reality.

“I got into sled dogs because they could bring me into the back country,” Tom says. “I love winter camping, back country travel, and it's tough to find people willing to do that, even in Colorado.”

The kennel started with six dogs in 2000, mostly Alaskan Huskies obtained from a former Iditarod champion. As their breeding line evolved, the Thurstons formed an ambitious five-year master plan: In 2009, they vowed, Tom would run the Iditarod with their dogs.

The Iditarod became a family affair, Tami says. Even 9-year-old Greta and 7-year-old Leona pitched in on chores and took part in mushing the dogs.

“People think I'm crazy, but Tom started dog-sledding when I was pregnant with our first child, so our kids don't know anything different. Chores and training is what they know, and they do two- and three-dog teams themselves,” Tami says. “The mamas have their puppies in our living room, and our children watch them being born.”

Greta, who has been mushing since she was 3, has a natural instinct with dogs, Tami says. Tom once enlisted her help with a dog that had been ill; Greta put the dog on her team and retrained him for her dad.

To prepare for the world's toughest dog race, Tom began entering shorter races, learning from his rookie mistakes along the way. In one race, for instance, Tom was in third place when a wrong turn sent him on a 14-mile detour. The mistake bumped him to a seventh-place finish, but Tom blamed himself, not his dogs.

“My philosophy is the dog never makes a mistake,” Tom says. “A mistake is solely the musher's fault.”

By the 2007-08 season, Tom and his dogs were a seasoned team, finishing with two victories, a sportsmanship award and best-cared-for dog team award — a particular point of pride because, although Tom considers his dogs athletes, they are family members, too.

“Anyone who mistreats dogs should have their dogs taken away and be banned. These are kind, gentle-spirited animals, so giving and unconditional,” Tom says. “Dogs will perform off the expectations you've established. You can't train at a 10-hour rate and then run them for 11 hours. You can't ask a dog to do something you haven't established for it to do, whether it's get the newspaper or run a race.”



**“I got into sled dogs because they could bring me into the back country. I love winter camping, back country travel, and it's tough to find people willing to do that, even in Colorado.” — Tom Thurston**



Matt Stensland

At the Double T Kennel, the dogs are part of the family. (Clockwise from top, left) Scrat enjoys attention from Greta Thurston. Tom and Tami Thurston with Elton. A lack of snow doesn't keep Kodiak and the other dogs from their training regimen. Tami Thurston spends a moment with future dog team members.



"Anyone who mistreats dogs should have their dogs taken away and be banned," says Tom Thurston, pictured with Sable.

Matt Stensland

No race in the lower 48 compares to the Iditarod. The race started in 1973 as a way of preserving an Alaskan heritage being overrun by snowmobiles. It takes place along the Iditarod Trail, a National Historic Trail that was once used for mail and supply runs to the Alaskan interior. In the 1920s, in fact, the trail played a major role in relief efforts to Nome, which had been struck by a diphtheria epidemic. Dog sleds were used to bring serum to the community.

When dog sleds again plied the trail 50 years later in 1973, the wind chill measured at -130 degrees Fahrenheit — making it a wonder there was a second Iditarod. But 2009 marked the Iditarod's 37th running. In odd years, the race goes through Iditarod, a ghost town that was the site of one of the last major gold strikes in Alaska.

Tom met his first goal: just to finish. He also met his other goals of finishing with 12 healthy dogs and having his team moving faster at the end of the race than the beginning. He met those goals against great odds. Weather for this year's Iditarod was so severe that racers twice were prohibited from leaving checkpoints. There were stretches of 60 mph winds and temperatures of -50 degrees Fahrenheit.

"It was challenging to keep everything together," Tom says. "Going up the Yukon River, the wind blew straight in our face."

Tom left one checkpoint in a group of teams. At the next one — 13 hours and 70 miles later — he learned that one team turned back, another was rescued and three others were 15 hours behind.

"The race is just so extreme, you can't prepare for those conditions, even in Colorado," Tom says.

Then, just 20 miles from the finish line in Nome, a blizzard hit, making it nearly impossible to see the trail, much less stay on it. Tom got down on his hands and knees, one hand on the gang line holding the dogs, the other searching for a trail marker.

"If you think you're lost, you probably are, and you should turn around and find a trail marker. So I did," Tom says. "I knew if I got 10 feet from the dogs, I wouldn't be able to see them. You have to keep your wits about you. A wrong decision can be fatal for you or your dogs. We had to earn it right up to the end."

Thanks to GPS, Tami was able to follow the race by computer. She admits she was relieved to see Tom make it through a gorge the racers knew would be particularly challenging.

For his part, Tom says either a musher has done the work to prepare for a race or he hasn't.

"The harder things are, the more rewarding they are when you get to the finish line," Tom says, adding that the Iditarod finish validated his five-year plan.

Time for a new plan, and one day, maybe another Iditarod.

*Editor's note: In late August, the Thurstons registered to participate in the 2010 Iditarod race. It begins March 6. Follow Tom Thurston's progress during the race online at [www.iditarod.com](http://www.iditarod.com) or check out his preparations on Facebook under "Double T Kennel."*

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**"The harder things are,  
the more rewarding  
they are when you  
get to the finish line."  
— Tom Thurston**

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Leona, left, and Greta Thurston don't just help train the dogs — they also name them. Here they spend couch time with (from left) Cherry, Moto Moto (a name inspired from the movie "Madagascar"), Shorty and Gloria (also from "Madagascar").

Matt Stensland



UF meat science professor Dwain Johnson worked with a University of Nebraska professor to help the U.S. cattle industry find a more inexpensive cut of steak it could promote during these tough economic times. Their solution — the flat iron steak — is the second most tender cut of beef.

Randy Batista (BA '73)

# A Cut Above

Watch for flat iron steaks to appear on a dinner table near you.

By Aaron Hoover (MFAS '02)

**T**here is no substitute for an \$1,800 handbag, string of natural pearls or golden parachute. But gourmands whose plates are left bare by the economic slump may have a good alternative to the \$24.99 New York Strip.

Its name hints fashionably at sparer times: the flat iron steak.

The flat iron — a cut of beef singled out by UF and University of Nebraska meat science researchers nearly a decade ago — is rapidly becoming more popular in restaurants and retail outlets. Praised for its tenderness and flavor, a flat iron entrée typically sells from \$5 to \$10 less than a New York Strip or filet mignon main course.

Still steak, to be sure.

But the price, at least, isn't heart-stopping.

"In this downturn people come in and they don't have the money or don't want to spend \$20 for a steak — but they will spend \$10 or \$12," says Dwain Johnson, the UF meat science professor who first picked out and promoted the new cut with fellow meat scientist Chris Calkins at Nebraska.

Steak seems traditional, even immutable, like butter or salmon.

But while the classic American cuts have been around for at least a century, others came along with the California roll or even later. Prior to the 1970s, for example, when Mexican food became popular, few outside South Texas would have recognized a colorful combo called the fajita. The beef in fajitas comes from a cut off the cow's diaphragm named for its appearance, the skirt steak. Until times turned taco, the skirt steak was ground into hamburger everywhere north of the Lone Star state.

"Now they don't grind the skirt steak up anymore," Johnson says. "They sell it for \$3 to \$4 a pound."

Dollars rather than food fads spurred the flat iron.

It traces its roots to 1999 when the National Cattlemen's Beef Association hired Johnson and Calkins to help reverse falling prices for beef products.

The two hunted for added value throughout the 6,000 muscles in the beef carcass, but they spent most of their time on two particularly large but then unprofitable parts — the chuck and round. Consumers, abandoning leisurely Sunday dinners for fast ones, were buying far fewer of the slow-cooked roasts typically carved from those parts. That was forcing beef producers to sell the meat, often ground into hamburger, at a loss.

The chuck comes from the cow's front shoulder and is 26 percent of the carcass. As Johnson says, "you can't give away a quarter of your product and make any money."

Among the 27 chuck muscles, the researchers bore down on one called the infraspinatus. The second most tender in the chuck after the tenderloin, the odd-looking infraspinatus consistently

aced taste tests. But it had a mouthful of a flaw: a tough piece of connective tissue running through its heart.

The researchers and the Cattlemen's Beef Association came up with the fix: fillet the top and bottom like a fish, creating not one but two 10-inch-long, half-inch-thick steaks. The steaks' elongated triangular shape suggested their old-timey name.

Johnson says restaurant suppliers were the first to latch on to the new cut with retailers following suit. Nearly 13 million pounds were sold in retail stores in 2008, up 18 percent from 2007, according to FreshLook Marketing Group, which compiles national sales data on perishable products. Combined with other tasty but less popular chuck steaks also picked out by Johnson and Calkins, the beef carcass' value is now worth \$60 to \$70 more than when the meat was sold for roasts or ground beef, Johnson says.

Better yet, diners saving dimes don't necessarily have to cluck for chicken.

Says Johnson, "Some of these cuts like the flat iron fit an intermediate market that had been given over to chicken breasts or pork cuts."

Find directions to UF's meat processing facility store (open Fridays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) and a price list at [www.animal.ufl.edu/extension/meat](http://www.animal.ufl.edu/extension/meat).

## Taste Test

Flat iron steaks have gained attention from a variety of television cooking stars including Wolfgang Puck, Rachel Ray, Giada De Laurentis and Martha Stewart. The recipe below comes from the catering teams at Walt Disney World.

### Peppercorn Rubbed and Grilled Flat Iron Steak

4 tbsp. cracked black pepper

1/8 tsp. ground allspice

1/4 cup chopped green peppercorns

6 (4-ounce) flat iron steaks (Yield: six servings)

Kosher salt

Chopped fresh rosemary leaves, for garnish (about 2 sprigs)

Mix black pepper and allspice; set aside. Rub both sides of steaks with green peppercorns, then sprinkle each side with pepper and allspice mixture to taste. Place steaks in refrigerator for minimum four hours. Salt to taste and let stand for nearly 30 minutes at room temperature before grilling (or oven broiling). Cook to desired doneness. Remove from heat and let stand at least five minutes. Garnish with chopped rosemary and serve.



Barbara Stephenson (BA '79, MA '81, PhD '85) became the United States' ambassador to Panama in July 2008.

## Grace Under Fire

Although she's faced numerous dangers in her journey to becoming a U.S. ambassador, Barbara Stephenson's main mission has always been to keep the peace.

**D**uring her first assignment to Panama in 1987, student protesters surrounded her embassy car, smashing windows and showering Barbara Stephenson and her fellow diplomats with glass.

Three years later in El Salvador, the concussion from a terrorist bomb under a utility pole 50 yards away sent Stephenson and her 6-month-old daughter ducking for cover under the water in a swimming pool.

And two-and-a-half years ago Stephenson hung on tightly while her helicopter zigged and zagged through the Iraqi sky fleeing the threat of ground-to-air missiles.

Though parts of her career read like pages from a Green Beret's diary, the UF alumna and mother of two is actually a diplomat, one who has made the rare transition from career foreign service officer to full-fledged ambassador.

She is America's new chief diplomatic representative to Panama, a significant U.S. ally and a more peaceful place than it sometimes was during her first posting.

Stephenson's career, though punctuated with occasional bone-chilling excitement, is built on forging relationships and finding common ground.

She drew on insight gained during desegregation in North Central Florida, for instance, when she worked to convince Protestants and Catholics to send their children to the same schools in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Now her job in Panama includes economic and education partnerships aimed at closing the "opportunity gap" and bringing others closer to the successes that Americans take for granted.

"It's an exciting time to represent America," says Stephenson (BA '79, MA '81, PhD '85). "There is just such a sense of

goodwill toward the United States. It is an important moment. And we want to use it to heal and restore our standing."

Panama is a natural setting for Stephenson. She developed her love for Latin America partly from UF study abroad programs in South America. She graduated from UF in 1985 with a doctorate in English, but she was also just one course short of a second major in Latin American Studies.

The wild helicopter ride came during Stephenson's short time in Iraq. Working from both Iraq and Washington, D.C., Stephenson helped lead the formation of 28 Provincial Reconstruction Teams, bringing together rural leaders in far-flung provinces throughout the country.

Ambassador David Satterfield, her boss in the Iraq project, praises Stephenson's "ability to display at times just the right mix of steeliness, spine and very calculated temper, coupled with an extraordinary

ability to get along and to make people get along, not just with her, but with each other. And that is a rare mix, indeed.”

Some of her colleagues say they knew early on that she would be a success.

El Salvador, Belfast and Iraq were “some of the biggest challenges we’ve encountered over the years and she has been involved in all of them,” says long-time friend and fellow diplomat Sue Saarnio, deputy director for multi-lateral trade in the State Department’s trade office.

Diplomacy is teamwork, Saarnio says. Nobody brokers peace accords or other agreements alone, “but there are people who are smart enough to crack the nut and figure out ... where can we find the middle ground here and where can we find something where we can all agree on to move ahead.”

Stephenson talks about her 24-year career using phrases such as “bridge building” and “common cause” and getting people to buy into a “shared vision” that leaves them better off. She speaks of work

that helps people and “leaves them also thinking the very best of the United States.”

Stephenson’s life and work have been influenced by people such as Rena Coughlin (BA ’81), her 1980s neighbor in University Gardens. Coughlin is a former Peace Corps worker, long-time close friend and now CEO of the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida.

“She is reflective, smart, and

then she’s also able to take action quickly,” Coughlin says. She’s “exactly who you want representing you overseas. She’s the opposite of the ugly American.”

— Phil Long

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**Stephenson has the “ability to display at times just the right mix of steeliness, spine and very calculated temper, coupled with an extraordinary ability to get along and to make people get along, not just with her, but with each other.”**

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**— Ambassador David Satterfield**

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## Inside the Embassy

- Barbara Stephenson became ambassador to Panama July 10, 2008. She was appointed by President George W. Bush.

- Since her appointment, Stephenson has worked to create a common database for Panama and its neighboring Central American countries to fight drug trafficking and organized crime in the region.

- In addition to Panama, her past diplomatic postings have included the United Kingdom, South Africa, The Hague, El Salvador, Curacao, Northern Ireland and Iraq.

- She speaks Spanish and Dutch and reads French.

- Stephenson’s husband, Matt (MA ’85), is a poet, musician trainer and chef. He’s also often the principle caregiver to the couple’s two children: Claire, 19, who is in her second year at the University of Virginia, and Brewster, 10.

- She is a native of Wildwood, having graduated as valedictorian of Wildwood High in 1976.

- Stephenson didn’t start traveling until she spent summers in Colombia, Greece and Austria as an undergraduate in UF’s study abroad program.

- Stephenson credits UF political science professor René Lemarchand with suggesting she consider a career as a diplomat.

- “The Gator Nation should be very proud of Ambassador Stephenson,” says fellow Gator and U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson (’60-’62), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. “Barbara’s had a distinguished career in the State Department for over two decades.”



Courtesy of the U.S. Embassy — Panama

Working for the career Senior Foreign Service since 1985, Stephenson holds the rank of minister counselor.

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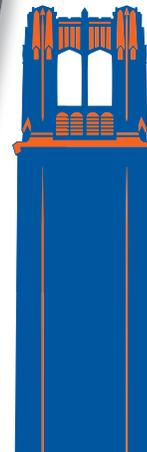
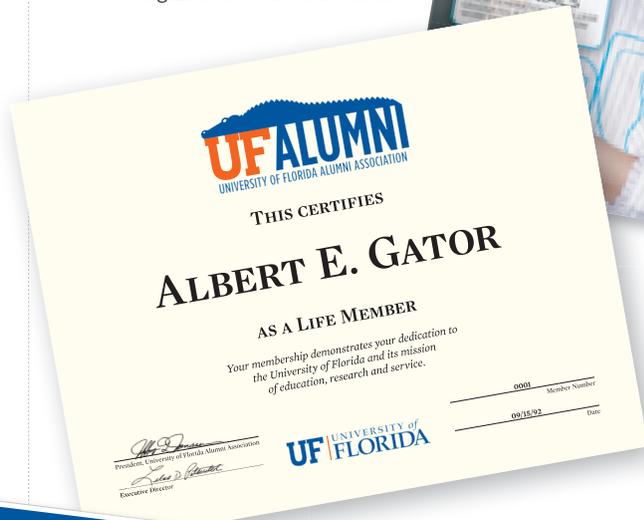


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# Seen these campus additions?

The thousands of freshmen weren't the only new sights on campus this fall. Three major UF facilities opened for business: the Shands at UF Cancer Hospital, the Emerging Pathogens Institute and the Biomedical Sciences building.

At left are four more new additions to UF's holdings. Put on your hard hat and see if you can guess what these new facilities are for and where they're located. Need a little help? Here are some hints:

1. Students, faculty and staff alike cheered with the opening of this six-level structure on Gale Lemerand Drive. Those of you who experienced the joys of waiting in line for hours at this office's old double-wide setup may not recognize its new digs — even in person.

2. This edifice will fulfill a dire need on campus when it opens in spring 2010. It will expand services which have been offered only in a three-story, 78-year-old building near the football stadium. This expansion, however, is situated west of the peaceful Baughman Meditation Center.

3. A brand new spring sport will play its first season in this Hull Road gem, which includes 1,500 seats for fans. You won't need to body check anyone to get in, however. It's close to the Cultural Plaza, which has plenty of parking.

4. The business of this 70,000-square-foot behemoth will be to house graduate programs for one of UF's top-ranked colleges. It's slated to open in April.



1



2



3



4

Answers: 1) Transportation and Parking Services 2) Counseling and Wellness Center 3) Lacrosse Stadium 4) William R. Hough Hall

Russ Bryant



# I Remember When ...

**I was an undergraduate 1948-1953. The fraternities were on University Avenue and on 13<sup>th</sup> Street or just east of 13<sup>th</sup>.** My fraternity, Delta Chi, was about a block east on Southwest Second Avenue.

The SAE house with its ubiquitous lion was on the southeastern corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and University Avenue. At all times of the year, seasonal produce was trucked up 13<sup>th</sup> Street on its way north to markets.

When the spring semester ended one year, some young men — probably from a rival fraternity — decided to do the SAE lion in. They obtained a long length of forged steel chain and hooked it around two of the lion’s legs late one night. Soon, a semi-truck loaded to the gills with watermelons rolled up to a red light at 13<sup>th</sup> and University. They quickly hooked the chain around the rear axle of the trailer and sat back confidently, expecting the truck to pull the old lion out of the ground. Unfortunately, the SAEs must have

planted that sucker in continental bed-rock. The traffic light turned green, and the trucker began to shift into his first gear. The trailer eased forward and the chain was pulled taut.

There was a terrible rending sound as the axle separated from the trailer. The trailer fell in the intersection, scattering broken watermelons. The miscreants abandoned their chain and got the hell out of Dodge.

The second SAE episode may be just a bit too much for your magazine.

The northwest corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and University held a Pure Oil truck stop. On the northeast corner was a fraternity that sat directly opposite from SAE. This fraternity and the SAE’s became bitter rivals.

One of the SAE brothers was a pharmacy major. It seems there is a white powder that, to a layperson, is indistinguishable from flour, and, if ingested, supposedly causes violent diarrhea. The SAEs sent a

kitchen helper to borrow a 10-pound bag of flour from the rival’s kitchen. They then carefully mixed the powder in the package they returned.

The SAEs didn’t realize their rival was about to entertain a sorority in a formal dinner. The menu called for biscuits made from the fateful flour. Fraternity houses generally had limited “facilities” for female guests. When the chemical began its terrible effects, young sorority ladies could be seen hurriedly crossing 13<sup>th</sup> Street in a desperate attempt to make it to the limited “powder room” at the truck stop.

Both fraternities realized this rivalry was getting out of hand. One homecoming, as the parade made its way west on University Avenue, both groups rushed out just before the parade and sat a table in the middle of the street to sign a “peace treaty.”

— *Jim Fisher\**  
(BAE ’52, MED ’60, EDD ’66)  
Mount Dora

Illustrations by Ethan Long

**These were, without a doubt, the best four years of my life.** The campus was still small enough that you knew most everyone. We had little money, but there were many “freebies.” I went to every basketball game and football game, and I lived for Gator Growl. I had the opportunity of seeing Ray Charles, the Lime Lighters, Richard Nixon and others who’ve slipped my mind. Daily trips to the C.I., a place where all gathered for friendly conversation and some awful food.

Being a journalism major, I was in one of the few air-conditioned buildings on campus, and this was a treat. The football stadium was small and the team poor, but we all went and cheered like hell.

I left Gainesville after my last test in 1963, not even knowing if I had graduated. A month later my diploma was mailed to me, and it still hangs before me as I type this e-mail.

I cannot end this without mentioning my favorite professor, the late H.G. “Buddy” Davis. Professor Davis was a man among men. He literally carried me through the birth of my son and stayed with me until I graduated. When I learned of his passing, I felt as if I had lost my best friend. I’m sure he’s up there somewhere, looking down on me and saying, “Great zot, Bill, get on with the program.”

— *William Goldman* (BSJ ’63)  
Land O’ Lakes

**A vivid memory of my days at UF is of my participation in the Miss Florida contest at the Spring Frolics of 1950.** My performance was less than stellar. I froze upon entering the stage and exemplified the phrase “like a deer caught in the headlights.”

The judge was the famous bandleader Harry James. He was accompanied by his wife, Betty Grable, the movie star and World War II calendar pinup. It was obvious that Harry James was a judge in name only. Betty Grable, with little attempt at subterfuge, continuously whispered into her husband’s ear during the entire contest. Thus, it was no surprise that the winner (albeit a very beautiful girl) was a younger version of Betty Grable. That outcome, to this day, still assuages my feelings of guilt as I reassure myself that even if I had smiled, I still would have lost the contest.

— *Norma Ullian Greenstein* (BA ’52)  
Southwest Ranches

**As a 1952-1956 student in the School of Journalism and Communications that Rae Weimer led,** then working closely with him between 1964 and 1973 (while he was special assistant to President Stephen O’Connell), I was — and am — able to respect and admire Rae with a different and more intense perception than many others.

In that era it was, “Bob, have the local folks in Tigert by 4 o’clock. The president will have a news conference statement.” Rae loved those attention-claiming phone call orders that triggered O’Connell commenting on timely issues affecting UF. When I complained meekly once about short notice to notify press, radio and TV, he smirked at me, “You asked for work when you came here, didn’t you?”

Rae Weimer had no doctorate, no master’s and not even bachelor’s degree documentation. His education claim may have had “SHK” after his name. “School of Hard Knocks” reflected years of New York newspaper duties preceding launch of the UF journalism thrust on a steady move toward prominence.

It was my lifetime highlight to earn a journalism degree under Weimer’s supervision, starting classes in rickety Building K across from Florida Gym and then being instructed in space within the northwest corner of the football stadium. Working

with and for Rae was a five-year bonus that the vast majority of his college’s alumni never experienced. He created valid logic for UF to name Weimer Hall as a salute to one individual’s dedicated leadership.

— *Bob Lynch\** (BSJ ’56)  
High Springs

**In 1955, after Fort Lauderdale High, I was scheduled to attend the University of North Carolina on a partial swimming scholarship.** At the 11th hour ... I was awarded a full scholarship to UF. I roomed with my Lauderdale buddy and fellow swimmer, Phil Drake (BA ’58). He was an All American and world record holder who was also attending on a full scholarship. We were the first two students with full scholarships in swimming.

I struggled academically. After aptitude tests I changed majors, grades really improved and here I am, an alumnus. I will be forever grateful for the wonderful people in the Athletic Department. I joined a national fraternity, but my real fraternity was our swimming team. We were all very close, and, to this day, some of us still stay in touch.

— *Bill Ruggie\** (BSA ’60)  
Clearwater

## Write Us

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\*UF Alumni Association member

# Integration Champion



It was Virgil Hawkins' determination that drove him to push for — and eventually witness — the integration of UF and other Florida universities.

It's been 60 years since Virgil Darnell Hawkins, at the time a 41-year-old public relations director at Bethune-Cookman College, applied to attend UF's law school.

He was one of five blacks who tried to attend UF's professional programs that year, and all five were denied admission based on race. The NAACP immediately filed a lawsuit on behalf of the applicants — Hawkins, Rose Boyd, Benjamin Finley, William Lewis and Oliver Maxey — but only Hawkins saw the fight through.

For the next nine years Hawkins fought to desegregate UF. Even the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in his favor, yet UF failed to comply with its ruling.

In the end, Hawkins agreed to withdraw his application in exchange for a court order that desegregated UF's professional and graduate schools. Then, he moved to Boston where he earned a law degree from the New England College of Law.

Because of the ruling, George Starke\* was admitted as the law school's first black student on Sept. 15, 1958. However, the honor of being the first black student to graduate would go to George Allen in 1962.

Hawkins, who died at age 81 in 1988, posthumously received an honorary degree from UF in 2001.

*Learn more about Hawkins and UF's integration at [www.law.ufl.edu/centers/hawkins/virgil.shtml](http://www.law.ufl.edu/centers/hawkins/virgil.shtml).*



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**\$500** — Buys books for the Libraries or a needy student.

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Track Tom Thurston's progress in the 2010 Iditarod this spring online at [www.iditarod.com](http://www.iditarod.com). His dog sled — and those of other mushers — will have a GPS device reporting how fast they are traveling, the temperature and where they are on the trail. The race begins March 6. Also, check out the Thurstons' weekly training videos, articles and photos on their Facebook page: Double T Kennel — Racing Alaskan Huskies.

Jim R. Kohn/AlaskaStock.com