

BRENAU

WINTER 2011

Window



Gospel According to Karen Peck | Special Agent Tracy Clark | SACS Speaks!

Political 'Science'

Brenau's Honor Code requires students and faculty to embrace truth. The university supports and enforces the honest pursuit of educational studies and respectful behavior towards others. When they graduate, Brenau alumni take honor code experience with them in life. It occurs to me that Brenau people could be outstanding role models and examples for those in our society who should have spent more time in their lives developing an appreciation for honor and truth.

Why do I bring this up now? Here's a news flash for you at the beginning of the 2012 election year: Politicians sometime manufacture issues to get the public's attention. They base their positions on these issues on gross exaggerations, deceptions or outright lies. In the past, those issues usually went away once ballots were counted. Unfortunately, in today's polarized political and media environment, some of these fake issues stick and, frighteningly, shape policy. As a result, the fake issues-makers *actually manufacture some real problems*.

As a scientist (the "hard science" kind, not the political kind), it drives me a little nuts that many of these fake issues appear to be giving momentum to an escalating war on science. The anti-science politicians have also reactivated some old prejudices that science somehow undermines one's religious faith. Aside from violating any honor code I know, this runs against the grain of our work at Brenau to purposefully and aggressively step up science education and honest inquiry and research, like the extremely successful undergraduate study of endangered plants that you read about in a previous issue of this magazine. Science plays a central role in our understanding of the formation and sustainability of the earth and all living things. The ultimate *sacrilege* is misleading the public with provably untrue "interpretations" of basic science to legitimize questionable political or social positions.

I blame the media, of course – not for its lack of *objectivity*, but its lack of *subjectivity*, its absolute failure to dig for verifiable truth, like true scientists do. A recent published report noted that about only one percent of the articles in all unbiased, peer-reviewed scientific journals in the past 10 years raised any doubts about the existence of climate change whereas more than 50 percent of the media reports did. That is happening because, to create the illusion of an unbiased reporting of news, when there is not enough science to support a logical debate on issues and facts, the media turns to unverifiable and inaccurate "opinions," mostly from people who cannot *spell* science.

In a new book, *The Body Politic: The Battle Over Science in America*, University of Pennsylvania professor and adviser to three presidents Jonathan D. Moreno writes that the alternative to science-based "experimental confirmation is, in a word, dogma. Dogmatic statements may have many fine qualities. They may be beautiful, inspirational, and convey a kind of wisdom, or at least the impression of wisdom. But they can never be verifiable and self-correcting in the manner of science."

It is galling to me, too, that we are at a point in history when we should be using science to study real problems and develop real responses instead of wasting time and resources haggling over fake issues created to frighten the public. Half a century ago the science-based space program led to an unprecedented explosion of discovery that not only put man on the moon but also made human life on earth healthier and more productive. Today, because of "political science," we're thumbing rides on rockets from Russia. In the 1980s American scientists pioneered miraculous fetal surgery techniques and instruments; today we rank 25th in the world in infant mortality. Because the politicians and pundits have no real grasp of science, we're forced into debates over whether "climate change," which has been around for millions of years, *even exists*; we cannot even begin the tougher undertaking of determining what we must do to address the impact of the interaction of human society and its byproducts with the scientific phenomena. We now fight legislative battles over textbooks with "alternate theories" to solid discoveries in paleontology, geology and genetics. Recently, even seemingly benign efforts to get kids to learn healthy nutrition have drawn political lightning.

We are smarter than that, aren't we? The university must redouble its efforts to remain a bulwark against those who would play politics with basic truths that just happen to include the survival of the planet and the health and safety of human beings. Our world faces many serious problems. However, one of the most valuable tools with which our Creator endowed us, the power of science, can help us solve them. We cannot abandon that gift – or abdicate our responsibility for using it – to cable news pundits.



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It's Official: SACS reaffirms Brenau accreditation

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges in early December reaffirmed Brenau University's 10-year accreditation as a Level V doctoral degree-granting institution, an action that followed the university's unprecedented performance in the higher education accrediting agency's detailed examination of Brenau academic programs and business practices.

At the annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., the SACS membership also named Brenau University President Ed L. Schrader to a two-year term on the commission's Board of Trustees, which guides the organization's work in the accreditation process for hundreds of public and private colleges and universities in 11 southern states, the Caribbean, Latin America and Mexico.

Schrader says both actions were a testament to Brenau's extremely strong showing in the decennial accreditation review process – the highest level of review and credentialing for all of Brenau's academic programs and administrative operations that support the university. The university passed the last major milestone to reaffirmation in March when the visiting independent team of academic officers from other institutions around the South completed its on-site examination. The committee made only a single recommendation for improvement to an administrative process, a procedural change that the Commission on Colleges approved in June.

Only One Minor Issue

"This is a proud moment for Brenau, its faculty and its administration," Schrader said the day of the SACS actions. "This demonstrates that Brenau University takes the accreditation process very seriously at all levels and strives to provide the highest-quality education for all Brenau students."

Schrader, who has been involved with many SACS reviews of other institution, says he had "very rarely seen fewer than 12 or 13 recommendations of things the institution had to correct or address" before receiving complete re-affirmation – with many of those requiring major alterations to academic programs and practices. Since Brenau is undergoing some major growth in its transition from a master's degree-level institution to a university that offers doctorates by adding and expanding both academic programs and

educational platforms, the clean review is doubly rewarding.

Following initial SACS approval last year, Brenau opened the first classes for candidates for its new Doctor of Nursing Practice in the fall term. The university plans to propose a doctoral program in occupational therapy and one other discipline during the next academic year.

The doctoral degrees are part of the Brenau 2025 strategic plan that envisions doubling enrollment to about 5,000 students in a little more than a decade with most of the growth's occurring in graduate-level programs. Brenau 2011 fall term enrollment set a new record of 2,819 students, more than 1,000 of whom are graduate students.

The SACS action provides the accreditation umbrella for all of the university's existing degree and non-degree programs. However, specific programs within the university also hold additional accreditations from professional standards organizations for various disciplines including the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, the Collegiate Commission for Nursing Education, Council for Interior Design Accreditation, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission for teacher education programs, the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs, the Masters in Psychology Accreditation Council, the National Association of Schools of Dance, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission.

SACS, one of six regional accreditation agencies in the United States sanctioned by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education, accredits more than 13,000 public and private educational institutions, which range from preschool to college level. At the university level, the Commission on Colleges accredits public institutions, private colleges, military schools and community colleges. Each accredited institution has a vote in electing members of the Board of Trustees.

"To be elected to the board is a great personal honor for me," Schrader said. "But I know that it is also recognition of the vision and hard work that the entire Brenau family continues to do in creating a truly remarkable institution that will serve as a model for higher education in the future."

'Early College' also wins SACS nod

AFTER CLOSE TO A YEAR since the university set out to transition Brenau Academy exclusively to an "Early College" program for extraordinary high school students, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges gave full recognition to the Brenau proposal. The key phrase here is "Commission on Colleges," which means the early college program is now a full-fledged, accredited college program. "That gives us the green light to legitimately market the program and plan for the future," says Lenna Applebee, director of the program.

Administratively, the Brenau early college academic unit reports to Andrea Birch, dean of the Women's College and all undergraduate studies, and to the university provost Nancy Krippel. The SACS approval has been the high point of a year of transition from the point Brenau trustees decided the old residential girl's prep school model was no longer economically sustainable. Applebee and staff currently are working with 10 students as they complete high school diplomas, all of whom, she reports, "are adjusting to full college workloads."

Make no mistake: SACS approval is huge. In addition to some cosmetics like what URL can be used on the Web site (the *.edu designation is reserved for higher education), the accreditation means courses will transfer seamlessly to any higher education institution and that Georgia residents can qualify for the HOPE Scholarship, financial aid that wasn't previously available to them as just high school students.

As evolution of the program continues, Applebee and Jenny Dell, alumni director, seek input from Brenau Academy alumnae through some independent research and direct contact. Call or write the Office of Alumni Relations at 770-718-5307 or alumni.news@brenau.edu to provide your current contact information.

Brenau brings national tournament to Gainesville

Continuing to enhance Brenau's stature in the intercollegiate mediation and arbitration field, the International Academy of Dispute Resolution selected the Gainesville, Ga.-based institution as the site for the 13th Annual National Undergraduate Mediation Tournament, Nov. 1 - 3, 2012. The selection marks the first time the tournament, which usually goes to Chicago or Des Moines, Iowa, has ever been held anywhere outside the Midwest. The tournament is expected to draw more than 40 teams from colleges and universities from around the nation.

Alternative Dispute Resolution, or ADR, is an increasingly popular and often court-mandated form of legal problem-solving in which a trained negotiator guides conflicting parties toward a mutually acceptable agreement. The intercollegiate tournaments are an important teaching tool for students to give them experience outside the classroom in employing their skills.

"The 2012 tournament should open the door for participation for schools that have been unable to travel to Chicago or Des Moines for previous events," said Dr. Ken Frank, chair of the Brenau Humanities Department and a member of the IADR board. "We are

honored to be chosen as the first site outside the Midwest."

Frank developed the university's Conflict Resolution and Legal Studies major 13 years ago, making Brenau the only institution in Georgia – and one of just a few in the country – to offer an undergraduate degree in the subject. The university has fared well in past competitions, winning top honors in 2002 and seldom ranking below the top 10. A dozen Brenau students have been honored as "All-American Mediators," including those in the picture, seniors Christina Poole and Heidi Cranford, who were added to the All-America rolls following their stellar performance in the 2011 national tournament in Des Moines in November.



Getting on track: Tigers launch new varsity sport

BRENAU UNIVERSITY continues to expand its athletic program with the addition of women's outdoor track and field, which will begin competition as a varsity sport in the spring of 2013. Athletic Director Mike Lochstampfor already is interviewing candidates for the new head coach position for the team and the university will begin immediately recruiting athletes. He says starting a track and field program was a logical next step for Brenau.

"It is a sport that is gaining in popularity on the national level," Lochstampfor says. "I look forward to seeing the many new athletes that this sport will add to the Golden Tiger family. I believe it will be a great fit for our university, and I have no doubt that it will be as successful as the rest of the sports we currently sponsor."

Track and field will become the ninth varsity sport for the Golden Tigers, balancing the athletic opportunities offered within each competitive season. Brenau already fields teams in soccer, cross country and volleyball in the fall; basketball, swimming and cheerleading in the winter and tennis and softball in the spring. All compete well in

the National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics. The Brenau softball team, for example, recently ranked 5th nationally in the NAIA pre-season poll.

There are 163 track and field programs in the NAIA, and more than 500,000 athletes compete at the high school level. However, within the Southern States Athletic Conference, of which Brenau is a member, only five schools participate in track and field: Emmanuel College, Shorter University and Truett-McConnell College in Georgia; Lee University in Tennessee and Loyola University in Louisiana.

By SSAC standards, that is a relatively small group. In comparison, 15 SSAC schools sponsor women's basketball teams, 13 have softball and soccer, 12 compete in volleyball, and 10 have intercollegiate tennis teams. As an early arrival to the sport in the Southeast, Brenau should be at an advantage in recruiting, Lochstampfor says.

Brenau research indicates that there are many athletes in Georgia who would like to have the opportunity to compete at the small-college level. "Those would be really good student-athletes for us," he says.

"They are going un-recruited, and this is a void we can fill."

Although Brenau traditionally draws heavily from Georgia, Lochstampfor says Brenau will "go out and vigorously recruit" student-athletes in other parts of the United States as well as internationally, where Brenau has had considerable success in attracting blue-chip players in other sports.

Lochstampfor anticipates the track and field teams' being among Brenau's largest. His target for the first year is 15 to 20 athletes with an ultimate goal of between 20 and 30. The number of scholarships – and the level of aid that will be available – has not been determined, but he says it would be consistent with the scholarships awarded on other teams of that size and consistent with cross country as well.

Any potential recruits interested in being part of this new, exciting program should contact Mike Lochstampfor, Athletic Director, at (770) 534-6231 or by email at mlochstampfor@brenau.edu.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO Karen

by Candice Dyer



Phil Skinner

Karen Peck lifts her lyric soprano in praise. One of the few women to front a band in Southern Gospel Music, she appears this month in *Joyful Noise*, a movie starring Dolly Parton and Queen Latifah.

KAREN PECK seems incapable of projecting the cool indifference that many celebrities affect on a red carpet.

Instead, she waves giddily to the fans who are shouting her name along the roped-off pathway winding through Dollywood for the annual Southern Gospel Music Awards. Peck, looking belle-of-the-ball in a rustling black gown, would pause to hug each of them, like long-lost kin, if there were time.

The gospel singer, who studied music at Brenau for two years in the 1980s, is both a presenter for this awards ceremony and a nominee for “Favorite Soprano,” an award she has won 11 times. Karen Peck and New River have become a mainstay act of the “Gaither Homecoming Series” with five consecutive No. 1 songs and a “Song of the Decade” to its credits.

She walks past the Southern Gospel Music Hall of Fame, with its old-fashioned, hardwood church pews, yellowed sheet music, and other homey artifacts that date to the genre’s origins a century ago as men’s “quartet music.” While women have made jubilant inroads in the industry, Peck, 51, is one of just a few who front a band with her marquee name, and she is winding up her second term as the first female president of the Southern Gospel Music Association.

“It’s still a male-dominated field, but that’s changing,” she says, in between all of the hugging, back-and-

forth compliments, and photo shoots backstage. “I have a passion for honoring our legends and preserving the music’s history, which is one reason I’m here.”



The one-star show

THE ATMOSPHERE – PART EVANGELICAL HOME-COMING and part class reunion – noticeably lacks the catty tension that simmers behind the scenes at other awards ceremonies. “Our community,” Peck says, referring to gospel artists, “is like a great, big family. The singers of my generation all grew up together. When we have troubles, as people do, we pray for each other. We’re not perfect – and it’s human nature to be just a little competitive with each other in music – but we’re all engaged in a ministry. If we talk the talk, we try to walk the walk and support each other. We aren’t ‘stars’ anyway. Jesus Christ is the star.”

She does a last-minute mirror check in the “Hen House,” as the women’s dressing room in Dollywood is labeled (the vending room across the hall is the “Biscuit Basket”) with her longtime friend, **Sheri Easter, O’o6**, a “Favorite Alto” nominee who earned her M.B.A. through Brenau’s online program.

“But this is the *mackdaddy* event for our form of music!” Peck says.

Easter, smiling, says, “Karen can always bring out a laugh in me, especially when I need it most.”

While they are waiting in the wings, Paul Couch, entertainment director of Dollywood, approaches Peck and says, “Hey, aren’t you that girl in that movie? Can I get your autograph?”

She playfully swats him with her evening bag. However, Peck will appear, alongside Dolly Parton, Queen Latifah, and Kris Kristofferson, in *Joyful Noise*, a movie scheduled for release in January about a struggling, small-town gospel choir in Georgia. The film’s much-anticipated soundtrack, produced by five-time Grammy winner Mervyn Warren, includes a song performed by Peck, “Mighty High.”

“I think it’s great that a big, mainstream movie is celebrating Southern Gospel and including a track from an artist who has worked so hard and brought so much to the industry for years,” Couch says.

Adds Peck, in her cane-syrup drawl, “It’s just a tiny role, but I’m excited that I got to say ‘y’all’ on camera.” The movie’s casting agency had scoured contemporary Southern Gospel music for an authentic, telegenic artist and settled on Peck, who did not have to audition. She has been playing that role since she was four.



Old-time religion

WHEN PECK WAS GROWING UP in Gainesville, Ga., her parents would take their three daughters to the marathon, all-night gospel “sings” at the Atlanta Civic Center. Standing on tiptoe in her chair to see the performers, Peck was enraptured, in every sense of that word, with the piano chords, the homespun pageantry, and the solace of old-time religion on tear-streaked faces. When the anointing came, as they say, Vestal Goodman, the “queen of Southern Gospel” would start waving her trademark handkerchief over her bouffant in divine semaphore.

“I was uplifted and just mesmerized by it all,” says Peck. “I rededicated my life to Christ in the 11th grade and said, ‘Lord, if it’s your will to give me a chance to sing, I’ll never stop.’”

She formed a girl group called The Joyful Trio and studied classical piano for 11 years, the last eight under Brenau faculty member and cosmopolitan taskmaster, the late **Eliza Holmes Feldmann, WC ’29**, who became her mentor.

“Ms. Feldmann was so strict, so uncompromising,

so tough,” Peck recalls. “She was a sophisticated lady who had traveled all around the world and returned to live on the edge of Brenau’s campus, and she would not accept anything less than your very best. At the time, I did not fully appreciate that. I probably grumbled about it, to tell you the truth. I am so grateful to her now for her high standards, for giving me that foundation. I wish I could go back and thank her for all she did. She opened up my world.”

Feldmann, discerning potential in her pupil, helped Peck secure partial music scholarships in 1980 to attend Brenau.

“Brenau played a major, pivotal role in my life,” says Peck, who studied piano, voice, and elementary education. “It taught me that, while it’s great to sing and play by ear, I believe your voice is your instrument, and I always encourage younger artists to keep studying music, to learn the breathing techniques and keep refining their voices and their other musical abilities. It’s an ongoing, lifelong process.”

A promoter asked the Joyful Trio to open for The LaFevres, one of Southern Gospel’s “first families” since 1921. Later, when Alphus Lafevre needed a soprano, he called Peck, who had just completed her sophomore year at Brenau. She began touring with the group when its founders were nearing retirement and passing the torch to Rex Nelson, who reconfigured The LaFevres as The Nelons.

“I was truly living my dream,” she says. “Instead of a poster of Shaun Cassidy on my bedroom wall, I’d had one of The Nelons. I had a crush on Donny Osmond, too, but I would look at that poster of The Nelons and pray, ‘Lord, if you can’t put me with that group, please put me with one just like them!’”



Answered prayer

PECK TOURED AND PERFORMED with The Nelons for about 10 years.

“I was green as all get-out, wearing those fancy dresses and feeling like Cinderella, touring and traveling all over the place,” she says.

She also was developing her singular voice: a lyric soprano that confides, entreates, and reassures like the Balm of Gilead. “I think she simply has one of the best voices in gospel music,” says Stella Parton, the country music entertainer who conducted a master class earlier this year at Brenau. “It’s both delicate and powerful.”

When Karen Peck was hitting her stride in the 1990s, gospel music was staging a comeback, paralleling two entwined phenomena: the growth of religious fundamentalism and the growth of cable television. The music surged in popularity through impresario Bill Gaither's "homecoming" series of concert videos, which air ubiquitously on cable television. In 2004, the Gaither Homecoming concert tour ranked 16th in Pollstar, outselling Elton John and Rod Stewart, among others, and Peck reigns as a Gaither favorite. A recent study ranked Southern Gospel was the ninth most popular format for AM stations and the 21st most popular for FM. And, despite the fact that the genre probably did not enjoy much encouragement on campus when Peck was a student, Brenau now has a gospel choir, which performs regularly in Gainesville and other venues.



Barbara Steinhaus

Brenau's choir, pictured below under the direction of adjunct professor Portia Scott, performs a different style of gospel music. It is known as Black Gospel, and, although racial influence are heavy within, it describes a style rather than ethnicity. Musicologists consider Peck's act Southern Gospel, or "white gospel." The terminology describes style, though, not ethnicity. Black Gospel differs considerably in tone and timbre, drawing from the emotive expressiveness of the Holiness Church, African-American spirituals and even the blues.



Rudi Kiefer

In music charts, Karen Peck and New River fall into Southern Gospel's subcategory of "progressive," which features more soloists and the smoothing influences of country and pop, in contrast to the old-timey, male-dominated, quartet-driven hymnodists. Both, however, trace their roots to the musical melting pot of southern Appalachian culture and, of course, to the church.

Brenau's gospel choir has a multiracial makeup and involves a lot of gutter-jumping with people involved in other types of music. If you don't believe us, check out the back row where you will find an operatic lyric soprano, Dr. Barbara Steinhaus, chair of the Brenau Music department. One of Steinhaus's stated missions is to expand Brenau's musical footprint. "We don't want to be known just for opera and classical singing or musical theater," she says. Black Gospel is part of that expansion. "That's why I hired [Portia]," says Steinhaus. "That's her expertise."

One suspects Peck's brand of gospel could now find a welcome mate at Brenau, too.

The same could be said of her outsize stage presence. Peck, whose extracurricular music tastes include Lady Antebellum and Beyonce, comes across as a blonde beatitude with a light heart and a killer wardrobe. She notes that ever since James D. Vaughan officially established Southern Gospel in 1910, its performers, like other sacred-music communities, have squabbled intramurally over issues of showmanship and solemnity.

"I believe entertainment can be a form of ministry," she says. "I want the audience to love the music and to feel the love of Christ through the music. People are genuinely hurting out there. My calling, I believe, is to communicate hope and encouragement through music, to let folks know that the Lord is with them. And if I can make 'em laugh a little between songs, I don't think there's anything wrong with that." She adds with a wink, "I may get in trouble for saying that!"

Of a show in Sweden, she says, "We were using an interpreter, who didn't really understand the word 'y'all,' to try to talk to the crowd. I told them that was 'Southern Swedish.' Judging by their faces, I don't think they got that joke. But the spirit of God knocked down all the language barriers. Even if the audience didn't understand the lyrics, they felt the anointing through the music."

When she married Rickey Gooch, the vocalist had planned to retire, more or less, and start a family. "I thought maybe I'd just perform locally from time to time, but God had other plans," says Peck, who homeschools her two children.



Homecoming

IN 1991, SHE RENEWED A FAMILIAR HARMONY with her alto-range sister, Susan Peck Jackson, who is married to David Jackson, from Nashville's Sho-Bud pedal steel guitar dynasty. They since have added pianist Jeff Hawes to the mix. The name "New River," she says, had refreshing, regenerative associations, plus "the Lord loved to be near water."

Peck's husband, a hairstylist and builder, converted his family's Lumpkin County homeplace in Yahoola ("Yay-hooler," in the local dialect) into a gospel compound called New River Park, with a stage designed to look like a country chapel, covered in weathered, reclaimed wood with a tin roof.

"There's such a beautiful, quaint, serene feeling there, especially when the sun is setting, and you can see the cross outlined against the sky," says Susan Jackson.

For the past decade, the couple has held "Christian Music Nights," an annual festival on Father's Day weekend. It usually attracts a crowd of around 600, including gospel stalwarts such as the Lewis Family, The Primitive Quartet, old friends Jeff and Sheri Easter, and up-and-comers like CS&K and Brian Free and Assurance.



Phil Skinner

At left, Karen Peck is "testifyin' and oversharing" at a "Women of Grace" gathering at the United Methodist Church in Dunwoody, Ga. The gospel singer studied piano and voice at Brenau. At right, Sheri and Jeff Easter, an award-winning gospel duo based in Lincolnton, Ga., also claim ties to Brenau. Sheri Easter earned her M.B.A. through the university's online program in 2006; their son, Madison, studied for a year through Brenau's online program; and Madison's wife, Shannon, is enrolled at the university now.



"For days before the event, we talk about the menu – fried chicken, casseroles, corn, the best Southern cooking you'll ever put in your mouth – and for days after, we declare we'll never eat again," says Sheri Easter. (Her son, Madison Easter, also studied for a year through Brenau's online program, and her daughter-in-law, Shannon, is enrolled at the university now.) "The community that is created there is a direct reflection of Karen. She welcomes everyone in with arms wide open, and the people feel that warmth."

The progressive, upbeat sound of Karen Peck and New River – with album titles such as "Taste of Grace," "No Worries," and the latest, "Reach Out" – has earned the act three Grammy nominations; multiple Dove nominations; and a place among the evangelical gentry with appearances on Trinity Broadcast Network (TBN) and gigs aboard Alaskan cruises with Mike Huckabee and the Rev. Charles Stanley. Peck is the first woman to serve on the board of Abraham Productions, a driving force behind arena-scale Christian entertainment, and lately, she has focused her personal ministry on churchwomen with seminars and conversational presentations, mingled with music. "I have a soft spot for pastors' wives, and for all ladies who are dealing with life's ups and downs," she says. "So, I sing a little, but we also share stories from our lives, and, well, I overshare. I

don't have a lot of boundaries when I'm talking."

Peck's faith, the source of so much joy, also has sustained her through tragedy, she says, recalling a devastating accident: "We were on our tour bus, headed back from a show in Branson, about 20 miles from home, when an elderly gentleman pulled out in front of us, and we hit him. The man, who did not survive, turned out to be a retired pastor," she says, pausing to gather her thoughts. "We have been persevering through that aftermath with a process of faithful prayer, striving to view events like that as preparations, not punishments, to remember that the darkest times also come with great blessings. It's part of us now, part of our story. All of us are more keenly aware that we are not promised tomorrow, that today is a gift. An amazing gift."

Then, to lighten the mood, she says, "I do love my job, and I couldn't ask for a better boss. And I have one great retirement plan, let me tell you."



Tracy Clark strikes a balance of family and FBI career by David Morrison

In a high-pressure, high-profile law enforcement role, Tracy Clark, EWC '89, managed to balance career with an active family life with a husband and three children as well as indulge her passion for animals. Above, from left, Clark with her Brenau diploma, in uniform with Gwinnett County police, receiving her credentials as a newly minted FBI agent, on patrol, on the beach horseback riding with family, and, at an "undisclosed location." At far right, the recently retired special agent.

THERE'S A SCENE in the Kevin Spacey movie in which Spacey, as a police hostage negotiator, talks through a closed door, using all the techniques of his craft to speak softly and calmly, maintaining authority while communicating empathy with the person on the other side of the wall. The idea is to keep the person calm, help them unclutter their thoughts so they won't do anything stupid. When the door bursts open, we learn the culprit barricaded in the room is the negotiator's teenage daughter.

It is a scene with which **Tracy Clark**, a 1989 Brenau graduate, readily identifies. She's the mother of three teenagers. She has also recently retired after 21 years as a special agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Although she knows a lot about talking people through high-stress crisis situations and occasionally even has taught hostage negotiations to other law enforcement officers, her kids know this about her. "My kids know I'm playing them," she says. As a result, the scenarios often do not work out the way she would have preferred.

You will notice that we're intentionally avoiding telling the names of her kids or exactly where her home is. For most of her career she has inhabited a very dangerous world. She retired in July, but her husband – we'll call him Jim – still resides there as a narcotics inves-

tigator with the Houston, Texas, Police Department. Although Clark spent most of her career attempting to nail financial and white-collar miscreants, who generally regard cops on their case as a cost of doing business, there is the occasional zany, like one who threatened retaliation on the FBI agent.

Clark grew up in Tucker, Ga., in suburban Atlanta, and enrolled in the University of Georgia temporarily until her father's illness forced her to drop out. Then she got what she calls her "first real job," as a Gwinnett County Police officer. In addition to laying foundations for her later career, the job enabled her to enroll in Brenau as a criminal justice and public administration major. It was a sweet deal: as long as she made A's and B's, the county paid her tuition. That was at a time when few women were police officers, so the "college girl" credential just piled on the hard time she sometimes received from her male colleagues. Once she completed her obligatory year with GPD following graduation, however, she got the last laugh: with the Brenau degree, the FBI snapped her up. After training, she and Jim, who also had been a Gwinnett police officer, moved to Houston.

Clark loves the diversity of the coastal Texas region where she now lives. "It's a great place to raise a family," she says, and it also allows her to indulge her passions.

She and her son began Tae Kwon Do in the early 2000s. In addition to their competing in tournaments around the country and in South Korea, Clark in 2005 won the Texas state championship for sparring. Texas, too, is great horse country. In addition to riding together, the Clark family rescues a lot of abandoned or abused animals, including dogs and horses.

As far as FBI assignments go, the nation's fourth largest city is a plum. It has one of the largest and most diverse field offices because it has arguably one of the largest and most diverse bases of criminal activities. The city is a crossroads for international drug trafficking – everything you can think up: heroin, cocaine, and the latest scourge, crystal meth with some up-and-coming wanna-be scourges like hydroponically produced substances, and lots of work related to Mexican and Latin American drug cartels. The port city is also the nexus of America's petroleum importing, exporting and refinishing industries. That makes Houston a prime target for international terrorism. And as we pass the 10th anniversary of the culmination of the seminal white-collar crime caper, Enron, let's not forget Houston's distinction as a white-collar crime capital.

Clark touched the Enron case only peripherally, but for a good part of the decade leading up to it, she was fully immersed in another similar story: the criminal undoing of Houston-based First City National Bank.

At one time, the bank itself employed more than 8,000 people as the flagship of the nation's 32nd-largest

bank holding company. However, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, bank executives, including its chairman, used the institution, Clark says, "like their personal piggy bank." The investigation and subsequent successful criminal prosecutions on the heels of the fourth-largest bank failure in U.S. history involved allegations of bribes, money laundering, kickbacks on outrageous mark-ups of 300 percent or more on consultant fees, more than \$400 million in bad loans, shaky loans with improper collateral – all of what we have come to know in the last decade as "the usual stuff."

"I didn't have an accounting background and really only knew the basics," she says. "But it wasn't that much of a handicap. All you have to do is follow the money."

In the last six years of her career she moved into the counter-intelligence/counter-terrorism world, keeping track of foreign nationals who were outright spying for other countries or who were "just sent here to assess vulnerabilities." That involved a lot of networking, talking to people to find out who knows whom, collecting raw information and supplying it to analysts who assessed potential threats.

All of that played off what Clark says she firmly believes has been her greatest asset as a cop and an FBI agent: communication skills. For example, in crisis situations, such as hostage negotiations, the people you deal with are already suffering from information overload "and they can't take it all in." You have to give them an opportunity to process what you tell them by keeping

continued on page 12

continued from page 11

the channel clear of too much clutter.

As a woman she has often encountered some interesting communications dynamics that forced her to adapt. “You can’t come across as too aggressive or too weak.” That was particularly true in the later stages of her career in homeland security matters, which often put her in contact with people of Islamic faith. In addition to being respectful, you have to know simple cultural nuances, like not conducting interviews on holidays. And you don’t get all bristly when you are slighted as a woman. “If a male partner went with me on an interview, I’d ask a question and they would answer to him,” she says. “But that’s OK as long as we’re getting answers.”

At the same time, she says she was always good at getting vital information because she was relentless. “In an interview I’m just boom! Boom! Boom! With one question after another until they back into a corner. Then I can get a confession or the information I need to move on to the next step.”

Questions, she explains, are not always “questions,” but logical flows of conversation. “You need to be able to talk to people. You not only have to know what to ask and when to ask it,” she says, “but how to ask it. And you have to know when not to say anything. It’s not all talking. A good bit of it is active listening skills.”

She also has some communication aces in the hole. She speaks some Spanish and, because she worked closely with an FBI financial analyst who is hearing impaired and who can read lips, Clark learned to sign. In those cases Clark was able to use her sign language skills during interviews when culprits whispered to one another so the agent could not hear: Her colleague could quietly clue Clark in on what was said.

Fair play? Maybe not, Clark concedes. But that’s all right, too, she says.

“I really believe that what I did made a difference.”

Brenau launches All-Steinway initiative

It is no accident that the emblem of Alpha Chi Omega is the three-stringed lyre. When original members constituted the AXO organization at DePauw University in 1885, its stated purpose was “to attain the highest musical culture and to cultivate those principles that embody true womanhood.” Although the organization was never “strictly music,” it still seemed fitting when the Brenau chapter marked its 100th year on campus that members decided to celebrate the occasion by doing something related to music.



They put together about \$2,500 as the first contribution to what now is a \$1.5 million campaign for the university to become an All-Steinway School.

What that means is that Brenau plans to replace all of its pianos on campus with top-flight instruments made by Steinway & Sons based in Long Island City, N.Y. The instruments will range in price from about \$12,000 to \$20,000 each for instructional pianos to more than \$200,000 for a concert grand for Brenau’s showcase performance venue, historic Pearce Auditorium. Currently Brenau owns all sorts of pianos, some of them Steinways but most made in Japan. All, including the Steinways, are in fairly poor condition. Two musical performances scheduled in Pearce during the fall term had to be moved at the last minute to other venues because the 34-year-old Steinway there is in dire need of refurbishment. But the All-Steinway School Initiative really has some additional motivation: “We believe acquiring these instruments across the board for practice halls and performance venues will help us attract more students for all Brenau music programs,” says Ben Leaptrott, a pianist and associate professor of music at Brenau. Atlanta **Emmie Howard Henderson, WC’01**, chairs the university’s Board of Advisers, which has taken ownership of fundraising for the Brenau University All-Steinway School Initiative. She is also a member of AXO.

“Brenau has spent considerable time and money over the past decade upgrading its performance and practice venues, like Pearce Auditorium and the Burd Center for Performing Arts),” says Howard. “The next logical step will be outfitting those venues with the best instruments available. The University of Georgia saw a 100 percent increase in the number of students who showed up for auditions for places in the music school after it upgraded its facilities and became an All-Steinway School.”

By declaring itself to be an “all-Steinway School,” Brenau will join more than 135 colleges, universities and conservatories that have already adopted the all-Steinway moniker. The group includes the Julliard School in New York City, Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. and Belmont University in Nashville, Tenn. In Georgia the group includes the University of Georgia, Kennesaw State University, Spelman College and Columbus State University.

For more information and a music video about the Brenau University All-Steinway School Initiative, go to www.brenau.edu/steinway or call the Brenau University Office of External Relations at 770-718-5309. Also, see the article on page 19 about Howard and the role of the advisory board in the fundraising initiative.

Some things are just so obvious



Brenau for more than five years. “See if you can guess who this is,” Dempsey instructed the audience. As he started ticking off clues, Di Fede dutifully furrowed her brow trying to guess. Dempsey first covered the general stuff in the words of people who’d nominated the 2011 honoree: “Always pleasant and professional; loves challenges; willing to lend a hand; a positive and enthusiastic member of the Brenau family; always present at campus and community events; always has a smile and a motivat-

ing comment for others; a sincere interest in making a difference in students’ lives.” She shook her head, seemingly clueless. Then came the denouement: “She has a B.F.A. in theater performance from University of Florida and an M.S. in organizational leadership from Brenau. ...”

“Oh, no,” Di Fede said and began softly weeping. Yep. She’s the only one it could have been.

Di Fede, who is assistant to the dean of the College of Fine Arts & Humanities, previously had been the admin for the psychology department while she was working on her graduate degree. However she started her career as assistant in the multimedia and theater services department, which has responsibility for, among other things, all the audio-visual and sound equipment on campus. To prove the citation, during last year’s barbecue when the amphitheater’s sound system failed during a musical performance, it was dean’s assistant Di Fede in 90-degree temperatures crawling around backstage, pulling and plugging cables, and schlepping heavy equipment to get things running.

We still can’t understand why she was surprised to tears by the honor.

Hitting all the notes: BBQ event marks 4th year



SOME PIT MASTERS EMPHASIZE SWEETNESS, while others favor heat or smokiness. Pete Cookston, a Memphis in May champ whose team swept all of the categories in last year’s Brenau Barbecue Championship, seasons his sauce with balance in mind. “We try to hit all of those notes so the taste spreads over your entire palate,” he says.

Brenau’s annual festival, scheduled on the Gainesville campus for Memorial Day weekend on May 25-26, takes a similarly well-rounded approach, drawing a diverse mix of pit masters, Brenau supporters, and all-around fun-seekers from northeast Georgia to the Delta, where Cookston and his wife, Melissa, are reigning royalty in the barbecue world. Their Yazoo’s Delta Q was top finisher in all Brenau categories in 2011 and has been perennially a top contender in national contests with frequent national TV cooking show appearances. They recently partnered with ribs-cooking champ John David Wheeler of Natural Born Grillers to open Memphis Barbecue Company in Horn Lake, Miss., but are expected to be back at Brenau in May.

“We wanted to create a fund-raiser that was different from the usual silent auction that’s normally associated with a school known for ballet and the arts,” says the event’s founder and organizer, Jim

Barco, senior vice president for institutional development. “We wanted to attract some folks who had no connection whatsoever to Brenau, including people in our own backyard who have never spent any time on campus.”

What better draw than a time-tested Southern sacrament that unifies and satisfies most demographics?

Last year, the fund-raiser, in its fourth year, netted \$91,000 for the scholarship fund for local students. “Statistically, these students will stay in this area, so it’s an investment in retaining intellectual capital and bettering the region,” Barco says, “and it fosters community, making Brenau more of a social hub for all of northeast Georgia.”

Live music and a growing midway of vendors round out the family-friendly scene.

“Since this event began, it’s become a tradition for kicking off the summer,” says pit master Lee Hemmer, a commercial real estate broker in Gainesville and one of the “amateurs” who participates in the “Backyard Braggart” competition. “It has the vibe of this great, big, weekend-long tailgate party, with the younger children playing in the grass while we hang out and eat and talk, but it accomplishes something worthwhile: helping local kids get an education.”

Although some of the sports for vendors, contestants and event sponsors are filling up fast, there’s still plenty of time left for you to plan on participating – event if that means just bringing your appetite. Go to www.brenau.edu/bbq for details.



Former trustee **Doris Beidenmiller Whitaker, WC '45**, who currently resides in Charleston, S.C., visited Brenau in late October to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Tau Chapter of Alpha Chi Omega. Pictured l to r: chapter president **Alison Sellers, WC '12**, national president Marsha King Grady, and chapter advisor **Lee Anne White, WC '82**.

Lynda Johnson Walton, A '58, and husband Noel celebrated their 50th anniversary on Aug. 8. Two days earlier, Walton's granddaughter, Rachel Arthurs, married Christopher Lambert. Both are graduates of the University of South Carolina. On Oct. 1, Walton's grandson, Christopher Arthurs, married Jaimee DiBona. Both are graduates of Bob Jones University. Rachel and Christopher are CPAs and members of the South Carolina Association of CPAs.

Jane Walker Stoner, '66, of Atlanta and husband Joe are proud grandparents of Samantha Conlin, born August 23.

Lee Anne Romberg White, WC '82, completed a Master of Science degree in Creative Studies at the State University of New York/Buffalo, where she was the recipient of the Mary Murdock Creative Spirit Award.

Chris Alexander Fitzgerald, WC '84, and husband John recently moved back to their hometown of Charlotte, N.C. John is senior pastor at Providence United



H. Chris Barber, EWC '82, launched his first book, *Charging Your Mindset*. The book is a fresh look at positive thinking – how to acquire it, maintain it, and manage the positive drive through our daily lives. *Charging Your Mindset* is available online at Tate Publication or through Barber's website. Barber is also working on two more books.

Methodist Church. Chris works in the Office of Student Conduct at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.



Mary Lina Hastings Pardue, WC '95, EWC '98, husband Erik, and daughter Anna, welcomed a new baby sister, Morgan Grace Pardue, on March 28.



Jennifer Allbright Mielke, WC '99, welcomed daughter Sophia Jordan Hooton (7 lbs., 8 oz.) on August 20.



Jennafer Eddy-Loving, A '97, WC '02, and husband Thomas announce the birth of their fourth child, Juniper Hadassah Hokulani Loving. She was born April 8 in Alpharetta, Ga. and welcomed by her very excited sisters and brother!

Joanette Warr Terry, WC '86, BSN, RN, CARN, MSN, accepted a nurse manager position at East Central Regional Hospital in partnership with the Georgia Health Sciences University (formerly Medical College of Georgia) in Augusta, Ga. She will be managing the general mental health unit.

Lt. Col. Charles "Buck" Bennett, EWC '98, assumed command of the 5th Ordinance Training Battalion, Regional Training Site for Maintenance in Fort Stewart, Ga. on Dec. 3. Bennett is a graduate from the Kings Bay campus.



Amanda Pruitt Graves, WC '02, and husband Michael announce the birth of their first child, Tabitha Grace Graves on July 2. The family lives in Woodstock, Ga.



Natalie Cruse Dollar, WC '04, and husband Mark welcomed their first child on Aug. 20. Charli Annabelle Dollar was 7 pounds, 4 ounces and 20 inches long. (Photo by **Lindsay von Arx, WC '09**)



Kelly Flanagan McCormick, WC '04, husband Rob, and big sister Mackenzie, welcomed Connor Wesley, (9 pounds 7 ounces) on Nov. 5.



Amanda Roper, WC '04, a research and instructional services assistant at Trustee Library on the Brenau campus, recently received a 2011 Paraprofessional Grant from the Paraprofessional Division of the Georgia Library Association at the GLA annual conference in Athens, Ga., in October.



Marie Barnwell Robinson, WC '04, and husband Chad announce the birth of their son, Chad Josiah Robinson, on June 1 at Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville. He weighed 7 pounds 15 ounces, and he was 22 inches long.



Susan White Moore, WC '07, and husband Chris welcomed the addition of twins, Levi Brannon and Lila Kate, on January 18.

Tommy Moon, EWC '02, joined First Citizens Bank as relationship manager for the bank's Toccoa, Ga., main office. Moon will be responsible for serving retail and small-business customers. Moon is affiliated with several nonprofit organizations including Northeast Georgia Youth, Stephens County Development Authority, and Stephens County High School Booster Club.

Christy Mauldin Edwards, WC '05, is the new executive director of Horizons Savannah, a non-profit organization that is working to

close the achievement gap for low-income children in Savannah. People can find out more about Horizons at horizonssavannah.org.

Grammy® nominated, award-winning **Sheri Easter, O '06**, and husband Jeff completed their "Paint Your Town Pink" tour in celebration of National Breast Cancer Awareness month in October. The gospel music duo raised more than \$15,000 for local cancer organizations. In addition to touring, Easter has also published her book, *Hear My Heart*, available at shop.jeffandsherieaster.com. *
*See related article on page 6.

Megan Powell, WC '07, married Capt. Benjamin Murray on Feb. 5, 2011 in Savannah, Ga. with 150 family and friends in attendance. Fellow Brenau and Alpha Chi Omega alumnae **Leigh Anne Strickland, WC '08**, **Lucy Sheffield, WC '09**, **Cassandra Miles, WC '08**, and **Cynthia Mayo Roland, WC '07**, stood alongside the bride as her maid of honor and bridesmaids.



After graduating from Brenau with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in arts management with a concentration in art and design, **Dominique Young, WC '07**, graduated from Florida A&M University College of Law in May with a juris doctorate degree. In July Young passed the Florida Bar exam. She is now a licensed attorney in the state of Florida. While at Brenau, Young was a member of the Rho Eta Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and the Orlando, Fla. resident played on the Brenau volleyball team for two years.



Emily Slough Jennings, WC '08, and husband Matthew announce the birth of their son, Easton James Jennings, on November 5. He weighed five pounds, seven ounces, and was 19 inches long.



Mandy Sheppard, WC '09, of Oakwood, Ga., married Conner Volpe of Kennesaw, Ga. on August 13 in Atlanta. Bridesmaids included Alpha Chi Omega sisters **Katie Sheppard, WC '09** and **Katy Clark, WC '08**. **Tami Williams Lee's, WC '02**, son was the ring bearer. Mandy was recently promoted to marketing manager for the department of housing at Georgia Tech. The couple resides in Smyrna, Ga.

Caitlin Kelly, WC '10, received a Master of Arts in Publishing & Writing from Emerson College in December.

Maida Smajic, WC '10, is recently engaged to Selmir Delanovic.

Clinical counseling psychology graduate **Melanie Covert, EWC '11**, will present research findings from her thesis topic, *Under-utilization of Mental Health Services in Minority Communities*, at the 11th Annual Southeastern Conference on Cross-Cultural Issues in Counseling and Education, February 10-11, at the Coastal Georgia Center in Savannah, Ga.

Class Notes submissions may be sent to: alumni.news@brenau.edu or call 770.718.5307



SAVE THE DATE
Brenau: Friendships That Last a Lifetime
May Day & Reunion Weekend
April 13-14, 2012

Golden Reunion, Class of 1962
Silver Reunion, Class of 1987
Ten-Year Reunion, Class of 2002

Check www.brenau.edu/alum periodically for updates

Make sure your information is up to date. E-mail details to alumni.news@brenau.edu or call 770-718-5307.

Dear Brenau alumni & friends,

In the fall of 2006, my husband and I moved to Knoxville, Tenn., home of the Volunteers and pride of Rocky Top. It's a delightful town, surrounded by the beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains and the calm of the Tennessee River. But as dedicated graduates of our respective alma maters (Georgia and Auburn), it felt like the farthest place from home.

It's amazing how connected we are to the schools which made us who we are today. Every time Clay and I saw a car tag, baseball cap, or t-shirt with our university's colors, we magically traveled "home" for a moment. The conversations that those images sparked felt like a warm cup of coffee. Sharing memories of familiar places with strangers made strangers become fast friends.

The same is true with Breanu. Wherever life has taken you after your time as a Brenau student, one small glimpse of the Golden Tiger, one shared smile among May Day memories, or one common connection through a favorite professor brings you home to Brenau.

Understanding the power of these connections, the Office of Alumni Relations is reaching out to alumni across the country through a more formal alumni chapter network. With Brenau alumni living around the globe, the chapter structure will allow groups with common ties and interests to "come home" to Brenau without leaving their home cities and towns. At the time of publication, there are chapter kick-off plans in the works for Hall County, Clarke/Oconee County, downtown Atlanta, Augusta, Savannah, Nashville, Tenn., Tampa, Fla., Orlando/Space Coast, Fla., Chicago, Charlotte, N.C., Myrtle Beach, S.C., Dallas/Ft. Worth, Milwaukee, Wisc., and even Kalamazoo, Mich.

In addition to upcoming regional events for alumni, May Day and Reunion Weekend 2012 are just around the corner. All graduates of the Academy and Women's College will truly "come home" and converge on the Brenau campus on April 13-14. Our alumnae steering committee is hard at work creating a theme and planning for the classes of 1962, 1987, and 2002, which will celebrate their golden, silver and 10-year reunions. A full schedule of events and formal invitations will be mailed in late January.

And as we carry on the timeless traditions of Brenau University, our office is also focusing on cultivating new and progressive ways to reach alumni. In January a group of Evening & Weekend and Online graduates in the metro Atlanta area will enjoy an evening of "Jazz at The High." Space is limited, but there are still complimentary tickets available for EWC and Online graduates. Contact our office at 770-718-5307 to make reservations.

I'm grateful to be a part of such an extraordinary family of alumni, students, faculty and friends – one that already feels like home. I would love to get to know each of you on a personal level and welcome your emails and calls.

In 2012, come home to Brenau, wherever you are.

Jenny Dell
Director of Alumni Relations
jdell@brenau.edu
770-718-5307



Upcoming Events

JANUARY 20
"Jazz at The High" with Brenau EWC & Online Alumni
The High Museum of Art Atlanta, Ga.
5 -10 p.m.
Complimentary tickets for alumni; call 770-718-5307 for reservations

FEBRUARY
Alumni Dinners with Dr. Ed Schrader
West Palm Beach – Feb. 6
Miami – Feb. 10,
Naples – Feb. 13,
Tampa – Feb. 15
Formal invitations to be mailed.

APRIL 13-14
May Day & Women's College Reunion Weekend
Gainesville, Ga.
Formal invitation to be mailed.

MAY 4-5
Graduations and welcoming of newest Brenau alumni

IN MEMORY

Sarah Myers Carpenter, A '53, of Luverne, Ala., died on Nov. 13.

Ann Gibson Wofford, A '55, of Hiawassee, Ga., died Oct. 28.

Long-time Brenau University trustee and benefactor **John W. Jacobs Jr.**, the media pioneer who founded Jacobs Media Corp. in Gainesville, Ga., died Nov. 23, after suffering a stroke. Jacobs would have turned 89 on Nov. 28.

A member of what author Tom Brokaw referred to as “The Greatest Generation,” the University of Missouri-educated Jacobs was twice recipient of the Silver Star medal for heroic actions during the Battle of the Bulge in 1944 while he was a U. S. Army artillery officer. In addition to business ventures and extensive community service, Jacobs spearheaded the development of the Northeast Georgia History Center at Brenau University, an ultramodern museum, independently funded and operated, built on university-owned property.

In 1949, Jacobs founded radio station WDUN-AM and north Georgia’s first FM station, WDUN-FM. In the vanguard of social as well as communications trends, he put women behind the microphone; steered WDUN-AM toward a news-talk format; and went online with AccessNorthGeorgia.com. Today, Jacobs Media owns Majic 102.9 FM, WDUN – 550 AM, and 1240 ESPN Radio.

Jacobs chronicled many of his far-sighted experiences in his memoir, *The Longer You Live: Remembrances of John Wesley Jacobs Jr.*, published by Brenau University Press as its first book venture in 2009. He worked as a Brenau trustee since 1958 and as chairman of the board for 23 years, making him the board’s longest-serving member. The university awarded Jacobs with an honorary doctorate degree and named the business and communications building on the Gainesville campus in his honor.

At the time of his death, Jacobs was coordinating a partnership between his company and the university’s mass communications department to provide students with scholarships, internships, and hands-on learning opportunities, ensuring his enduring legacy in media innovation and education.

The forthcoming issue of Brenau Window will celebrate Jacobs’ life and contributions in more detail as it focuses on the communications portal of the university’s curriculum and Jacobs’s role in providing for future generations of Brenau students.

ONE FOR THE BOOKS

Grand Gesture

Although her mother taught music for decades, when **Emile Claire Henderson** showed up on the Brenau campus as a freshman in the late 1990s, she probably was more inclined to try to sell you a piano than to play one for you.

“I am not artistic,” she says, expressively punctuating the west Tennessee-bred cadence of her speech. “I’m not musically inclined.” However, at 32 years old, the 2001 Women’s College graduate with a business degree in marketing, strikes many pitch-perfect notes.

Following graduation she spent a couple of seasoning years with companies like Newell Rubbermaid, got married and settled in Atlanta. The young woman now known as Emmie Henderson Howard and her Brenau chum, Reagan Hardy Howell, launched Southern Proper in 2005. The upscale clothing and accessories company has parlayed viral marketing and social media savvy into an attention-grabbing, successful enterprise. Southern Proper’s colorful, whimsical designs of neckties have been featured in Southern Living and a host of other publications. In 2011 she was the university’s second honoree for an entrepreneurial award – the first being Sally Foster, the Brenau Academy grad who parlayed selling giftwrapping through schools and other nonprofit organizations into a multimillion-dollar conglomerate.

Never straying too far from Brenau since her student days, Emmie Howard now has stepped up to spearhead an ambitious \$1.5 million enterprise to purchase top-of-the-line pianos to help bring the Brenau music programs up to par for competing for gifted music students from around the globe. She will also drive an equally ambitious endeavor to repackage and repurpose Brenau’s Board of Advisers as a more dynamic organization, the 1878 Council, with specific tasks and goals, the first of which is running the Brenau All-Steinway School Initiative.

Howard migrated to north Georgia from the family farm in Golddust, Tenn., just a Mississippi River delta meander to the left of Ripley, the town about 50 miles northeast of Memphis that is best known for its tomatoes. She discovered at Brenau an unexpected level of enthusiasm for the arts and music, both on campus and in the community. Her aunt and uncle, Ginny and Ben Powell of Gainesville, were regular patrons of the arts in the town and at Brenau.



“I really learned that the music tradition at Brenau was the richest part of its heritage and the ‘emblem’ for the school with the community,” she says. Many of her friends and Alpha Chi Omega sisters majored in music. And, what brings us the full circle back to Steinway pianos is one of her friends, who was a musical theater major. “It’s ironic now,” says Howard, “but I distinctly recall that she always went home to Atlanta to practice. She hated to practice on campus because all the Brenau pianos were so out of tune all the time.”

For several years Howard has been part of the university’s Board of Advisers, which an administrator once cryptically described as a sort of organization for university trustees-in-waiting. The board, with its eclectic mix of members, has no governance authority and, although individual members always have been willing to step in and help whenever they could, it has never really had a clear charter. As chair of the group, Howard says she and her fellow members want that to change; they want to play more of a role as ambassadors for the university and as a window for the world to see into the university and what makes it great.

The group’s members “are doing so many wonderful things” that they can be excellent resources for mentoring students as part of a standing academic program. And, she says candidly, the group, through personal and business relationships, can play an important role in another essential activity for private institutions: raising money.

“We decided that the Steinway project was something we really believe in and could really embrace as our own,” she says. “This is a way we can show people how wonderful Brenau is. They may not have any connection to Brenau, but they will be connected because of the music. I know it was a hook for me.”

– David Morrison

For more information on the Brenau University All-Steinway School Initiative, see the article on page 12 and go to www.brenau.edu/steinway.



INTRODUCING THE BRENAU UNIVERSITY ALL-STEINWAY SCHOOL INITIATIVE

More than 135 colleges, universities, conservatories and other schools of distinction already have embraced the “All-Steinway School” moniker. Brenau strives to add to its powerful academic arsenal the piano that inspires students to realize their artistic talents and that best prepares them to compete at the highest levels.

Higher education today inhabits a highly competitive world. Three other institutions within a 50-mile radius of Brenau already are among the all-Steinway schools.

Brenau’s mission is to prepare students for extraordinary lives. To accomplish that, you need nothing less than extraordinary tools.

To learn more about how you can help Brenau reach this goal, please contact Matt Thomas at 770-718-5309.



Scan the QR code to watch and listen as Brenau music professor Ben Leaptrott introduces the Brenau All-Steinway School program. Or go to www.brenau.edu/steinway to watch the video and get more information.