

BRENAU



WINTER 2010

Window

Unexpected Treasures

Brenau's Own 'Spice Girl'

Debra Dobkins on Self-invention

21st century Brenau’s first decade

Without renewing debate over whether the decade began Jan. 1, 2000, or Jan. 1, 2001, this is an appropriate time to recount and celebrate some milestones on the quest for a 21st century Brenau University during the first decade of that century. I encourage you to add your own choices, but here is my “Top 10” list:

- A SOLID FOUNDATION. That includes creating a clear, concise mission as the cornerstone with framing outlined in an exciting Brenau 2025 Strategic Plan.
- FINANCIAL STABILITY. Brenau began the decade with a need to boost endowed funds, make substantial physical improvements and enhance financial incentives to attract and retain top-flight faculty. Then there was The Great Recession. So, in the second decade, Brenau’s development needs persist, but having skillfully managed its way through the national financial crisis that defined the decade, the university stands now on solid fiscal footing.
- GRADUATE PROGRAMS. On Dec. 7 Brenau’s accrediting agency approved the university’s request to become a doctoral degree-granting institution. We are now recruiting candidates for the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree in the Sidney O. Smith Jr. Graduate School. Brenau launched its first terminal degree in August – an M.F.A. degree in interior design. The 960 graduate students enrolled this term set a new record.
- INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION. On any Brenau campus you are likely to meet students from around the globe. In addition to attracting students from China, Taiwan, Afghanistan, Denmark, Russia and many other countries, the Brenau footprint expanded this past decade through academic partnerships in China, Korea, Mexico and Europe. We will in the next two years establish a funding mechanism to help students have a “required” international experience during undergraduate days.
- VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS. The opening of the cutting-edge performing arts center on the Gainesville campus launched a decade that saw great strides in theater, dance, music and other arts disciplines. The university’s permanent collection of artworks continues to expand. We established the first academic partnership with the High Museum in Atlanta. The arts at Brenau soared in the first decade.
- HIGH-WATER MARK FOR WOMEN’S COLLEGE ENROLLMENT. In fact, we reached high-water marks for all enrollments with a record of 2,780 in the fall term. More remarkable was the 906 enrollment two years ago for the Women’s College.



Billy Howard

Although the recession puts us at slightly less than 900 now, we are on track to stabilize enrollment at about 1,000 as the Brenau 2025 Women’s College transforms the single-gender educational experience.

INTERCOLLEGIATE SPORTS. No, it is not just a “guy thing.” Brenau Golden Tigers not only compete at national championship-capable levels in several sports, but they also are top performers in the classroom. Great competitive sports help attract great students and expose a wider audience to Brenau.

ACADEMIC RESTRUCTURING. The new structure of graduate and undergraduate schools and the four colleges will help us more effectively deliver on providing liberal arts programs as well as professional preparation at all levels and across all education platforms.

MULTIPLE CAMPUSES. They’re not satellites. They’re not regional. We have five Brenau *campuses* in Georgia pivotal in growth and development of the university. We continue our effort to fully integrate all campuses and all students and alumni from all campuses into the Brenau culture.

ONLINE. Playing off the old New Yorker cartoon punchline, one might argue that “nobody knows you’re a Golden Tiger on the Internet.” So, the same challenge of full cultural assimilation applies to another high-growth area: Brenau-class education delivered to Brenau students anywhere in the world via the Internet and other technology-based vehicles. This decade saw a six-year growth rate of more than 250 percent in online courses. By the end of the next decade, half our tuition revenue will come from online.

I’m naturally optimistic, but looking dispassionately at the past decade reveals great strides toward becoming 21st century Brenau. This is not Ed Schrader’s report card. It belongs to you – students, alumni, trustees, donors, faculty, staff and other members of the Brenau family. The first decade proves that 21st century Brenau is a viable concept. We all have a responsibility to continue toward the goal of full realization of all that promises.

Ed L. Schrader

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CONTENTS



4 Spice Girl
Betsy Byrd never suspected her biology degree would land her access to Col. Sanders’ secret recipe or that she would have a hand in running what amounts to the modern-day equivalent of “The Spice Trail” as a global logistics expert for McCormick.



7 Creative Distraction
Charter schools prove their mettle by getting great results from bending the rules of traditional public school education. A new Brenau partnership with McEver Arts Academy in Gainesville bends them farther by involving more than just education majors on practice-teaching assignments.



10 Nothing Less Than Self-Invention
English Professor Debra Dobkins helps create a “new tradition” at Brenau with a fall convocation address that provides a road map for Women’s College students to be “strong Southern Women” – even if they are not Southern women.



12 The Kindness of Strangers
New Orleans philanthropist and architect Henry Shane knew nothing about Brenau before he decided to donate more than \$1 million worth of artworks by abstract expressionist Hunt Slonem. The man who brought the “Big Blue Dog” to Metairie, La., has now added plenty of parrots and presidents to Brenau’s permanent collection.



23 One for the Books
A James Bond aficionado may be tempted to use names of characters like “Miss Moneypenny” and “Dr. No” in reference to Brenau’s financial watchdogs Sandra Thornton and Wayne Dempsey. But they would be short-changing the accomplishments of this dynamic duo.

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Brenau's Spice Girl

by Karen Rosen

BACK WHEN PEOPLE STILL USED the classifieds to find jobs, **Betsy Byrd (WC '83)** answered an Atlanta newspaper ad for a “second shift quality control lab technician” at McCormick & Company. With a biology degree but no clear career path, “I thought, ‘What the heck? It’ll be a job until I find my *real* job,’” Byrd says of joining the world’s largest manufacturer of herbs and spices. “And they had great benefits.” Her mother, **Virginia Barrett Byrd (WC '59)**, had a different viewpoint. “She shocked us when she said she had gotten a job with McCormick,” Virginia Byrd recalls. “Wow, 3-to-11 shift – in an industrial park area. I thought, ‘Oh gosh, my little girl.’”

But her little girl had a nose for this business. In 26 years, Byrd moved up the McCormick food chain from plant management jobs in Atlanta, Salinas, Calif.; Haddenham, United Kingdom, and Dallas, Texas, to last year’s shift to corporate headquarters in Hunt Valley, Md., where the air for miles around is redolent of spices.

As McCormick’s first Director – Global Process Optimization, Byrd implements manufacturing initiatives and accelerates growth around the world through efficiency and capacity improvements. Her travels take her to facilities in China, Singapore, Thailand and India, plus she explores opportunities for expansion in the Asia Pacific Zone, South America and Eastern Europe. In China, Byrd’s team was responsible for the installation of a new processing line for sandwich sauces, like the one for the famous McDonald’s Big Mac.

“One thing that is interesting about traveling to these countries is going into a McDonald’s or a KFC and actually validating the consistency of the taste,” says Byrd, who swears she hasn’t had a bad bite yet.

Although her Phi Mu sorority sisters remember Byrd’s culinary talents as largely confined to Ramen noodles, **Jenny Lee Kirby Allgood (WC '85)** now jokingly calls her Brenau’s very own Spice Girl. “I’ve always known that she knows the KFC spices, but she would never tell,” Allgood says.

Except for quality control, which is staffed mostly

by women – “because it’s kitchen-like,” Byrd says – her McCormick jobs have been in male-dominated fields. She was the youngest management person on staff at the Atlanta factory, and she became the highest-ranking female plant manager, paving the way at the company for other women in operations.

“She was impressive right from the start,” says Mike Navarre, Byrd’s mentor who retired two years ago as vice president of operations. “Betsy has a unique quality where people just feel so comfortable with her that they open up, and she’s the best natural leader that I ever ran across in business.” Thanks to those qualities, Navarre adds, “she became most valuable as a troubleshooter. We always sent her into the worst mess we could find.”

Cleaning up messes was Byrd’s forte at the Phi Mu house on campus, where friends knew her as “Byrdie” and still tell stories about the 1974 Plymouth Valiant, nicknamed the White Flash, she shared with her sister, **Lynda Czarnomski (WC '85)**. **Stacy O’Brien Boyd (WC '84)** thought Byrd’s room was by the sorority house entrance for a reason. “She was the only one who had a room that you didn’t cringe when you walked by it.”

As house president for a year, “Keeping the house clean was my thing,” Byrd says. “That really bugged me. I remember one gal leaving her pots in the sink and I knew who it was, so I just gathered up her pots and dishes – still dirty – and put them on her bed.” Point made. “I’m certainly not afraid of making the unpopular decisions, if it’s the right thing to do.”

But Byrd does it in a way, Czarnomski says, that rubs people the *right* way. “She has this quiet air of authority about her that’s not bullyish or even really oppressive at all,” she says. “People didn’t want to disappoint Betsy.”

Adds **Ann Marie Kirby Chaney (WC '83)**, who still uses the spice rack Byrd gave her as a wedding gift, “She’s always laughing or has a smile on her face. She’s a very calming spirit, a calming presence. But she doesn’t take anything off of anybody, I’ll tell you that. Things just tend to roll off her back. I don’t know if I’ve ever seen Betsy mad.”

BYRD’S EASYGOING MANNER SERVED HER WELL in England, where she had to defuse a tough situation her third day on the job as manufacturing manager. A female supervisor rushed into Byrd’s office to say the packaging department, made up of about 40 men, was on the brink of a “walk-out” because they were upset about having to work overtime.

Byrd got them together, introduced herself and apologized for meeting under such frustrating circumstances. “Being a good corporate steward, I explained our role as supplier to some of the biggest food companies

and that it was imperative that we provide excellent service,” Byrd says. “I told them that there wasn’t much I could do to eliminate the need to work the immediate weekend, but that I would certainly take it on as my first goal. Feeling quite confident with my ‘pep talk,’ I ended my speech with that common Southern phrase, ‘Now get your fannies in gear and go out and work.’”

The men responded with snickers and giggles, taking Byrd by surprise. “An operator approached me, greeting me with the very English, ‘Hello, Love Has anyone told you about the word ‘fanny’?’ I said ‘no.’ He proceeded to tell me that in England, ‘fanny refers to the female lower anatomy.’ It was quite the ice-breaker, and from then on I was greeted with smiles.”

“I’ve always known that she knows the KFC spices, but she would never tell.”

Byrd had early practice in winning people over: Her sorority sisters held preconceived notions about her when she arrived at Brenau. Because Byrd’s father was a career Air Force officer, she moved from the Philippines to Hawaii to Germany, where Byrd graduated from high school. “When she moved in, she was the German girl,” Chaney says. Adds Boyd, “The older girls thought she was going to have a weird accent and funny hair. She was just as normal as the day is long.”

Attending Brenau had been an easy decision. “That’s where the women in my family went,” Byrd says. Great aunt **Kathleen Black (WC '14)** was one of the founding members of the Phi Mu chapter, grandmother **Elizabeth Black** graduated in 1921. Betsy’s mother followed suit. “My parents instilled great values,” Byrd says, “and Brenau reinforced a lot of those values: respect, trust, honesty. Brenau was very grounding for me.”

The school also gave her roots while laying the groundwork for her eventual career. “Because of the small student body and small campus, it was sort of a comfortable low-risk environment to test leadership and influencing skills, whether it was on the swim team or Phi Mu,” says Byrd, a backstroker and distance freestyler who captained the team as a senior and now runs a marathon a year.

Upon graduation, she resumed her peripatetic ways. “I guess it’s part of the military background – it’s very easy for me just to pick up and go.”

But it wasn’t Byrd’s choice to move around. “She



Monica Lopossay

falls in love with the people and organizations and thinks she'll never leave," Navarre says, "until she gets tapped on the shoulder and we tell her to go fight another windmill somewhere."

That last windmill is in Maryland in a job specially created for Byrd's skills. "I call this my 'out to pasture job,'" she says with a laugh. "I swore I would never go to corporate, but it caught up with me." Byrd liked being on the factory floor "where the real fun is" instead of behind a desk.

She still tries occasionally to don her lab coat and hairnet and get in the thick of production. Currently Byrd's favorite spice is a pork seasoning, and she also touts the Montreal steak and Montreal chicken

seasonings. "Those are excellent, particularly for grilling out," she says.

Of course, after the first year or so, Byrd, like most McCormick employees who work in a factory, became desensitized.

"People come to visit the plant and say, 'Oh, what are you making? It smells so good,'" Byrd says with a laugh. "We're like, 'We can tell you what we're making because we know it's on the production schedule, but we don't smell it anymore.'"

Yet Byrd's career at McCormick has given her something she continues to savor. "The variety," she says. After all, it is the spice of life.

Lighting one little candle

On a cold, wet day in late November, students in Professor Gnimbin Ouattara's global issues class conducted a mock demonstration on the Gainesville campus to raise awareness about global genocide – part of a class project to help them understand the imperative to put knowledge and theories into action, no matter how narrow the venue. Ouattara, a native of Ivory Coast and a political refugee in the United States, says the purpose of the class is both to teach students the theoretical language of the anti-genocide movement around the globe and to instill in them appreciation that learning about an issue is not enough.

There must be action, which constantly keeps the issue alive and on the agendas of nations around the world. The demonstration, he adds, was not protesting anything. It merely demonstrated how grass-roots action for awareness begins. "By increasing awareness, someone may study the issue more, contact their elected representatives and urge some government action" that will help build a solution to the problem. Likewise, he says, organizations like the United Nations cannot really address the problem on their own, but instead rely on nongovernmental organizations and individuals to get involved and take action. Often, he says, the only weapon at the disposal of individuals or NGOs is public pressure that will not go away. But do small, local demonstrations actually create movements? Ask the Tea Party.

WBCX wins new Corporation for Public Broadcasting funding

Brenau University's radio station, WBCX-FM, recently received a \$69,875 Corporation for Public Broadcasting Community Service Grant for the period 2010-12. The new grant brings the total of CPB grants awarded to WBCX over the past four years to \$337,998.

Ted Garner, the director of media services at Brenau who has spearheaded the CPB funding applications, says the money is being used, among other things, to acquire such highly regarded programming as the BBC World Service news, to produce top-flight and award-winning shows such as *Your Body is a Wonderland* and *Poets and Troubadours*, to move to digital broadcast transmission, to completely remodel the main broadcast studio and to stream Brenau radio station's signal on the Internet to global audiences.

Although the radio station is a great learning laboratory for Brenau students, it is a full-service station with a broadcast footprint that extends along roughly a 35-mile radius in north Georgia from 89.1 on the FM radio dial. The wide range of music and other programs has begun attracting broader audiences, including frustrated National Public Radio listeners in the area who contend with scrambled signals from public radio stations in Atlanta and Demorest on the same FM spot and with the frequent "pledge drives" that interrupt programming. With the streaming broadcast available on any Internet computer, Garner says WBCX is "well on its way to a national and international reputation for excellence in programming."

Brenau students use 'creative distraction' to teach – and learn

by Mary Welch

Teachers teaching students and students teaching teachers sets up a win-win situation. That's exactly what the partnership between Brenau University and McEver Arts Academy in Gainesville aimed to accomplish. Last summer the public elementary school won approval to recast itself as a charter school with an arts-based strategy to develop well-rounded students who learn by expressing themselves in many ways. Stanford University's resident arts-in-education expert Elliot Eisner argues that the creative "distraction" in the classroom actually helps kids focus.

Although Brenau education majors have long worked in Gainesville public schools in practice teaching, McEver Principal Catherine Rosa, shopping for academic partners, teed up an opportunity right in the university's interdisciplinary liberal arts wheelhouse. Brenau Dean of Fine Arts & Humanities Andrea Birch leapt at a chance to get students from a variety of disciplines involved. As a result, Brenau fine arts, dance, theater and music students help with courses during the day as part of the charter school's "regular" curriculum. They also offer dance classes and semi-private voice lessons. Down the road, Birch sees conflict resolution, business, mass communications and other "non-arts" disciplines involved.

Brenau fiber arts and voice students opened the first program for the McEver pupils, many of whom speak Spanish as their primary language. Arts Education direc-

tor Barbara Faulkner and Fashion Design Professor Lori Gann-Smith, along with students like Holly Lynn Smith and Candice Jenkins, introduced "Fiber Fridays" in which the children learned about felting, knitting and cord- and rope-making techniques. They made felted paintings and felted bags, complete with handmade cord/rope handles and knitted scarves. Brenau students also worked with fourth- and fifth-graders to create a puppet show from scratch – designing and making puppets, scripting and performing the program in front of an audience.

"They're developing skills that can prove to be valuable in whatever career they go into," says Gann-Smith. "Today's employers want people who can think creatively and critically. In any arts project, there are always problems. They are solving problems."

Music department Chair Barbara Steinhaus, Dance Chair Vincas Greene and Sandra Brim, creative writing director, also brought in students to work with the McEver kids. Steinhaus' six charges all want to teach voice after they graduate, so they got some hands-on experience in what that was going to be like.

Rosa believes the Brenau students made a tremendous impact on the students. "We're getting a wonderful response. We had students who after school worked with voice teachers and it was extraordinary. The students are engaged and no one wants to be absent on Friday when the Brenau students come in."

To read the full article, please visit www.brenau.edu/brenauwindow.



Regina Fried



Rudi Kiefer

In elementary school, "string theory" means something totally different from what it does in college, but Brenau students and faculty help McEver students bridge the universe of play and learning. At right, sophomore vocal performance major Keisha Boykin helps kids prepare for their first recital.



Fossey exhibit on 'permanent' display at Brenau

When Brenau partnered last year with the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International for some public and academic programs, it landed as a bonus a display of things never seen by the outside world – the personal belongings of the occupational therapist-turned-primate researcher that were recovered from her home in Rwanda after she was murdered in 1985. The temporary exhibit was so successful that the Atlanta-based Fossey organization agreed to a five-year contract to make the exhibit permanent, and it is now open for business in a special collections room of the Trustee Library on Brenau's Gainesville campus. Although small, the exhibit provides an unusual glimpse into the controversial life – so fraught with contradictions – of the author of *Gorillas in the Mist*. You'll see brutal, prehistoric-looking weapons she confiscated from poachers – sometimes at the point of her revolver – also on display. Next to those find jeweled rosaries, intricate hand-drawn maps, loving “family” photos of the mountain gorillas she



In the photo taken in the recent re-opened Brenau Dian Fossey exhibit, from left, Helen Ray, the former Brenau provost who worked with the Fossey organization over a two-year period on the programming partnership; Tara Stoinski, the Pat and Forest McGrath Chair of Conservation and Research at the Fossey Fund; curator Melissa Hozey; and Elizabeth S. Morford, the Fossey Fund's chief development officer

saved from extinction and evidence of another of her passions, shopping, with some designer-label clothing. Visit anytime the library is open or call Special Collections Librarian Melissa Hozey, curator of the exhibit, at 770-534-6213 for a guided tour.

Be of good cheer: new varsity sport jumps in



Adding any new sport is always something to cheer about – especially in this case. Competitive cheer joins the Brenau athletics roster in 2011. With up to 30 athletes who will not only cheer, but also tumble, dance and perform stunts with pyramids and flyers, the program even before it begins has administrators talking in superlatives about the number of participants it will attract and how much it will impact the university's overall student recruitment programs. They all predict that cheer at Brenau will be, in a word, huge.

Thanks to ESPN television coverage of competitions as well as the *Bring it On!* movie franchise about the highly competitive world of cheer, the sport has become especially popular in the last six or seven years. It is practiced by hundreds of thousands of participants in all age groups. Krista Britt, who Golden Tigers Athletic Director Mike Lochstampf recruited to head the program late in the fall, says that all-girl competitive cheer is one of the fastest-growing athletics programs in colleges and universities.

Lochstampf agrees, saying that both current and incoming students have shown incredible levels of interest and enthusiasm for the sport. But, he adds, “This is kind of a groundbreaking venture.” Lochstampf explains that cheerleading is known as an “emerging” sport, with only about 50 of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics' 300 member institutions looking at possibilities for programs. The NAIA plans to sanction a national championship in 2012, setting it apart from the larger NCAA, which does not recognize the sport or host a national championship. Shorter University in Rome, Ga., a sister member of the

Southern States Athletic Conference, currently has a successful cheer program, but most schools will be like Brenau: building from the floor up.

Coinciding with the Winter Weekend student recruiting event, Brenau will hold a cheer clinic for high school seniors on campus Jan. 29, 2011. Tryouts for the team will be in April.

Brenau already has a spirit team as a club sport with members cheering at basketball and volleyball games. Athletes on the competitive squad will have the option to be part of the spirit team, but it will not be mandatory. We're not talking about your grandfather's “two-bits-four bits-six-bits-a dollar” kind of cheerleading.

Britt brings extensive experience. Currently coach at North Hall High School and working as a choreographer for various teams in the area, which she will continue doing along with her Brenau job, Britt has been cheering since she was 5 years old and coaching since she was in college. She has appeared in the Super Bowl in Atlanta as a featured dancer and instructor. She also has served on the staff for the SEC Championship Game since 2006 and has been involved in the Gator Bowl and Sugar Bowl pre-game and halftime shows.

And, by the way, don't try to tell her that cheer is not a sport.

“These girls train at a very high athletic level,” Britt says. “Cheer is actually almost as dangerous as football because the athletes are stunting and climbing and tumbling and tossing. We don't have helmets and pads to protect us. Shaking your pompoms on the sidelines – that hasn't been anywhere near the case for 15 years.”

– Karen Rosen



Brenau's new cheer coach Krista Britt, above, is shown at left coaching her team at North Hall High School. The Golden Tigers want to catch the wave of one of the fastest-growing women's sports.

With faculty in full regalia for both the somber processional and recessional, President Ed Schrader welcomes new and returning students at the first of three formal convocations at the Women's College. Fall convocation speaker Debra Dobkins, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Faculty Member of the Year, applauds first-years students and upperclassmen for both past and future accomplishments, saying "I wonder if you know just how big a favor you did yourself in choosing Brenau."



Tom Askew



Nothing less than self-invention

After 13 years at Brenau, Debra Dobkins, associate professor of English and director of the Writing Center at Brenau, inaugurated what some are calling a "new tradition"—showcasing outstanding faculty in addresses at the Women's College formal convocations

Dobkins, whose ongoing research focuses on Southern women — writers and readers — and the influence they have on each other, began her fall convocation address with a self-deprecating remark about the "pure terror" she felt at following the prior year's convocation speaker, who had received a standing ovation by declaring that "timid women don't leave lasting legacies." Then, Dobkins promptly welcomed the Class of 2014 to campus with a pure, old-fashioned stem-winder — what one student called an "awe-inspiring" mes-

sage that not only recounted the myriad accomplishments of strong products of women's colleges but also outlined for the newcomers to single-gender academia how their educations will be a source of strength in the future.

You can read the full text of her speech at www.brenau.edu/brenauwindow. But to whet your appetite, here are some excerpts:

WE ARE, IN MANY WAYS, PRIVILEGED to be here, and we must accept the responsibility this privilege carries with it. ... There are still many women in places here and all over the world who have been denied basic freedoms like the right to education and the right to say no. Their voices have been silenced, and we owe it to them to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded

us and to work to ensure that women's voices everywhere are given free expression.

I'VE WITNESSED THE MAGIC that can happen when women connect with shared purpose. My alma mater [Agnes Scott] often quotes an alumna's description of it as "a place where mind sparks mind," an environment in which it's cool and exciting to be smart together. I challenge you to make Brenau the kind of place where your thoughts catalyze and advance your sister students' ideas.

THE WOMEN'S COLLEGE HAS BEEN THE HEART AND SOUL of this institution's identity since 1878. However, it is important to note that it is only one part of the larger university today. We have a number of thriving coeducational programs at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, and I argue that their success enriches us all. Brenau is dedicated to the advancement of all its students — male and female. Our mission is to foster all students' intellectual, professional and personal growth. Brenau women have known for 132 years that being pro-woman does not mean being anti-man. As the mother of a son, I certainly have a direct interest in opportunities for young men, but I also believe that the advancement of women benefits the whole culture — and ultimately improves the future for our children and grandchildren, regardless of their gender.

MY WORK FOCUSES ON SOUTHERN WOMEN writers and readers. No region has a richer literary legacy than the American South, and few regions have had a more complicated history when it comes to gender constructs and stereotypes. ... Damaging stereotypes, particularly of women and their roles, have persisted here with tenacity. Again, this shows how audacious and visionary Brenau's founders were in 1878.

IT IS NO SURPRISE that Southern literature often maps the tangled intersections of gender and geography in the region. We know that our transactions with literature are a vital, compelling way to examine the world and our place in it and help us understand how that place in many ways defines the selves we can imagine. Interacting with literature we engage life's most profound questions: who are we, where are we and why are we here, what does it all mean, and how do we live in relationships with others? Texts can illuminate a multiplicity of possible answers to these existential human questions.

TO CARE FOR THE SELF, Foucault and Plato said, one must purposefully read and write, thoughtfully speak and listen, and actively foster friendships. Undertaking such acts, people might gather, contemplate and share new ways of knowing and being. The goal was to create a self that was wise and noble and helped others in their self-constituting practices. The result was nothing less than self-invention.

YOUNG SOUTHERN WOMEN use Southern texts not just to understand their culture and themselves, but to help create the selves they want to be. The women I interviewed found in this literature a technology for self-invention and employed it to practice care of the self. Southern female characters became models for how they wanted to be — or not be — in the world, specifically in the contemporary South. One thing all the women in my study talked about is how reading in the company of women became a transformative act as they collaboratively interpreted novels, stories, poems and plays. They also spoke extensively about the role of the Women's College in their identity formation. Every woman I interviewed discussed at length the sustenance and support, freedom and power, and lasting friendships she found here.

HERE'S WHAT those smart young women wanted you all to know: Be bold. Be fierce in following your passions. Don't be afraid to stretch your boundaries. Be curious about everything. Try doing things that are hard. Take classes that challenge you, even if you do have to study more. Be confident in knowing you are supported. Deny the negative stereotypes about women through your actions. Give the lie to damaging myths perpetuated about us. Know that you are beautiful and unique and have a voice that deserves expression.

I WILL ADD something I've learned from writers like [Eudora] Welty and [William] Faulkner, from philosophers like Plato and Foucault, and from my Women's College experience: You have the power to create the self you want to be — if you're willing to approach the cultivation of that self with dedication and purpose and concern for others, if you're willing to work extra hard, if you're willing to practice being, not seeming, as the Brenau ideal urges. We can challenge you to lead extraordinary lives, but you must engage the challenge, and that isn't always easy. You must dare to envision the possibilities and pursue them boldly.



Barry Williams

The Kindness of Strangers

by David Morrison

HUNT SLONEM, the 59-year-old abstract expressionist who is best known for paintings and sculpture of explosively colored tropical birds, monkey faces and occasionally bunny rabbits, says the dead presidents began showing up in his work a few years ago. Although Slonem pieces sometimes evoke whimsy and pure fun, he talks mostly about the spiritual nature of his painting. That is particularly appropriate when the discussion turns to the portraits of Washington, like the one on the cover of this magazine, Abraham Lincoln and other historic figures.

“When I paint, I feel their presence,” Slonem said unabashedly two years ago in a long interview on *CBS Sunday Morning*. “I work with channelers, who actually hear words and voices. Lincoln told me to paint doves.”

So he paints doves. Lincoln also told him to paint olive branches – the other spiritually commissioned, repetitive image in what the artist calls Lincoln’s “Peace Plan.”

Slonem actually “met” Honest Abe through the late president’s wife, Mary Todd Lincoln. A friend some years ago gave Slonem a shawl that once belonged to the former first lady. Slonem had painted her periodically over the years because he regarded her as a classic 19th century woman of style and, according to a New Orleans art critic, “a kindred spirit because she believed in mediums, séances and shopping.”

In this story, however, Slonem is actually the medium. Although his studio remains there, Slonem recently decamped from the 89-room, 30,000-square-foot digs

on 10th Street in Manhattan’s West Village for a smaller 15,000-square-foot Hell’s Kitchen habitat. He also has a 19th-century home – Cordt Mansion – in upstate Kingston, N.Y., where he visits the spiritual healer who put him in touch with Lincoln and other people from the past. Then there are a couple of opulent antebellum plantations he is restoring in south Louisiana – Albania in Jeanerette and Lakeside in Batchelor.

In addition to the ghosts and spirits that seem to inhabit the places, Slonem shares his residences and working space with animals, particularly exotic birds, dozens of which occasionally have the run of the place, perching on the artist’s shoulder or easel as he works.

Through New York social circles he befriended the late Lucie Jadot Shirazi, the Belgian railroad heiress who married a member of the deposed royal family of Iran and who, with Price Phillip of Great Britain, subsequently cofounded the World Wildlife Fund. Since Shirazi’s death in 1994 at age 86, Slonem has maintained contact with artist and film director Roberto Mitrotti, who is president of the Princess Shirazi Foundation, a Brenau benefactor.

Slonem, son of a U.S. Navy submarine skipper who moved around considerably during his early years, graduated from Tulane University in 1973, and made both sensual and spiritual connections with the land. Or, as he put it in an interview with *The New York Times* about why he had acquired two Louisiana plantations, “I could eat the dirt here.”

Henry Shane, who earned both undergraduate and

It sounds a bit like character sketches from a Gothic novel or a Tennessee Williams play – the daughter of a Belgian railroad magnate who married into Iran’s deposed royal family, an enigmatic New Orleans area architect, developer and philanthropist, an eccentric artist with plantations in the South who paints sometimes with exotic birds on his shoulder in an 89-room apartment in New York City, mediums who talk to dead presidents. But this is really just a story about plain old networking that resulted in some incredibly interesting – and unexpected – additions to Brenau’s permanent art collection.

One of the artist's "best friends" at work in the New York studio. Slonem says he has "lived with birds" since the 1960s and, depending on which published account you believe, there are between 60 and 100 always around.



Barry Williams

graduate degrees at Tulane well before Slonem's arrival there, is a Kenner, La., native, architect, developer, philanthropist and almost evangelical art collector. In the latter pursuit, Shane appears to have but one conceit: "I only collect Louisiana artists," he said in a telephone interview. Although Slonem never works in Louisiana and certainly wasn't born there, when he became a landowner in the state, he became eligible for membership in Shane's exclusive club of "native" artists. Shane and his wife, Pat, subsequently have collected hundreds of Slonem pieces, including an iconic 18-foot sculpture of perched toucans donated last year to the city of Metairie, La., as part of a public art and beautification project. That sculpture garden also contains the famous "big blue dog" sculpture of another Shane friend, the Cajun artist George Rodrigue.

"I guess I just liked Hunt's work," Shane chuckles about his "exception to the rule." The Shanes "probably

have about 300 paintings," many of them hanging in their home, where about 1,000 pieces by many artists hang at any given time. "Every time we visit Hunt, we'll buy some more, and then take down the older stuff and donate it."

Where does Brenau fit into all of this? Shane confesses he'd never heard of the place. Slonem had, but only peripherally because of his connection to Mitrotti and Princess Shirazi, whose unique designer clothing is now the crown jewel in Brenau's vintage clothing collection.

As the artist recalls the story, Shane called him one day and asked if he knew anybody who might be interested in having a couple of Slonem's pieces. Shortly thereafter, Mitrotti called about something else, and Slonem asked whether he was still in touch with "the college in Georgia." That put in the works a series of events that led Brenau President Ed Schrader and former President John Burd to visit Slonem in his studio last summer and



oversee packing and shipping dozens of paintings and sculptures to Brenau – a collection that by one estimate is worth well more than \$1 million.

"Normally I don't donate that many pieces," Shane said, "but Hunt kept talking to me about it and it made sense. Y'all did pick some nice stuff. It is a pretty good sampler of Hunt's work over the years."

The collection, Slonem says, is representative of his work since he first moved to New York 35 years ago, pretty much tracking the retrospective of a book about his art that is scheduled to be published in the fall. It clearly illustrates his "cross hatch" painting technique, which he describes as "wet into wet" and using the back of the brush to carve into the surface. The Brenau Collection includes pop culture icons, presidents, images of animals, and interesting abstract pattern paintings.

"It is a wonderful addition to the permanent collection because it is representative of abstract work that is not like anything else that we have," says Brenau Galleries Director Vanessa Grubbs, who is working with Slonem to put together a future show of the collection on the Gainesville campus. "Another thing that is very interesting about his work is that, because of the bright



Barry Williams



New Orleans Times-Picayune

colors and texture and size of the paintings and sculpture, it's often used as a backdrop for photography in high-fashion magazines like *Vogue*. Our fashion design and merchandising students probably will recognize it right away."

Since 1977, Slonem has had more than 150 solo exhibitions, including a massive exhibition at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans that Shane says "was one of the biggest shows they've ever done." More than 75 museums internationally, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Guggenheim Museum in New York, include Slonem works in their collections.

Slonem says he looks forward to Brenau's collection, which he says will be a rare chance to see the breadth of the work "all hanging together in a group."

"It really is about spirituality," he said. "I am happy to have it with a school where people can get a positive message from it, which we need more of on this planet at this time. I get letters and messages from people around the world about how something I'd done had an uplifting, healing quality for them. I hope a little of that will be spread around at Brenau."

Clockwise from bottom left, one of the paintings Abraham Lincoln "told" Slonem to paint; the artist explains technique and images in his paintings to Brenau President Ed Schrader; some of the more than \$1 million worth of art headed for Brenau's permanent collection; and Brenau's "stranger" benefactor Henry Shane.

1930s

Beverly Ann Clark Johnston, WC '37, of Delray Beach, Fla., celebrated her 92nd birthday. She has three daughters, six grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

1940s

Barbara Dawson, WC '46, of Mount Dora, Fla., has taken ballroom dance lessons for 15 years and received her silver trophy in February. She is 84 years old.

1950s

Sophia Catharios, WC '58, of Australia, is the proud grandmother of Master Alex Catharios III and has been commuting back and forth between Melbourne and Sydney to enjoy the company of her children Melissa and Dean Catharios. She is heavily involved in preparations for the staging of her new play *HYPATIA* to open in April 2011 under the auspices of the Greek Festival of Sydney.

1960s-1970s

Nan Jolly Moore (BA '74, BC '78) of Griffin, Ga., is the proud new grandmother of Harrison Andrew Hilley, born June 26.

The **Brenau Academy Class of 1974** met for a pot-luck lunch at the home of **Sandy Wiggs** in Vinings. Attending were **Cathy Morgan Chapman** and husband Cy, **Kay Edwards Schnak** and husband Rob, **Nan Jolly Moore** and husband Len, **Sandy Wiggs, Marilyn Bagen Sager** with sisters Andi and Robyn, **Debbie Logwood**, and **Mary Jean McNair**



Classes of '67 to '74 Chi Omega alumnae from the Eta Zeta chapter met for a reunion weekend at Hilton Head Island in September. They want all Brenau alumnae to know that Eta Zeta alumnae are alive and well and they plan to have another reunion in two years. Pictured are (l to r): 1st row, **Jan Follachio Bloom, WC '70, Debbie Jones Spiecker, WC '70, Margaret Cowley Cole, WC '74, Glo Kavakos Aaron, WC '71, Linda Childers Crawford, WC '70;** 2nd row, **Susan Dupree Mincey, WC '68, Kathy Webb Jones, WC '72, Ann Nash, WC '72, Haden Hodges Jones, WC '71;** 3rd row, **Weegee Bird, WC '71, Stella Parris, WC '71, Pam McBrayer Gilmer, WC '70, Kathryn Fanville Dodd, WC '70, Susan Hutcheson Thompson, WC '72;** 4th row, **Tricia Ligon, WC '71, Penny Teague Eubanks, WC '71;** 5th row, **Susan King Haley, WC '70, Becky Smith Hyman, WC '71, Charlotte Collins Floyd, WC '74, Meg Price Leonard, WC '68, Joanna Sinnet Ritch, WC '68;** not pictured are **Nancy Pope Williams, WC '72** and **Ellen Galvin Latimer, WC '71.**



Jane Suggs, WC '74, of Columbia, S.C., is proud to have her very own Brenau girl. Her daughter Betsy is in the Masters in Interior Design program at Brenau. She is pictured here with her daughter and Betsy's classmate Jody.



Nicki Griffith Rionda WC '95, of Stockbridge, Ga., announces that Jack Andrew Rionda was born on August 20. He was 6 pounds 14 ounces and measured 19.5 inches long. He joins big sister Annie.

Brown '76. The group met again in August in Marietta. Attending were **Cathy Morgan Chapman, Nan Jolly Moore, Debbie Logwood, Marilyn Bagen Sager** and sister Robyn.

Jamie White Partain, WC '77, of Hartwell, Ga., announces that she is moving to an old 1937 house in Hartwell. Her husband passed away four years ago.



Rear Admiral (Lower Half) **Patricia E. Wolfe, EWC '87**, of Jacksonville, Fla., was promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral (Upper Half) at a ceremony on Oct. 5. Wolfe's second star was pinned on by her husband, Robert. She has been recalled to active duty numerous times in support of Operations Desert Storm, Sea Signal, Restore Democracy, and twice for Operation Enduring Freedom. In January 2010 Wolfe was commander of Combined Task Force (CTF) 48, part of Operation Unified Response, providing humanitarian and disaster relief in Haiti. She is currently assigned as the commander, Navy Expeditionary Logistics Support Group, Williamsburg, Va., Naval Weapons Station Yorktown, Cheatham Annex.



Crystal Mobley Davidson WC '96 of Wylie, S.C., and husband, James announce the birth of their second child, Lincoln Samuel Davidson. Samuel was born May 26 weighing 7 pounds 11 ounces and measuring 19 inches long. Big brother, Coleman is excited to have this new addition to the family.

Elizabeth Robinson, EWC '88, of Chatsworth, Ga., received the Teacher of the Year award for Murray County Schools. She is a third-grade teacher at Woodlawn Elementary School and has taught her entire 22-year career in Murray County, all of it at the third-grade level.



Alpha Gamma Delta sisters met for a mini-reunion over the 4th of July weekend in Gwinnett County, Ga. Pictured from left, front row, **Susan Katz, WC '98** and **Kalina Haynes, WC '98**; middle row, **Victoria Welch Diamond, WC '00**, **Shawn Chapman, WC '97**, **Ambah Frederick, WC '01**, **Kelli Lansford Horner, WC '00**, **Karri Bentley, WC '02**, **Tamara Vansant Sansbury, WC '99**, **Erica Barnett Galasso WC '98**; top row, **Angie Old Jones, WC '97**, **Tonya Evans Chatman WC '99**, **Tricia Marrero, Stacy Williams WC '00**, **Nicole Iannarone, WC '99**, and **Holley Rotton Adams, WC '03**.



Khalilah Robinson Johnson, WC '05, of Alpharetta, Ga., married **Charles Julian Johnson** of Gainesville, Ga., on August 8, 2010, at Chateau Elan Winery and Resort. Women's College attendants and participants in her wedding included: **Natalie Grasso, WC '05**, **ShaRhonda Kimbrough, WC '01**, and **Sheriah Richardson, WC '01**.



India Rose, WC '06, of Lithonia, Ga., was one of only 19 doctoral students from throughout the United States selected by the Delta Omega Honor Society in Public Health to present research at a poster session during the recent American Public Health Caucus in Denver.

1990s-2000s

Oscar C. Harper, EWC '92, of Peachtree City, Ga., assumed the role of president of Southern Power, and became a senior vice president of Southern Company Services. He was formerly vice

president, energy planning and nuclear development at Southern Company's Georgia Power subsidiary.
Mark S. Ayers, EWC '93, of Annapolis, Md., joined the board of directors for ALAS Defense

Systems. He has 27 years of business management and implementation experience in the manufacturing and service industries.



Shannon Grinnan Weeks, WC '07, of Buford, Ga., president of the Gainesville ZTA alumnae chapter, recently held a gathering with other alumnae to decorate the ZTA house for Christmas. Pictured are (l to r): **Emi Lawson Hughes, WC '05**, **B.J. Richardson Williams, WC '82**, **Anna Sewell Berry, WC '07**, **Ivey Templeton, WC '09**, **Shannon Grinnan Weeks, WC '07**, and **Kayla Patterson, WC '05**.



Shannon Grinnan, WC '07, of Buford, Ga., married **Brad Weeks** on May 1, 2010, at First Baptist Church in Gainesville. Bridesmaids included **Nicole Allen Thompson, WC '07**, **Anna Sewell Berry, WC '07**, **Cortney Barrett Koshiol, WC '07**, **Katy Sulhoff, WC '07**, **Emi Lawson Hughes, WC '05**, **Kayla Patterson, WC '05**, and **Sara Week Lingerfelt, EWC '07**.



Cortney Orme, WC '08, and husband **Chris Orme** welcomed new baby boy, **Joshua David Orme** on Jan. 25, 2010.

Trudie Nacin, EWC '96, of Lawrenceville, Ga., has been appointed by **Clyde Reese**, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH), as **Director of the State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP)**. She was formerly the SHBP Deputy Director and has worked in the insurance and managed care industry since the 1980s.

Dinah C. Wayne, WC '96, of Flowery Branch, Ga., has been named to the State Board of Technical and Adult Education as

the Ninth Congressional District representative.

Lance Williams, EWC '96, of Greenwood, S.C., has been named by U.S. Rep-elect **Jeff Duncan** as his chief of staff. He served as former U.S. Rep **Gresham Barrett's** first chief of staff, leaving the office in 2007 to return to managing his family-owned business, Southeastern Financial Group.

Tracie Webb, EWC '97, of Murrayville, Ga., has been promoted to vice president of Gainesville-based **Peach State Bank & Trust**. She has been in banking for 16 years.

Mike Sale, EWC '99, of Colbert, Ga., has joined **The Commercial Bank in Crawford** as president and chief executive officer. Sale has 18 years of banking experience in Northeast Georgia. He previously worked with **Athens First Bank & Trust** as a group vice president.

Meredith D. McEver, EWC '02, of Gainesville, Ga., has joined **Willis Investment Counsel** as its assistant trader and portfolio administrator. She comes to Willis Investment Counsel after a career at **Regions Financial Corporation** that spanned almost 12 years.

Emily Elizabeth Rowland, WC '08, of Sugar Hill, Ga., is proud to announce her position as director of the dance program at **Mountain View High School** in Lawrenceville, Ga.

Samantha Wright, WC '09, of Roswell, Ga., is working as a credentialing and privileging specialist in the primary care/emergency medicine division of **JHCVO at Jackson Healthcare** in Atlanta. She was recently able to help secure a position with the company for fellow sorority sister and Brenau alumna, **Kyleigh Wright, WC '10**.

Anna Sowell, WC '10, of Lawrenceville, Ga., is now the assistant director, annual giving, at **Georgia Gwinnett College**.



Alumnae in Birmingham, Ala., recently met for a luncheon at Do Di Yos. Pictured from left are **Maurine Wallace Abney, WC '58**, **Susan Kelly Biedinger, WC '81**, **Caroline Cronic, WC '08**, **Elizabeth Holman, WC '10**, **Janelle Frei Hite, WC '01**, **Lindsay Cook, WC '73**, **Tamara Vansant Sansbury, WC '99**, **Karri Bentley, WC '02**, and **Melissa Gardner Edge, WC '02**, alumni director.

Last issue we omitted captions for the Silver Divas from the **Class of 1985** and Golden Girls from the **Class of 1960** for their 2010 reunion photos.

Silver Divas, First Row left to right: **Lynda Byrd Czarnomski**, **Cindy Aldridge Ingram**, **DeAnne Smith Mitchell**, **Barbara Beck Pettigrew**, **Beth LeFevra Hendrix**. Second Row left to right: **Dana Fowler Miller**, **Sissy Herndon Phillips**, **Jill Kelley Stewart**, **Reba Gates Page**. Not pictured are: **Alison Tarpley Burnette**, **Tina Merritt Coppola**, **Barbara Beck Pettigrew**, **Collete Woods**, **Pam Wright Broach**, **Tina Merritt Coppola**, **Felecia Gober Doyle**, **Casey Simpson**.



Silver Divas

Golden Girls, Front row left to right: **Susan Seaver Raffa**, **Betty Williams Wing**, **Gail Leverett Connolly**, **Hilda Bagwell Taylor**, **Penny Ellsworth Spears**. Second row left to right: **Dotty Eleazer Alexander**, **Eloise Smith Walston**, **Leeda Stockton Currin**, **Jeanette Rathburn Howell**, **Ann McDuffie Palmour**, **Jennifer Chang Su**, **Jill Simpson Knapp**, **Charon Crabtree Parker**, **Sandra Smith Soterakis**, **Mary McClurkin**. Not pictured are: **Judy Neal Mabry**, **Joan Harrill Trimble**, **Nancy Wofford Moore** and **Cam Franklin Boatwright**.



Golden Girls

The **Class of 1961** is looking forward to its 50th Golden Girl Reunion on April 15-16, 2011. Classmates who have already committed to attending include: **Janice Bailey Carter**, **Terry Terhune Glover**, **Alyce Ferdie Nimineau Johnston**, **Godshall Parker**, **Polly Pickren Reins**, **Mary Melinda Saussy**, **Nancy Adams Thompson**, **Patricia Johnston Treadwell**, **Beville Geyer Vertuno**, **Daisy Goodnight Waldrep**, and **Sara Thurber Wilkerson**. They hope many more will plan to join them!



Members of the North Atlanta Alumni Council held their first event in downtown Norcross in October. Pictured from the left are several Brenau alumni with faculty from the North Atlanta campus of Brenau. **Danielle Crawford, EWC '09**, **Kathy Ames, EWC '94 & '96**, **Marlee Henry, EWC '03**, **Sandra Thurman, EWC '96, '98, '99**, and **Monique Jones, EWC '09**. Also pictured are **Suzanne Butterfield**, associate professor of human resources, **David Cedarburg, EWC '06**, **Debbie Frazier, EWC '09**, **Angie Hollanda, EWC '09**, **Wanda Saed**, director of nonresidential programs and support services, North Atlanta campus, and **Monique Jones, EWC '09**.

Alumnae in Greenville, S.C., met in October for a luncheon at Brick Street Café. Pictured from left are **Ellen Burnside Wilkinson, A '64**, **Helen Hancock Sablan, A '64**, **Heather Statham, WC '94**, **Jennifer Milam George, WC '92**, **Betsy Adcock Baumgardner, WC '88**, **Adair Smith Senn, WC '92**, and **Misty Gowder, WC '03**. Not pictured are **Betty Steuart Harris, WC '44**, and **Lynn Chiles McKain, WC '72**.



Alumnae in Charlotte, N.C., met in October for a luncheon and tour of the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art. Pictured from left are **Melissa Edge, WC '02**, Alumni Director, **Sandra Smith Soterakis, WC '60**, **Dotty Eleazer Alexander, WC '60**, **Leeda Stockton Currin, WC '60**, **Betty Gilkeson Robinson, WC '45**, **Ann Britton Edwards, WC '70**, and **Lib Gray Dula, WC '61**. Not pictured is **Sara Evans, WC '73**.



IN MEMORY

- Lollie Ellis Newton Burns, WC '24, of Knoxville, Tenn., died Aug. 8.
- Helen Ellis Lilly, WC '31, of Alpharetta, Ga., died Nov. 4.
- Mary Virginia Carter Parrish, WC '33, of Hopkinsville, Ky., died Aug. 24.
- Elizabeth Smith Mintz, WC '35, of Norfolk, Va., died Nov. 15.
- Dorothea Lupo Kelley, WC '36, of Duluth, Ga., died June 25.
- Kathryn Tuttle Crowe, WC '39, of Millen, Ga., died May 4.
- Flossie Mae Sutton Gousha, WC '41, of Pinellas Park, Ky., died Aug. 6.
- Lestina Stanley Webb, WC '41, of Flovilla, Ga., died Oct. 24.
- Martha Elizabeth Halle Vodak, WC '44, of Sylva, N.C., died July 13.
- Betty Lee Hagy Hodges, WC '45, of San Antonio, Texas, died Sept. 25, 2009.
- Martha Milburn, WC '45, of Harrison, Ark., died May 19.
- Martha Elizabeth Finger Stratton, WC '45, of Gainesville, Ga., died Dec. 14.
- Mary Catherine Duff Anderson, WC '46, of Monticello, Fla., died May 8.
- Mary Ann Candee Elrod, WC '49, of Atlanta, died July 11.
- Edith Hermonot Dickinson, WC '50, of Montpelier, Vt., died Nov. 21, 2001.
- Henrietta Dettmering Jerol, A '61, of Cumming, Ga., died Nov. 23.
- Mary Shepard Yearta, WC '70, of Asheville, N.C., died June 7.
- Sandra Lee King, WC '75, of Vero Beach, Fla., died Aug. 21.
- Patricia Louise Bell Stone, WC '70, of Houston, Texas, died July 10.
- Risa Sher Vivona, WC '87, of York, Pa., died Sept. 11.
- Barbara Davis Webster, former Brenau professor, of Brevard, N.C., died July 13.



Mickie Yamamori Mathes, a former member of the College of Education faculty at Brenau, died in Doha, Qatar, Nov. 8, after a long battle with intestinal cancer. Mathes, former chair of the special education department at Brenau, was the university's first Fulbright lecturer – winning the prestigious grant in 2007 to spend a year at the University of Qatar in the Persian Gulf State at its college of education. The Qatar university asked her to stay on to help it win accreditation for its program, which was completed shortly before she died. Jim Southerland, provost and vice president for academic affairs, said Mathes was “well loved by students and colleagues alike.” The native of Japan joined the Brenau faculty in August 1996. While at Brenau, Mathes and her former husband, Ben, who headed the not-for-profit Christian organization Rivers of the World, lived in Dawsonville, Ga.

ONE FOR THE BOOKS

Gold medal performers



Billy Howard

With the attention the Brenau CFO and his staff pay to making all spending requests conform to budgets, we are tempted to steal shamelessly from *The Daily Show* to accuse Dr. Wayne Dempsey of exhibiting “The Audacity of Nope.” That’s an uneasy mantle for a man who normally pushes the envelope on terms like jolly, gregarious and accommodating. Ditto that for Vice President for Financial Services Sandra Thornton, who personifies calmness under pressure, equanimity and grace. And, in the past three years, pressure they have known. The university auditor Billy Minch expressed the sentiment in more accountant-like terms, but had it not been for the Dempsey-Thornton duo’s skills in managing finances, Brenau could have landed in big trouble.

Brenau derives about 75 percent of its annual revenues from tuition payments. During an economic downturn that put many tuition-dependent private institutions on the brink of bankruptcy, Brenau posted three straight years of financial growth, including a \$1.9 million jump in the last fiscal year. It generated operating revenues to replace other funding that disappeared with disastrous global economic conditions and it held the line on spending. “That means you’ve made good decisions,” Minch says, “and a lot of the positive change can be reflective on Sandra and Wayne.”

From a “profit and loss” perspective, Brenau went from a deficit of \$9 million at the height of the recession to a positive \$4.5 million – a \$13.5 million improvement in one year. On the esoteric three-point scale the U.S. Department of Education applies to higher education institution financial operations, Brenau had fallen to 1.3, about 0.2 points below where it needed to be. This year the score was 3.0; it can’t get any higher. During the recession, Brenau endowments and other investments tanked along with those of Harvard and everybody else. This year

Billy Howard



endowment investments have started a comeback, which is happening a little faster because Dempsey and Thornton found ways around drawing operating revenues from funds that had lost considerable earning potential. By employing modern financial management tools and tight-fisted discipline, Brenau not only dodged massive layoffs and elimination of retirement contributions, but also saw some modest improvements in salaries and other benefits and still managed to contribute about \$8 million from the operating budget for student financial aid.

The tools and discipline meant that faculty and staff have had to make some sacrifices, which Dempsey and Thornton readily acknowledge. All of that has enabled the university to get a handle on cash flow requirements – which involves making certain there is enough money in the bank to pay bills, meet payrolls and handle unanticipated expenses, like this year’s \$750,000 upgrade to dormitory fire systems.

Dempsey, who came to Brenau in 2005, grew up in Rome, Ga., where he met his wife Marsha, he jokes, when they were in the local Baptist church Sunday school nursery together – as “students.” He majored in biology at Shorter and, with a master’s degree from the University of Georgia, taught school in his hometown for a number of years. But Shorter hired him to head its student financial aid program, then named him its first administrative vice president – a job he was so good at that the university conferred on him an honorary doctorate.

University of Tennessee graduate Thornton was also a school teacher for several years before she and her husband, Joe, moved to Georgia. She completed an accounting degree at Brenau in 1987 and an M.B.A. nine years later. After working for an accounting firm, she came to Brenau as controller in 1986 and became the financial VP in 2006.

Both Dempsey and Thornton make the President’s Club list for their annual financial contributions to Brenau. Although neither will step up and demand any kind of medal, fine-print mention in an annual report does not say anything about their true “financial” contributions. Saying “no” when times are tough help make sure you’re still around to say “yes” later. And for that, maybe there should be a medal.

– David Morrison

Smithgall and Stafford join Brenau Board of Trustees

She is a Brenau University alumna who had served two previous terms on the university's governing board. He's an Atlanta businessman whose name you already see on streets and other Brenau campus facilities because of the prior service of both his parents on the board. Suffice it to say that on Oct. 22 when Shay Stafford and Charles Smithgall III attended their first meeting as newly appointed members of the Brenau Board of Trustees, it really wasn't their "first meeting" or first exposure to Brenau. Judge Sidney O. Smith Jr. nominated the two, saying "These are both outstanding individuals and they both will make excellent additions to the board," and the vote to seat them was unanimous.



Frances English (Shay) Stafford, a native of Hendersonville, N.C., graduated from Brenau in 1969 with a degree in psychology and education. She began her career in Washington, D.C., as an assistant to U. S. Rep. Roy Arthur Taylor, the nine-term Democratic congressman from her home state. Stafford subsequently she worked for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as governmental coordinator for the southeastern states. Later, she was public relations director of Holy Innocents' Episcopal School in Atlanta. Stafford lives in Atlanta with her husband, Connell, director of the public affairs firm, Troutman Sanders Strategies, and previously a vice president with The Coca-Cola Company and executive assistant to former Georgia U.S. Sen. Sam Nunn. They have two daughters, Ali and Jenna, who reside in Atlanta. She is also a six-term elder at Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, and for 10 years she has been on the board, five as its chair, of Covenant House Georgia, the largest private, non-profit agency that serves homeless and at-risk teenagers.



Charles A. Smithgall III is a newcomer to the Brenau board, but he follows in the footsteps of his father, the late Charles A. Smithgall II, and his mother, Lessie Bailey Smithgall, who remains trustee emeritus at Brenau. Smithgall founded SEI/Aaron's, Inc., in 1995 and currently is the franchisee of 87 sales and lease-to-own stores in nine states. He and his wife, Sally Lee Griffitts (Griff) Smithgall, live in Atlanta. After he graduated with a degree in industrial management in 1965 from Georgia Tech, Smithgall spent a year at Wharton School of Finance and Commerce at the University of Pennsylvania before enlisting in the U.S. Army in 1967. The next two years he was a company commander in engineering companies in South Korea and Vietnam. He continued academic pursuits in 1975 at Harvard Business School in an executive leadership program, but he was already moving up in the business world. After starting his career with a construction company, Smithgall followed his parents' footsteps into the communications industry with Chattanooga Cable Television Co. and Turner Broadcasting in Atlanta. Entrepreneur Ted Turner encouraged him to acquire an Atlanta AM radio station and change the name to WCNN. Smithgall served as president of Ring Radio Company until he began his current pursuits.