

# RFSA MAGAZINE

RETIRED FACULTY-STAFF ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

## SPRING MEETING

*pg. 6*

## RFSA VISITS ICELAND

*pg. 15*

## UT HISTORY CORNER

*pg. 22*

SPRING/SUMMER 2023  
SITES.UTEXAS.EDU/RFSA



**RFSA BOARD**

**2022-23**

**2023-24**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

PRESIDENT	Susan Kessler	Charles Roeckle
PRESIDENT-ELECT	Charles Roeckle	Robert Lawrence
PAST PRESIDENT	Tany Norwood	Susan Kessler
SECRETARY	Joyce Harris	Joyce Harris
TREASURER	Bill Lasher	Mary Knight
HISTORIANS	Barbara & George Frock	Barbara & George Frock
HISTORIAN EMERITA	Martha Boyd	Martha Boyd
MEMBER-AT-LARGE, 1ST YEAR	Mary Knight	Hunter March
MEMBER-AT-LARGE, 2ND YEAR	Alba Ortiz	Alan Friedman
MEMBER-AT-LARGE, 3RD YEAR	Sharon Justice	Alba Ortiz
MEMBER-AT-LARGE, UT SYSTEM	John De La Garza	John De La Garza

**OTHER OFFICERS**

MAGAZINE EDITOR & ASSISTANT EDITOR	Donna Bellinghausen & Sharon Justice	Donna Bellinghausen & Sharon Justice
MEMBERSHIP CO-CHAIRS	Vacant	Liz Hastings & Martha Hilley
PHOTOGRAPHER	Miles Abernathy	Miles Abernathy
IT/WEBMASTER	Holly Thompson	Holly Thompson
SCHOLARSHIP CHAIR	Lael Hasty	Lael Hasty
SPONSORSHIP CO-CHAIRS	Jim Crook & Cecil Martinez	Jim Crook & Cecil Martinez

**INTEREST GROUP CHAIRS**

ARTS AND CULTURE	Laraine Lasdon	Laraine Lasdon
BRIDGE	Mary Kay Hemenway	Mary Kay Hemenway
EXERCISE	Carolyn Wylie	Carolyn Wylie
FOODIES	Robert Lawrence	Robert Lawrence
SPEAKER SERIES	Phil Kelton, Alice Reinarz & Karrol Kitt	Phil Kelton, Alice Reinarz & Karrol Kitt
TRAVEL	Sybil & Keith Momii	Sybil & Keith Momii
INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT & COORDINATION	Carol Barrett and the Texas Exes	Carol Barrett and the Texas Exes

*Cover Photo: Northern Lights near hotel. Photo by Kathleen Armenta.*

*Back Cover Photo: The Blue Lagoon. From left, Randy Wallace, Alice Reinarz, Corky Hilliard, Tany Norwood and Ginger Smith. Photo by Neal Hagood.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>02</b>	RFSA BOARD MEMBERS	<b>20</b>	NEW BOARD MEMBERS
<b>04</b>	A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT	<b>21</b>	LONGHORN FYI
<b>05</b>	SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS	<b>22</b>	UT HISTORY CORNER
<b>06</b>	SPRING LUNCHEON MEETING	<b>25</b>	SCHOLARSHIPS
<b>10</b>	MEMBER SPOTLIGHT	<b>26</b>	ICELAND REFLECTIONS
<b>12</b>	INTEREST GROUPS	<b>28</b>	ADVISORY PANEL
<b>15</b>	RFSA VISITS ICELAND	<b>30</b>	IN MEMORIAM

# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



## ► When is a lunch more than a lunch?

When you gather with the UT Retired Faculty-Staff Association for its spring luncheon and meeting. Less than a week ago at this writing, more than 150 former campus colleagues met. We were:

- **ENERGIZED** by the remarks of **Dr. John Daly**, renowned Professor of Communication and Management.
- **INSPIRED** to hear from RFSU scholarship recipient **Erica Buckland**.
- **MOTIVATED** to action on hearing **Jessica Timpson** tell how we can help students who are former foster children through Horns Helping Horns
- **HELPING** with our food donations to UT Outpost, a resource for students who face food uncertainty.
- **ENCOURAGED** to participate in RFSU Interest Groups.
- **GRATEFUL** to our generous sponsors (see their ads in this magazine).
- **RESPONSIBLE** to RFSU, electing two new executive officers: **Bob Lawrence** as President-Elect, and **Hunter March** as first year At-Large Member. We also welcomed to the Board Co-Chairs for Membership: **Liz Hastings** and **Martha Hilley**.

## LOOKING BACK ON 2022-23

As we emerged from pandemic restrictions, more activities called for more communication. UPDATE emails were sent throughout the year to RFSU members.

Thanks to **Holly Thompson**, our website (<https://sites.utexas.edu/rfsa/>) and Facebook presence (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/131246400563201>).df are updated and ever-improving.

Members again volunteered to support UT Remembers, Orange Santa, and 40 Hours for the 40 Acres. RFSU awarded 21 scholarships of \$2500 each.

Our special Advisory Panel, chaired by **Sharon Justice**, collected input from members, then compiled and evaluated it all and made several significant recommendations to the Board.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The 2023-24 Board will hit the ground running under the leadership of President **Charles Roeckle**. We'll implement the Advisory Panel's recommendations on membership, scholarships, service/volunteerism, new ways to connect with UT, new RFSU activities, and will identify a program coordinator to support our Texas Exes staff administrator. An RFSU oral history project will be steered by **Sharon Justice**. A new Past-Presidents Advisory Committee will be introduced.

As new members join the Board, others finish their terms. RFSU is indebted to outgoing Past-President **Tany Norwood** and to outgoing At-Large Member **Sharon Justice**. And every year, we are indebted to the Office of the President, the Texas Exes, and especially to **Carol Barrett** for their steadfast support.

Serving as your President for the past year has been an honor and a privilege – and a lot of fun! It has brought me back to the campus and has reignited the spark of collegiality that was such a treasured part of my professional experience. I encourage you to be an active RFSU participant – in an interest group, in leadership, in a volunteer opportunity. Come, bring your former colleagues, encourage those who are nearing retirement. Join us in our mission to *provide the point of connection, continuity, and communication for the mutual benefit of our members and The University of Texas*.

**SUSAN KESSLER**,  
*President, 2022-23*

## TEXAS CONNECT

► *Texas Connect* is a magazine for staff and faculty that was created in partnership between University Marketing and Communications and Texas Student Media in the Moody College of Communication. *Texas Connect* was created to shine a light on the people who power this university and to provide information that will help them thrive. We want to offer a chance for all members of the university's staff and faculty to celebrate our stories and meet their colleagues across the hall, down the street and throughout the UT community. The magazine includes storytelling, design and photography contributed by upper-division students as well as staff and faculty members. It is self-funded through advertising revenue.

RFSU advertises in *Texas Connect* with a goal of letting faculty and staff learn about our organization before they retire. Check it out: [texasconnect.utexas.edu](https://texasconnect.utexas.edu)

# SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS



► Our sponsors have been solicited because of their excellent reputations for selling the best goods and providing the best service to customers.

Many of them are family businesses that have been in our community for a long time. These include the Covert family of auto dealerships, the Strand family of Stan's Heating and Cooling, the Ravel family of Karavel Shoes, our new sponsor, Vince Martinez, Vince Martinez Realty, and the Fish family of Weed-Corley-Fish Funeral Homes. Our other sponsors, although not family owned, have a long-time reputation for giving wonderful service to the community. They are St. David's HealthCare,

University Federal Credit Union, the Westminster Retirement Community and Fast Park & Relax. Check our sponsors' ads for information about their services, coupons, and special discounts.

Through their sponsorships, these businesses help us keep our membership dues low and provide support to UT students through the RFSA Scholarship Fund. When you need goods or services, please consider using them – it will be a win-win-win situation for you, for them and for RFSA. And when you use them, please let them know that you belong to RFSA and that we appreciate their support.

## STAN'S HAS BEEN SERVING AUSTIN FOR NEARLY 70 YEARS, AND WE'VE GOT THE GRAY HAIR TO PROVE IT.



### \$15 OFF TUNE-UP

Stan's 30-point Precision Tune-Up far exceeds industry standards and ensures your air conditioning and heating system is in top working condition.

*Offers valid for a limited time.  
Not valid with other offers or annual contracts.*

### \$250 OFF WATER HEATER INSTALL

Stan's repairs all major makes and models. 100% satisfaction guaranteed. Factory trained technicians.

### FREE ENERGY AUDIT

If your home is 10 years old or older, call Stan's for a free energy audit to make your home more energy efficient.



[WWW.STANSAC.COM](http://WWW.STANSAC.COM)

512-929-9393

TACLB 38119E  
M38233

# SPRING LUNCHEON MEETING

## HIGHLIGHTS

► President Susan Kessler presided over the Spring Luncheon Meeting, held on April 26, 2023, in the Connally Ballroom.

**THANKS to:** President Jay Hartzell and his staff for hosting our luncheon.

Our student hosts – members of the Orange Jackets and Texas Blazers.

The Texas Exes for everything that they do for us, including administrative, support, these beautiful facilities, maintaining our accounts, the design and printing of our magazine.

Alumni Center staff for their preparation of the room, food, and drink.



Dr. John Daly engaging with audience

### FEATURED SPEAKER

Dr. John Daly, Liddell Centennial Professor of Communication and TCB Professor of Management was our lunchtime speaker. Using humor, examples, and interactive activities his thoughtful presentation focused on interpersonal, persuasive, and overall effective communication.



James Brown and Harovel Wheat

**GRATITUDE** to our business sponsors for their generous support (several of whom were in attendance as our special guests)

St. David's HealthCare

Fast Park & Relax

Weed-Corley-Fish

Covert Auto Group

Karavel Shoes

Stan's Heating, Air & Plumbing

Westminster Senior Living Community

University Federal Credit Union

Vince Martinez Realty



Activity at the Travel Table

### APPRECIATION

The ADVISORY PANEL, chaired by Sharon Justice, was thanked for their dedication to the project. Several of their recommendations will be explored and implemented in the coming months.

# SPRING LUNCHEON MEETING

## HIGHLIGHTS

### SPECIAL GUESTS

Several students from the class of 2022-23 RSFA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS were in attendance. Erica Buckland, a senior in Psychology Honors, spoke on behalf of all recipients. See the entire 2023-23 recipient list in this issue.

Valeria Martin and Abida Shoukat of UT OUTPOST, the campus resource for students experiencing food insecurity, were available at a table to share information. RFSA accepts food donations for UT Outpost at each luncheon.

Jessica Timpson, coordinator of HORNS HELPING HORNS, a program providing advising, mentors, social events and financial support, gave a brief description of the services. Members stopped by her table to learn about voluntary activities.



Robert Lawrence and Hermelinda Zamarripa



Incoming President Charles Roeckle and Susan Kessler



From left, Elvia Rosales, Frances Castillo, and Sharon Hinkle

### SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Tany Norwood is leaving the Board after completing her term as President Elect, President, and Past-President; as well as serving as magazine editor, treasurer and serving as President twice. Susan thanked Tany and presented her with a parting gift.



The John McKetta \$100 Attendance Award recipients: From left, John De La Garza, Hillary Hart, Jean Harrison, Liz Nowicki, Jane Garner

### BUSINESS MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

FINANCIAL REPORT by Bill Lasher, presented by Susan.

Operating Fund Balance as of 8/31/22: \$34,293; Expenditures of \$11,993 as of 3/23/31; Operating Fund Balance as of 3/31/2023 of \$33,758

The members VOTED affirmatively for 2023-24 Board Positions electing Bob Lawrence as President-Elect and Hunter March as Member-at-Large

THANKS were extended to Past President Tany Norwood's Nominating Committee. Members were Sharon Justice, Mary Knight, Charles Roeckle and Susan Kessler. The complete list of RFSA Board Members is found on page 2 of this issue.

Members were invited to indicate interest in our six INTEREST GROUPS on cards available on the tables.

GROUP TRAVEL options were available at the Travel table.

# Covered Airport Parking

*Special for Retired UT Faculty and Staff*

# 15%<sup>\*</sup> off

**Proud Sponsor of the  
Texas Longhorns®**



- Pick up & drop off at your car
- Emergency car services
- Relax for Rewards members earn FREE parking
- Free reservations for Rewards members with guaranteed parking

To receive the special UT rate, join our free *Relax for Rewards* at [TheFastPark.com](http://TheFastPark.com).  
Must use Promo Code **3F2CP7** when joining.

## TheFastPark.com

Exclusively serving the Barbara Jordan Terminal at Austin-Bergstrom Airport

512-385-8877

2300 Spirit of Texas Dr. Del Valle, TX 78617



5501 Burnet Rd Austin, TX 78756 512-459-7603



Visit Karavel Shoes  
for the very best  
selection of comfort  
shoes for men and women.

# \$20 OFF

your next purchase of  
\$100 or more\* code:23rfsa

[karavelshoes.com](http://karavelshoes.com)

\*Not valid with other coupons or discounts.





# Accidents can happen fast.

At St. David's HealthCare, we use the latest techniques, including minimally invasive care, to treat orthopedic injuries and illnesses. Board-certified physicians as well as therapists at our hospitals have the technology needed to reduce recovery times and get you back to your favorite activities as soon as possible.

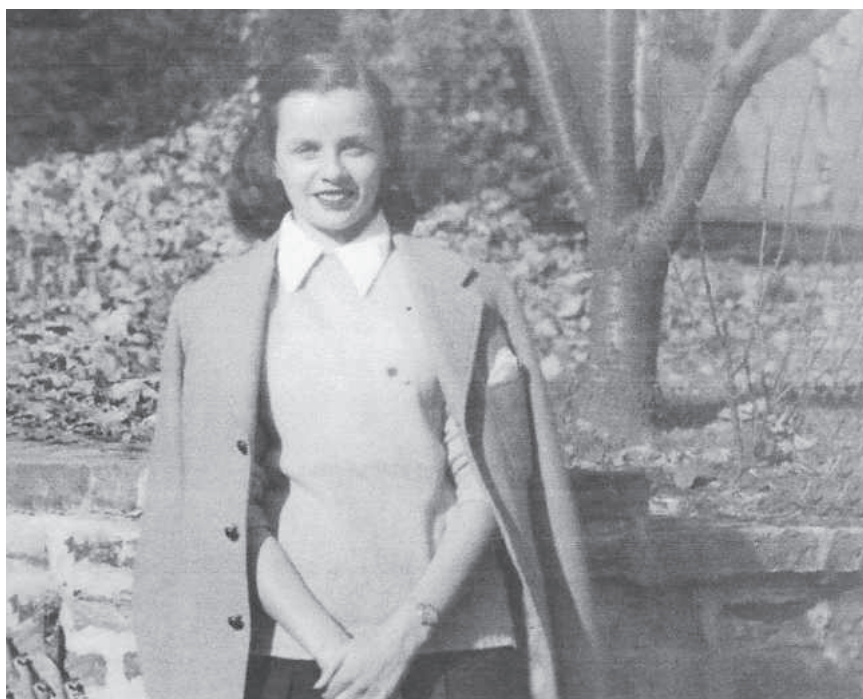
**StDavid's HEALTHCARE**

*The Best Is Here.*

[stdavids.com](http://stdavids.com)

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

VIRGINIA PHILLIPS



**ABOVE:** Virginia in college circa mid-1940's.

## WHERE DID YOU GROW UP?

▶ I was born at home on November 4, 1922, on the family farm in Quantico, MD. I joined my 7-year old brother to complete the family. My father, Claude Phillips, was what was known as a truck farmer. My mother, Stella Bounds Phillips, was a homemaker and seamstress. I lived in Quantico and then moved to other cities for college and work.

## TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY

▶ My dad grew vegetables on our farm: string beans, cantaloupe, watermelon, sweet potatoes, cucumbers, and ford hooks (a smaller version of lima beans). Mules (Jack and Hanna, Frank and Tom) were used to pull the various farm implements – plows, cultivators, and wagons. Wheat and corn were grown to feed the cows and mules. His first tractor came just before I started high school. After loading whatever crop was in season, he would take it to the market in Salisbury (about 9.5 miles away) for a produce buyer to bid on and buy. The produce would then be loaded on a larger truck, or sometimes on a rail car to be delivered to Philadelphia or New York.

My mother took care of the household and cooked for us. She was an excellent seamstress and sewed all my clothes and for others in our family. My dad did not work on Sundays. We would go on excursions – church

picnics, to the seashore, to historic sites, and farther in the summers: along the east coast, Maine, Chateau Frontenac in Quebec, and other places in Canada. Travel was a big part of my whole life.

## EDUCATION AND CAREER

▶ My first seven grades were in the two-room Quantico elementary school about three miles from home. I walked half the way to an intersection to board the bus for school. The school was very primitive by today's standards-outhouses and a hand drawn water pump for drinking water. High School was in the county seat of Salisbury and had been replaced by a consolidated school by the time I finished. I should add there were only eleven grades, not twelve as at present. There were three programs of study: general, commercial, and academic. I chose academic because I wanted to be prepared for college.

College admission in 1939 was not as complicated or time consuming as it is today. After looking at printed materials my parents and I selected Western Maryland College in Westminster, MD, now known as McDaniel College. The college offered pre-med and legal programs and was well known for its graduates trained to teach in high schools. The college also offered courses in library science which I took. After college graduation in 1943, I applied for and was hired at the University of Maryland as Junior Assistant Librarian. After two years I realized I needed a professional degree in library science if I were to advance in the library field. The closest to Maryland was Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. I graduated from Emory in 1946 with the needed professional master's degree in library science.

After graduation, I returned to the University of Maryland Library where I worked as a reference librarian. During this time, I attended American University in Washington, DC and received a Master of Arts degree with a major in US history and minor in archives in 1959. I had 30 years of service and could retire from the state of Maryland with full benefits.

Both my parents died in 1974 and I decided I needed the experience of working somewhere else. I applied for the position of Assistant Director for Branch Services at The University of Texas General Libraries and was hired. I came to Texas in December 1975, and it is where I have remained. There were 13 branch libraries as well as special collections in addition to the Main Library which was still in the Main Building

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

VIRGINIA PHILLIPS



Virginia celebrating her birthday with friends at a favorite place, Fonda San Miguel, in November 2019.

Tower). Automation was just being introduced in libraries. Many of the branches and collections were consolidated and moved to the new Perry-Castañeda Library after it opened in 1977. I retired from the General Libraries in 1999.

## NOW THAT YOU ARE RETIRED, HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME?

► For many years, both when I was working and after I retired, I traveled with groups and friends and various family members. Often, I would travel to library conferences and add on vacation days to visit sites around the destination of the conference. I have been on cruises to Panama, the Great Lakes, and by air and buses and cars. all over the United States. I've visited National Parks, historic sites including Presidential libraries and museums, and Texas county courthouses. My first trip to Europe was in 1960. I have traveled with RFSA, Friendship Force, Road Scholar, American Express, Emory University

Alumni, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and probably other groups.

In retirement I participate with the Friends of the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, QUEST, altar guild of my church, RFSA, and state and national library organizations.

I spend hours reading presidential biographies, histories and mysteries, walking, daily household chores, meeting friends for lunch and keeping up with family and friends, researching family genealogy and answering questions for other family members. I have more to do than I can do in a day.

## WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING A MEMBER OF RFSA?

► Keeping up with colleagues and friends. Keeping up with all things UT. The food at the annual RFSA luncheons.



Virginia at her 100th Birthday Celebration, 2022.

# INTEREST GROUPS



**ABOVE:** From left, Carole Buckman, John Lacy, Kay Hopper, Lynn Cooksey

**BELOW:** December Lunch at Kapatad Filipino & Chinese Food

## ARTS AND CULTURE

▶ Since our last report we now have over 40 members on our email list.

Members have contacted me to say they appreciate the postings of current and future arts and culture offerings on campus and off-campus, but UT connected. We focus on theater, museums, lectures, music and shows at Texas Performing Arts as well as off site performances for Austin Classical Guitar, Austin Shakespeare Company and certain ASO performances (for example, Beethoven, etc.).

People are getting to me from the website and Facebook postings so keeping this up to date (with Holly's help) is important. As an important milestone, we are hosting our first in-person get together on the morning of May 5th, 2023. The idea is to build friendships, connections, and share what art forms we enjoy.

For more information, contact Laraine Kentridge Lasdon at 512-784-3657 or [larainelasdon@gmail.com](mailto:larainelasdon@gmail.com).



## BRIDGE

▶ The bridge group met monthly from September 2022 through April 2023. The group plans to continue playing monthly at the Alumni Center, including the summer months. Our usual time is the first Monday of the month from 1-4 pm. Parking is provided.

We play "party" bridge, not duplicate, and welcome new players. You need not have a partner to participate. Since we play on tables of four, please contact the bridge chairperson (Mary Kay Hemenway) in advance of your interest in attending.

For further information, contact Mary Kay Hemenway at [mk.hemenway@utexas.edu](mailto:mk.hemenway@utexas.edu).

## EXERCISE

▶ The RFSA exercise group meets in Gregory Gym on Monday mornings from 8:30 to 9:30 am. To participate you need to join Rec Sports if you are not already a member. You can join at their office just inside the entrance to Gregory Gym. There is an additional fee of \$10 per month for the RFSA class.

Experienced exercise instructor, Sandy Erickson, leads us in a variety of exercises designed for all ages and fitness levels. She can adapt the exercises for anyone with special needs.

This is a small, friendly group that needs more members. If you are a person who has resisted caring for your physical needs, come and check us out. Do not be intimidated. We have a lot of fun as well as increasing our fitness levels. (As an extra incentive, we have been known to get together for coffee and snacks after class from time to time.)

For more information, contact Carolyn Wylie, 512-453-2566, [cateswylie@gmail.com](mailto:cateswylie@gmail.com).

# INTEREST GROUPS

## FOODIES

### ► Here's to the Foodies Who Lunch

(with apologies to Stephen Sondheim)

The Foodie group remained quite active late Fall, through Winter, into early Spring. Since November, we have been doing lunches rather than dinners for two reasons: First, it was a suggestion at the RFSA Fall luncheon; and second, with the time change, people did not want to travel at night. Dinners will come back in the summer, but the lunches have been very successful (or we may stick to lunches, we will see how this plays out).

Here are the places we have been:

November: Mighty Fine Burgers (about 16 people)

December: Kapatad Filipino & Chinese Food (about 16 people)

January: Galaxy Café (about 20 people)

February: Trudy's Northern Start (about 12 people)

March: Rudy's BBQ (about 12 people)

April: Llama Kid (4 people...quite a few people already had plans that day)

We have had a good time at all places and each establishment has been welcoming to our large group. There have been several new people that have started coming, I think through February and March we have had 4 to 6 new people join us.

If you would like to be added to the email contact list, send an email to Robert (Bob) Lawrence at [rjlawrence1031@gmail.com](mailto:rjlawrence1031@gmail.com)



April lunch at Rudy's BBQ

## RFSA SPEAKER SERIES

► The RFSA Speaker Series had an excellent sequence of speakers from December through March. We continued to use our new google group for email meeting notices and publicized them in the monthly RFSA general news emails. We also continued to use either the Howson or Old Quarry Library meeting rooms depending on availability and speaker schedules. Here is a summary of our recent meetings.

We had Dr. George F. "Fritz" Benedict speak on December 14, 2022, about the James Webb Space Telescope. He is a retired Senior Research Scientist with UT Austin's McDonald Observatory. The title of his talk was "Astronomy's Golden Age Continues: Recent Results from the Webb Space Telescope." He has a long history of working with telescopes in space, including the Hubble Space Telescope, and his talk featured many beautiful, high-resolution images from



Dr. George "Fritz" Benedict

# INTEREST GROUPS



Reverend Nancy McCraine

Webb. Fritz does courses for the Lifetime Learning Institute so anyone interested in astronomy can sign up for his presentations there.

We had Dr. Karen L. Fingerman speak on January 18, 2023, on the topic "Ups and Downs of Aging." She is Professor of Human Development and

Family Sciences at UT Austin and the Director of the Texas Longevity Center. There was much excellent discussion at this meeting.

We had Rev. Nancy McCraine of Hospice Austin speak on February 8, 2023. She gave an excellent update on

how hospice services work in our current times and provided a lot of practical information for those who become involved with hospice care.

Our final meeting for featured remarks by Professor Michael Granof on the topic, "Is the Federal Government Fiscally Sustainable?" Professor Granof is the EY

Distinguished Centennial Professor in Accounting Emeritus and a University Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus with UT Austin in the McCombs School of Business.

We contacted several potential speakers for April but were unable to converge on specific dates for their talks. We will continue our series in fall 2023.

Speaker Series co-chairs are Alice Reinarz (areinarz@tamu.edu), Phil Kelton (pwkelton@gmail.com), and Karrol Kitt (kkitt@austin.utexas.edu).

## TRAVEL

We have two more exciting RFSA trips planned in 2023. We hope you will join us on new adventures this year or next year! Trip highlights, prices, brochures, and registration forms are posted on the RFSA calendar at <https://sites.utexas.edu/rfsa/calendar/>.

Contact Lori Threatt at Relaxed Escapes Travel Consultants at [lori@relaxedescapes.com](mailto:lori@relaxedescapes.com) or phone (737) 228-3680 for questions and registration.

## Nova Scotia & The Canadian Maritimes

This trip is planned for July 22-30, 2023, and will be hosted by Premier World Discovery and Relaxed Escapes. Robin Fradenburgh is the trip leader. Spots are available so sign up soon.

Highlights include visits to scenic Halifax, Baddeck, Cabot Trail, a ferry ride to Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, Hopewell Rocks, Moncton, and Lunenburg.

## New York City & the Hudson River Valley

Our adventure is scheduled for September 22-28, 2023, hosted by Premier World Discovery and Relaxed Escapes. Billie Pierce will be our trip leader. Spots are still available so please contact Lori Threatt to register for the trip. Highlights include sightseeing in New York City, attending a Broadway show, then visits to the Hudson Valley, West Point, Boscobel house and gardens, Hyde Park, a maple syrup farm, New Paltz, Kingston and a Hudson River cruise.

See our upcoming **2024 trips** and brochures on the new fliers. We are headed to Portugal, on a cruise to the British Isles and visiting the national parks in Utah! Due to the ever-changing Covid pandemic safety guidelines, we encourage all our travelers to be fully vaccinated and boosted and to follow all current CDC guidelines during travel.

We are currently accepting nominations for the 2024 Travel Chairperson(s). Please consider joining our enthusiastic committee!

Co-Chairs Sybil and Keith Momii at [sybil.momii@gmail.com](mailto:sybil.momii@gmail.com) and [keith.momii@gmail.com](mailto:keith.momii@gmail.com)



Professor Granof and Phil Kelton



# RFSA VISITS

## ICELAND

**ABOVE:** The Blue Lagoon. Photo by Tristin Caramiho & Michael Brock

# RFSA VISITS

## ICELAND



## RFSA Travels to Iceland -Land of Fire and Ice

SYBIL AND KEITH MOMII, AND  
KATHLEEN AND RICHARD ARMENTA

► Members of UT RFSA traveled to Iceland in March 2023 in two groups, Trip A (March 8-15) and Trip B (March 15-22). Our trip was coordinated by Lori Threatt, Relaxed Escapes Travel Consultants and Mayflower Cruises & Tours.

Iceland is a land of surprises! It is not completely covered by ice but still very cold in March. Group A experienced bitter cold temperatures, the coldest since 1951! Group B's weather ranged from sunny afternoons to snowstorms and raging winds. The terrain is a stunning mix of volcanoes, lava plains, glaciers, mountain ranges, partially frozen rivers and lakes, spouting geysers, hot springs, boiling mud pools, the Aurora Borealis and beautiful Atlantic coastlines. With virtually no pollution, the air is fresh, and the

water is sparkling clean. Geothermal activity provides reliable warmth and green energy.

We stayed in the quaint village of Selfoss. Icelanders use Icelandic Krona currency and speak the ancient Icelandic language (which is very challenging for Americans to pronounce or spell). Our local tour guides and bus drivers were native Icelanders who provided historical commentary, examples of native music, and explanations of the amazing terrain and geographic phenomenon. On Trip B, our local guide, Hafdis, sang us a lovely lullaby and recited historic Icelandic poetry! The next morning, when we boarded the bus, we returned the favor by singing "The Eyes of Texas," with our horns up, to Hafdis and Pietr, the driver.

On our first excursion day we toured the Golden Circle. We visited the Frioheimar Tomato and Horse farm, learning how Icelanders grow vegetables in massive climate-controlled greenhouses by harnessing geothermal energy. We enjoyed freshly picked tomatoes, tomato beverages and ice cream. The farm also raises and trains a unique breed of hardy Icelandic horses whose ancestors came with the Vikings about 900 AD. A riding demonstration

**ABOVE:** Vik, a remote seafront village. Photo by Marvin Hackert.



# RFSA VISITS

## ICELAND

featured the five gaits unique to this breed. The ‘beer gait’ was demonstrated when the horse smoothly trotted around the ring while the trainer riding him held a full mug of beer without spilling a drop! The unique horses are highly treasured and were essential to the early settlers’ survival.

Our next stop was Geysir, Iceland’s most famous area of thermal activity, where we saw about 100 geysers, some periodically erupting in fountains of vapor and mist. The Strokkur geyser spouted about every five minutes, sometimes over 100 feet high. We drove to Gullfoss, the Golden Waterfall, on the mighty glacial White River. Gullfoss is one of the most impressive waterfalls in Europe with tons of icy water majestically thundering into a deep gorge.

Our final stop was Pingvellir, located by Lake Pingvallavatn, the largest lake in Iceland and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The world’s oldest democratic Parliament was founded here in 930 AD. The beautiful canyon running through the park is the meeting point of the Eurasian/ North American tectonic plate rift. We hiked between the two tectonic plates through a rugged landscape composed of tall volcanic rocks.

The next day we headed to Reykjavik, the northernmost capital city in the world. Our route took us over the Hellisheiði mountain pass which offers a magnificent view of the wide plains formed by glacial rivers that created the fertile farmland in southern Iceland. Reykjavik is the home of about one third of Iceland’s population, about 138,000 people. It is a modern city with a variety of museums, galleries, shops, and restaurants, and is heated entirely by geothermal water. The beautiful harbor was first seen by the city’s Viking founder Angolfr Arnarsson as he sailed into the bay in 874 AD, and he named it ‘Smoking Bay’ for its rising steam. The city center is home to charming historic European styled buildings of stone or timber, contrasting with imaginative modern architecture.

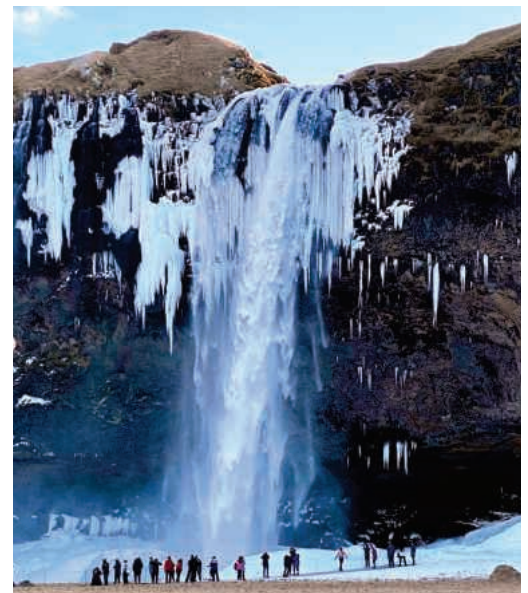
The city tour included the impressive Hallgrímskirkja Church, the largest in Iceland, where we viewed its massive pipe organ and soaring steeple rising 210 feet. We visited the Hofdi House, site of the 1986

summit between U.S. President Ronald Reagan and President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union, an important meeting in ending the Cold War. The house has also served as a diplomatic residence, but at least one country’s diplomats moved out due to the ghostly activity; there is now a sculpture on the grounds honoring the ghosts. We saw Parliament, the National Museum, the pollution free Salmon River and a large outdoor swimming pool heated by natural hot springs. We had free time to have lunch and explore. Then back on the bus for a unique virtual simulation called Fly Over Iceland. This experience involved special effects (wind, motion, sound, scents) for participants to virtually soar over scenic landscapes and beautiful natural Icelandic wonders. This was a highlight for all except those with motion sickness!

The next day we traveled to the Reykjanes Peninsula and the Blue Lagoon. The Blue Lagoon is a unique, world-famous turquoise pool of warm geothermal water, found in the middle of a lava field surrounded by Icelandic wilderness. The waters are heated by underground volcanic activity at the depth of 5400 feet, then pumped to the surface to form this man-made wonder. We enjoyed a refreshing soak and mud facial masks in the 100-degree mineral-rich lagoon, which is reputed to have rejuvenating, healing properties – and we left looking much younger than when we arrived.



**TOP:** Stokkur geyser along the Golden Circle. Photo by Tristin Caramiho & Michael Brock.



**ABOVE:** Seljalandsfoss Waterfall. Photo by Randy Wallace

# RFSA VISITS

## ICELAND



**ABOVE:** Reykjavik Harbor.  
Photo by Bob Lawrence

On the Reykjanes Peninsula, members visited the geothermal areas of Krysuvik and frigid Lake Kleifarvatn with its hot springs and solfataras (sulfurous volcanos). The moonlike surroundings and boiling mud pits demonstrated the fire and ice that represents Iceland. We drove through quaint fishing villages, and our views included volcanoes and lava fields covered in ancient moss on one side of the road and the Atlantic Ocean on the other side.

Our final day was a trip to the South Shore. We journeyed through small villages and farmlands with views of majestic mountains, including Iceland's most active volcano, Mt. Hekla, and the towering ice-capped strato volcano Eyjafjallajokull (which last erupted in 2010). We saw several waterfalls, including the magnificent Seljalandsfoss and Skogarfoss. We toured the Skogar Folk Museum, where the cultural heritage of southern Iceland has been preserved and walked through sod-covered homes representative of early

settlers. We also learned many Icelanders believe in the existence of three kinds of creatures, elves, trolls and "hidden people," each playing distinct roles in Icelandic mythology.

We viewed the Reynisdrangar rocks, steep columnar basalt cliffs, which stand 217 feet above sea level, next to one of Iceland's black sand beaches. At the beach Group B braved high winds, blinding snow, and blowing black sand for unforgettable spring break days at the frozen beach! After returning to Selfoss we had a farewell dinner at Tryggvaskali Restaurant, the oldest house in the village. We dined on delicious fresh salmon topped off by a traditional lava cake dessert.

Our tour of beautiful Iceland, the land of fire and ice, was a remarkable and life enriching experience. Many travelers plan to return – in the summer!

See many more photos on our website:  
[sites.utexas.edu/rfsa](http://sites.utexas.edu/rfsa)

# WESTMINSTER LIFE IS ALL IN THE DETAILS

THE KORMENDYS: WESTMINSTER RESIDENTS SINCE 2020

**Mary Kormendy**  
Adventure Travel Expert

*"We quickly saw that Westminster is the best senior living community in Austin."*

**John Kormendy**  
Observational Astronomer


*"People come here from all over the USA, because of the rich range of activities and the complete range of care that it provides. If our health needs -- Mary's and mine -- ever differ, we can always get all the help that we need in one place."*



**WESTMINSTER**<sup>SM</sup>  
AN AUSTIN ORIGINAL

THE LIFESTYLE YOU'VE PLANNED FOR

To learn more, call (512) 454-4643 or visit us online ►

 Managed by  Life Care Services<sup>®</sup>



# MEET OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS

The Nominations Committee of the Retired Faculty-Staff Association recommended the following two RFSA members for positions on the RFSA Board. These positions were approved by the RFSA membership at our Spring Luncheon on April 26.



► **Robert Lawrence** is the nominee for President-Elect. He retired from University Unions in 2018 as Director for Budgets, Finance and HR. When he attended the first RFSA Luncheon after his retirement, he realized that he knew about a third of the people in the room and decided this would be a good group with which to become involved. Since then, he has chaired a committee on the membership directory; has been part of the ad hoc RFSA Advisory Panel; and currently chairs the Foodies interest group.



► **Hunter March** is the nominee for Member-at-Large, 1st Year. He retired in 2018 as Professor Emeritus of Music and Human Learning and Associate Dean of Fine Arts Education. He taught graduate and undergraduate courses in the College of Fine Arts, where he received the Teaching Excellence Award. He served as head of the UTeach Fine Arts program, doubling enrollment in the COFA teacher education programs, with a focus on promoting arts integration and placing student teachers in underserved schools. The UT System Board of Regents established the Hunter C. March Scholarship in Fine Arts Teacher Education in May 2016. Many RFSA members met him at our 2022 Holiday Party, where he was the pianist for our holiday songs sing-along.

In addition to the above slate of candidates, the Nominations Committee recommended two members to serve as co-chairs of the Membership Committee. The Executive Officers approved these nominees in February, and their terms took effect immediately.



► **Liz Hastings** retired in 2019 as an Academic Advising Coordinator in the College of Liberal Arts. Her career started in the Office of Admissions as Admission Counselor, where she traveled all over the state. Later, she directed the SHARE (Students Helping Assist the Recruitment Effort) program, then transferred to the Junior/Community College Recruitment Program. After her children were born, Liz became an Academic Advisor in the College of Liberal Arts, where she was a recipient of the James W. Vick Award for Academic Advising. While working in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, she also accompanied Study Abroad students on their trips to Argentina and Mexico. Liz has served on the ad hoc RFSA Advisory Panel.



► **Martha Hilley** retired in August 2019 as coordinator of group piano and pedagogy in the Butler School of Music. As a teacher, she received numerous teaching awards, including the Texas Excellence Teaching Award, the Dad's Association Centennial Fellowship, and was selected for the William David Blunk Professorship in recognition of outstanding undergraduate teaching and research. Finally, in January of this year, she was thrilled to announce the opening of her first ever home studio specializing in group piano for beginning adults aged 60 and older.

Information about these individuals is available on our RFSA website ([sites.utexas.edu/rfsa](https://sites.utexas.edu/rfsa)) and on our RFSA Facebook page (search Facebook Groups for University of Texas Retired Faculty-Staff Association). Congratulations to these nominees and new board members from the RFSA Nominations Committee: Sharon Justice, Susan Kessler, Mary Knight, Charles Roeckle, and Tany Norwood, Chair.

# LONGHORN FYI

## VETERAN AND MILITARY AFFILIATED SERVICES

PART OF THE CAMPUS-WIDE EFFORT TO SERVE VETERANS, MILITARY, AND THEIR FAMILIES.

*By Jeremiah Gunderson, SSG USA (Ret.), Director*

▶ “Three months ago, I was leading a platoon of Marines on door-to-door raids in Fallujah. Today I’m sitting in a classroom with a bunch of people old enough to be my children!” This was the story of a recently separated United States Marine Corps Staff Sergeant in 2013, but it also reflects a common experience for many of our nation’s veterans returning to college campuses after separating from service. This influx of veterans was the impetus behind Dean of Students Soncia Reagins-Lilly’s decision to create a veteran services hub in the Office of the Dean of Students. When the doors of Student Veteran Services opened for the first time on November 11, 2011, no one could have imagined where that vision would take us nearly 13 years later.

In 2020, Student Veteran Services grew again, to become Veteran and Military Affiliated Services in order to better reflect the community we serve and the programs we offer. We are dedicated to supporting veteran and military students in areas such as veteran education benefit support, academic support, community engagement, mentorship, and career support. In 2023 alone, our team provided nearly \$400,000 in scholarships and emergency funds to 519 military and veteran students on campus. In 2023, we also worked with generous donors who committed nearly \$7 million in future funding for not only military and veteran students, but also the spouses and children of those who served.

We are proud to be part of the reason The University of Texas at Austin is now ranked number one in Texas and number 18 in the nation amongst all public and private institutions for veterans and military. UT’s ROTC program has grown in size and prestige. Thanks to the work of Dr. Elisa Borah, a military spouse and research professor at UT Austin, the Forty Acres is now home the Institute for Military and Veteran Family Wellness. Under Dr. Borah’s leadership, the university also hosts the national Military Social Work Conference, which brings nearly 250 military social workers from around the world to our campus each year. The Office of Defense Research Advancement, under the direction of Dr. Seth Wilk, is leveraging UT’s reputation as one of the top research institutions in the world to partner with the Department of Defense on cutting edge research. In 2022, a group of faculty and staff veterans formed the Military and Veteran Faculty/Staff Association, a campus organization dedicated to supporting the



From left: Jeremiah Gunderson, Director; ROTC cadet & prior service USMC Non-Commissioned Officer, Corbin Tyler, at his 2019 Officer Commissioning Ceremony;

David Lessenberry, office operations manager & retired Navy Senior chief with 26 years active duty.

large number of military and veteran university faculty and staff.

While we have accomplished a lot since 2011, there is still a lot of work to be done. With the incredible support from President Hartzell, campus leadership, our strong community of donors, and every stakeholder serving our military members every day, we truly believe that we can work together to make The University of Texas at Austin the best school in the nation for military and veterans.



Military and Veteran students who had the honor of running the Texas flag onto the field for the Military Appreciation game against TCU in November 2022.

# UT HISTORY CORNER

## HOW TO RESCUE A DEAN

by Jim Nicar

► Engineering Dean Thomas Taylor was in a considerable predicament.

It was a balmy spring Monday evening, April 1, 1912, when the University faculty gathered for their monthly dinner. A mostly social event, it was scheduled at the University Club, located just west of campus on San Antonio Street. Though the meal was funded through club dues, the professors from each academic department took turns as hosts and were responsible for the menu and post-dinner entertainment. This might include a musical performance or skit by the host faculty, a special lecture, or a debate. This particular evening, it was the law department's turn, but the professors had devised something rather sinister: they planned to convene a surprise kangaroo court and place the engineering dean on trial.

The faculty organized an all-male University Club in December 1904, both as a social outlet and to network with college-educated men in Austin. They found a house on the corner of 17th and Lavaca Streets and chose Professor Will Battle – namesake for Battle Hall and the Battle Oaks – as the group's first president. After just over a year, better quarters were found closer to campus at 23rd and San Antonio Streets, with a third move several years later to a two-story house at 2304 San Antonio. (Today, the site is just behind the Castilian dorm, where the Pi Beta Phi sorority

house now stands). Its proximity to the Forty Acres increased membership and attendance.

The clubhouse included rooms for receptions, lounging and reading, playing billiards, and cards. A stocked kitchen was next to an oversized dining hall, and several rooms on the second floor were rented to new faculty members who were just getting settled in Austin. There were Christmas parties for members and their families that featured a visit by Santa Claus, receptions for visiting professors in town to give a campus lecture, post-debate dinners for the UT Debate Team and their opponents (which, on several occasions, came all the way from Oxford University), and costume balls for members and wives (though Dr. and Mrs. George Garrison never seemed to want to dress up).

Tuesdays were mostly reserved for the University Ladies Club, composed of wives of professors and women faculty and staff. Each spring, the women hosted a Bluebonnet Card Party, which often had 15 tables of bridge being played simultaneously, and with each table decorated with baskets full of hand-picked Texas bluebonnets.

As the faculty arrived for their monthly dinner, that it was held on April 1 made it even more special for the engineers. Starting in 1908, the day was reserved to pay tribute to Alexander Frederick Claire – or “Alec” for short – as the “patron saint” or mascot of Texas engineering students and alumni. In that year, students “borrowed” a wooden statue from a local beer garden, declared it to be the likeness of Alec, paraded the figure around the campus on the morning of April 1, swore allegiance to their mascot on “holy” calculus books, and promptly cut classes for the rest of the day. For the present Cockrell School of Engineering, the first day of April is still revered as Alec's Day, and the statue is on display in the engineering library.

At the same time, the law and engineering departments had been longtime, mostly friendly rivals, and the 1912 law faculty saw the date as a ripe opportunity. They planned to have the red-haired Dean Taylor stand trial for some invented vagrancy, and once convicted, Taylor would be assessed a dinner for the law faculty at the dean's expense.



Dean Taylor (center) and nine engineering student bandits with six-shooters.

# UT HISTORY CORNER

As there were only five law professors, others were recruited to join in the fun. Medieval history instructor Augie Krey and history professor Charlie Ramsdell were named “sheriffs” and would arrest and secure Taylor, while Harry Benedict, Dean of what was then the College of Arts and Sciences, was given the title “Foreman of the Jury” and was to lead the audience to an inevitable guilty verdict.

Benedict held a PhD in astronomy from Harvard but had earned both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in civil engineering at Texas under Dean Taylor and wasn’t about to be branded a traitor. Benedict quietly informed Taylor of the law faculty’s dastardly plans, and Taylor arranged for a group of nine trusted engineering students – later dubbed “Taylor’s Bandits” – to rescue him at the appropriate time.

As the dinner began, there was a feeling of pleasant anticipation among the law faculty. The engineering professors had a similar feeling, but for an entirely different reason.

Just as the main courses were finished and dessert was to be served, the kangaroo court was sprung, and the sheriffs ordered Taylor to be taken into

custody and seat him in a chair at the front of the room. Taylor, who’d recently become a car owner, was promptly accused of “auto-intoxication” and “insolent indifference to the whims, fancies, and wishes of the University Club.” The audience, with a collective tongue-in-cheek, recoiled in horror at learning of the charges.

At that point, the trial was abruptly pre-empted. A signal by engineering professor Ed Bantel brought nine masked bandits screaming into the room from the kitchen where they’d been hiding. All were armed with actual six-shooters - loaded with blanks - and the “courtroom” was suddenly filled with shouting and shooting, gun smoke and mayhem. Taylor was hustled out of the dining room, and while the sheriffs tried to retain their charge, they were no match for the determined bandits. Taylor was led out of the clubhouse and hurried off to the University campus for the protection of the Engineering Building (today’s Gebauer Building).

A few days later, Dean Taylor did indeed host a dinner at his expense, but it was for his faithful bandits.



**Vince Martinez, Realtor®**  
**Keller Williams Realty**  
**512.785.4288**  
**vincem@kw.com**



## ABOUT OUR SCHOLARSHIP FUND

RFSA's Scholarship Fund is our main, and most impactful, service project. It was created in 1983 and the first scholarship was awarded in 1988. Two years ago, our fund reached a milestone of surpassing one million dollars in market value.

In addition to undesignated donations, members and friends are encouraged to make contributions in memory or honor of family, friends, and colleagues; in celebration of particular events, and through estate donations. In 2018, our organization committed to match any donations with reallocated operating funds, and some of that match is still available. So, if you donate soon, you can double the amount of your donation.

Please consider a contribution – it will truly make a difference in a student's life.

**A donation card is included in this magazine. Make a difference in a student's life this year and send your donation to RFSA for the next group of students receiving an RFSA Scholarship.**

## RFSA SCHOLARSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS

GIFTS RECEIVED FROM NOVEMBER 2, 2022 - APRIL 30, 2023

Charles Clark  
In honor of Jay and  
Janet Riekenberg  
In memory of Jerry S. Harris

Mary and James Crook

Susana Aleman  
In memory of Dr. Peggy Kruger

Jean Marie Harrison

Robin Fradenburgh

Phillip and Karen Kelton  
In memory of Robert G. Tull

Martha Ann Boyd  
In honor of Tany Norwood  
In honor of Carol Barrett  
In honor of Bill Lasher  
In honor of Joyce Harris  
In honor of Cora Hilliard

Phyllis and David Warner  
In memory of Steve Magee

Beverly Shivers

Lewis Myers, Jr.  
In memory of Jackie Myers

Lael Hasty

Pam Autrey

Cynthia and Thomas Barnes  
In memory of Harlan J. Smith

Admiral Bobby R. Inman

Dorothy and John De La Garza

Joanna Rollings

Nancy Payne  
In memory of  
Mary Margaret Wilson

**Donate By Mail**  
Checks should be made payable to  
**The University of Texas at Austin**

And mailed to the following address:  
*Carol Barrett, RFSA Coordinator*  
*Texas Exes*  
*P.O. Box 7278*  
*Austin, Texas 78713*

**Donate Online**  
You are also able to donate online through the UT Online Giving website at [giving.utexas.edu/RFSA2012](https://giving.utexas.edu/RFSA2012). The "Gift Designation" line should read "Retired Faculty-Staff Association." Enter the amount you wish to give and complete the rest of the information requested. You will receive an electronic acknowledgement from UT and a written acknowledgement from RFSA in the mail.

Joyce McClendon

Peggy Mueller  
In memory of Wame J. and  
Nell P. Hallmark

Tany Norwood  
In honor of Sharon Justice

Karen Hitzfeld

Sharon Justice

James Hsu  
In honor of Dr. Charles Chiu

Sybil Momii

Carol Barrett

Cecilio Martinez  
In honor of Karen and  
Phillip Kelton (correction April  
16-November 1, 2022)

## STAY CONNECTED ONLINE

► We have two ways for you to stay connected to RFSA online: our RFSA website and our Facebook group. Be sure you have our new website bookmarked [sites.utexas.edu/rfsa](https://sites.utexas.edu/rfsa), where you will find photos, information about our organization, upcoming events, and other RFSA news.

If you are a Facebook user, join us at [facebook.com/groups/131246400563201/members](https://facebook.com/groups/131246400563201/members), or by searching groups for "University of Texas Retired Faculty-Staff Association". We want this to be a place where members can post activities, updates and photos, and not just those about RFSA.

We want to create a community for our members to share all kinds of information.



# SCHOLARSHIPS

## 2022-23 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

**Daeun Baek**

Seattle, WA  
Moody College of Communication,  
College of Liberal Arts Advertising, Sociology

**Cecilia Gonzales**

Fort Worth, TX  
College of Fine Arts  
UTeach Theater Education

**David Do**

Pflugerville, TX  
College of Liberal Arts  
Government and Economics

**Evelyn Guerrero Sanchez**

Houston, TX  
McCombs School of Business  
International Business

**Dong Hyun Jung**

Austin, TX  
Cockrell School of Engineering  
Mechanical Engineering

**Cassandra Araiza**

Corpus Christi, TX  
College of Natural Sciences  
Human Development and Family Sciences

**Ryan Leung**

Austin, TX, Hong Kong  
College of Natural Sciences/School of Human Ecology  
Human Development and Family Sciences

**Christina Suarez**

The Woodlands, Texas  
Moody College of Communications  
Radio Television Film

**Alison Roetzer**

The Woodlands, Texas  
College of Natural Sciences  
Neuroscience

**Andrew Dunn**

Selmer, TN  
College of Education  
Sports Management

**Connor Anderson**

Dallas, Texas  
College of Liberal Arts  
Economics

**Aidan Hudson**

Plano and McKinney, TX  
College of Liberal Arts  
Psychology

**Clara Chadick**

Denton, TX  
College of Liberal Arts  
Rhetoric and Writing

**Bernice Chen**

Taiwan, Austin, TX  
Moody College of Communications  
Public Relations with a certificate in  
Applied Statistical Modeling

**Anfal Mohamed**

Amarillo, Texas  
College of Natural Sciences  
Neuroscience BSA

**Erica Buckland**

Corpus Christi and Houston, TX  
College of Liberal Arts  
Psychology (honors)

**Carolina Monteverdi**

The Woodlands, TX  
College of Liberal Arts  
Psychology, Business Minor

**Erika Ruiz Sanchez**

Mission, TX  
Moody College of Communication  
Speech, Language & Hearing Sciences

**Abd Almoamen Keshlaf**

Paris, France; Tripoli, Libya  
College of Liberal Arts  
International Relations and Global Studies

**Bakhtawer Ayub****Edher Paniagua**

# ICELAND REFLECTIONS

## REFLECTIONS FROM ICELAND TRIP

*It was cold, it was windy and yes, there was snow. Fifty-three RFSA travelers journeyed to Iceland, the land of Fire and Ice, during March. For some it was their dream trip, for others a return trip, and for others an item they could mark off their bucket list. Reflections by some of those adventurers are shared below.*

► It occurred to me when we visited the Skogar Folk Museum that Iceland was a deadly place for the original settlers. After the Vikings took down the trees, people depended upon driftwood for building various things. Icelanders could die in the cold, they could die while fishing in the water, if they did not have enough food when winter came and there was little light, they could die...it was a truly harsh environment. It is impressive how they persevered and thrived on the island.

*-Robert Lawrence*

► My Iceland highlights included the Blue Lagoon, where I could have spent all day. Another favorite was *The Fly Over Iceland* virtual flight during which we swooped over the island and were spritzed by waterfalls. We screamed and lifted our feet when we “dived” toward lakes and skimmed mountains.

But I was most surprised by my conversion into a geology nerd. Iceland sits atop the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates, which are pulling apart. We saw a mountain cracking in two due to this, traveled through the ever-expanding canyon and lake over the plates, and learned that scuba divers could touch both plates at the same time. Beautiful and fascinating. I will return. In the summer next time!

*-Tany Norwood*

► We wanted to learn more about Icelandic culture and to see the Aurora Borealis. Thanks to our local guide, Hafdis Augustsdottir, I learned about how Icelanders get their “last” names. Icelanders do not have surnames but are identified by whose child they are. Her father’s name was August so her “last” name is Augustsdottir. John realized his dream of seeing the aurora borealis which appeared briefly so he could snap a quick photo. It was an absolute dream trip made even better by our fellow travelers. We can’t wait for our next adventure!

*-Joni and John Jellison*



Diane Larson at Gullfoss Falls. Photo by Neal Hagood.

► What Surprised Me About Iceland: unlimited hot water that smells like sulfur; tomato sorbet containing bits of basil; fields of volcanic rock covered with mosses that change shades according to the angles of the sun; and, that Iceland has the highest density of public bathrooms in the world.

*-Mary Crook*

► “Iceland Is”

Iceland is awe.

Iceland is a verb, not a noun.  
Iceland’s landscape is not scenery;  
It is living, breathing change –  
Active volcanoes, immense glaciers,  
Lava-strewn fields, tectonic plates.

Iceland is imagination.  
Elves and trolls embedded in folklore  
and consciousness,  
History bound in ancient sagas.  
Life was hard as lava fields,  
survival miraculous,  
Like soft mosses clinging to basalt stone.



Horse Hug at the Geothermal Tomato and Horse Farm. Photo by Billie Pierce.

# ICELAND REFLECTIONS

As traveling companions, we tasted it –  
Coldest days of March since 1951.  
Hardy enough for midnight sightings  
of the aurora borealis,  
Treks to frozen waterfalls, geysers,  
volcanic sand beaches,  
Bathing in healing geothermal pools.  
Laughs and warm fellowship kept us going.

-Barbara Anderson

► I expected Iceland to be beautiful! What I found was a rugged, stark land, with lots of natural wonders, that would have been difficult to inhabit. The Vikings had to be a hardy breed to adapt to the many obstacles they faced. It

reminded me of the volcanic areas of Hawaii, the glaciers and frozen waterfalls of Alaska, the geothermal features of Yellowstone, and the ruggedness of West Texas. That said, the Blue Lagoon was hands-down my favorite experience of the trip. Who would think you could feel so invigorated in a huge, hot pool when it is 30 degrees outside? One of those lifetime experiences.

-Robin Fradenburgh

► Iceland was a unique and beautiful country. We were able to view the Northern Lights on multiple evenings with clear skies and sub-zero wind chill. Temperatures were the coldest since March of 1951! Beautiful vistas of volcanoes, ice rimmed rivers, waterfalls, deep blue lakes, and the north Atlantic gave us many photo opps. I will never forget the charming Icelandic horses

and the greenhouses powered by geothermal energy. The Skogar Folk Museum gave us an appreciation for the early Viking settlers' lives, traditions, and challenges. We learned to efficiently put on and remove multiple layers of outerwear and find "trolls" in the mountains observed.

-Kathy Armenta

► Iceland is cold! Wearing multiple layers of clothing really made a difference. Our tour director was very knowledgeable and answered all questions about history, customs, and culture. Although we were not able to see the aurora borealis, we saw a magnificent night sky as well as glaciers, waterfalls, rainbows, lava fields, geysers, hot springs, icy rivers, snow, Icelandic horses and the gap between the Eurasian and the North American tectonic plates. The food was delicious!

-Diane Larson

► Recent headline in Reykjavik newspaper: "Iceland Hosts Exceptional Party for UT RFSA Travelers."

The celebration showcased amazing landscape (waterfalls, glaciers, geysers, thermal pools) and social culture stretching from first settlers to modern technology. Experiences spanned the warm water delight of the Blue Lagoon to the never to be repeated sampling of Fermented Shark. Pictures show the sights but can't really capture the bonds of RFSA friendships, some newly created and some strengthened. A philosophy that encapsulates the Icelandic resiliency - "Þetta reddast" which translates as "everything will be all right"—will be a special memory!

-Alice Reinartz

► What I will remember most are various people I encountered, for example, Havdis and Peter, who were so enthusiastic about their culture, the young woman who gave the lecture at the tomato farm and those who shared their horses with us. A woman at the grocery store assured me that I was indeed buying orange juice since I couldn't read the label. Icelanders are a warm and comfortable people.

I enjoyed the architecture, including the Harpa Building, churches, farms and residences that looked so simple and functional, featuring the color red. Against the white snowy background, the red and white buildings looked so clean and bright.

-Billie Pierce

► How Iceland Changed Me: Imagine living with volcanic eruptions, melting glaciers, new islands rising from the sea, earthquakes, and two continental plates drifting apart. The geological drama and shocking beauty of Iceland mesmerized me. It's also why Iceland's motto will always stay with me. "Þetta reddast" (pronounced "theta red-dast") means: "It will all work out." Our tour guide said Icelanders are optimistic people. These decedents of Viking sailors and Celtic women are experts at both *hanging on* (to their heritage, language, horses, and livelihood) and *letting go* (of what the island takes away). Such great role models!

-Kathleen Kimball-Baker



Skógafoss waterfall on the Skógá River.  
Photo by John Jellison.

# RFSA ADVISORY PANEL

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ADVISORY PANEL TO THE BOARD

*By Sharon Justice, Chair 2022-23*

► The RFSA Advisory Panel, commissioned by Past President Tany Norwood, is composed of the following members: Karrol Kitt, Karen Harrison, Bob Lawrence, Liz Hastings, Robin Fradenburgh and John De La Garza. President Susan Kessler, President-Elect Charles Roeckle, Past President Tany Norwood and Carol Barrett also attended. Our charge was to look at the future of RFSA and consider what new programs and services would interest our membership. One of our goals was to think outside the box.

Our plan of action was to gather information from our membership. We began by brainstorming ideas as a panel and then agreed to have table discussions at the fall luncheon. We believed this would give us a good overview of what RFSA could implement as well as give a voice to our membership. Our table discussions yielded almost one-hundred questions, comments, and suggestions, which we sorted into categories such as membership, scholarships, services and volunteerism, technology, interest groups, activities, and random ideas.

The panel met to discuss the suggestions and ideas and then agreed on recommendations to be presented to the RFSA Board on February 15. These recommendations are shared below. The full report is available on the website: <https://sites.utexas.edu/rfsa/files/2023/02/RFSA-Advisory-Panel-Report-02152023l.pdf>

### RECOMMENDATION CATEGORIES

#### MEMBERSHIP

- All the information about membership should be shared with the membership committee.

#### COMMUNICATION / TECHNOLOGY

- Ask Miles Abernathy or Holly Thompson to educate members about how to use Facebook and the RFSA website. It could be during or after a luncheon or at a special meeting. We think one of the reasons our members don't use this technology is because they don't know how.
- Discuss ways to gather feedback from our members. Suggestions from members included having table discussions on a regular basis (bi-annually), using Facebook or our website for a "Questions & Answers" section.
- Include the RFSA website and Facebook links on all our communications.

- Explore ways we can have a presence in Alcalde and the Texas Exes website, such as an occasional article and a link to our website.

#### SCHOLARSHIPS

- In collaboration with OSFS, discuss the possibility of reducing the number of scholarships and increasing the amount of each one or, if funds are available, maintaining the number of scholarships and raising the amounts.

(Note: A virtual meeting was held on Tuesday, February 14, with RFSA, Development and OSFS to discuss this issue.)

#### SERVICE / VOLUNTEERISM

- Ask someone to volunteer to serve as the service coordinator. Members were familiar with UT Remembers and Orange Santa. Are there other on-campus events such as commencement, serving as docents, Mooove In, UT Halloween, among others?
- Contact UT's Office of Community Engagement to explore options.

#### CONNECTING WITH UT

- Build bridges with our community such as OLLI, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, and share our membership list with them so our members can learn of those opportunities.

#### ACTIVITIES

- Bring back UT student music ensembles (to our luncheons) and take advantage of UT's talent.
- Convene interest group chairs to discuss ways in which they can collaborate.
- Conduct oral histories of our members.

#### PROGRAM COORDINATOR / PROJECT MANAGER

- Many of these ideas did not "fit" into our current organizational structure; therefore, we recommend appointing a member to serve as program coordinator or project manager. The responsibilities would be to follow through on determining viability and implementation of the "Random Ideas" and other suggestions listed in the report and to assist Carol Barrett with RFSA programs and projects.



# THE COVERT FAMILY

SERVING TEXAS FOR OVER 114 YEARS SINCE 1909



**COVERT  
CADILLAC**  
COVERTCADILLAC.COM  
11750 RESEARCH BLVD  
AUSTIN, TX 78759  
(512) 592-3086



## COVERT HUTTO

*A Family tradition since 1909*

   
www.covertthutto.com

1200 US 79  
HUTTO, TX 78634  
(512) 866-479

## COVERT

*A Family tradition since 1909*



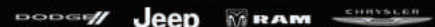
www.covertford.com  
www.covertlincoln.com

11514 RESEARCH BLVD  
AUSTIN, TX 78759  
(512) 345-4343



## COVERT

*A Family tradition since 1909*

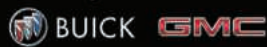


www.covertcdjr.com

8107 RESEARCH BLVD  
AUSTIN, TX 78758  
(512) 730-3300

## COVERT AUSTIN

*A Family tradition since 1909*

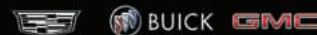


www.covertbuickgmc.com

11750B RESEARCH BLVD  
STE D AUSTIN, TX 78759  
(512) 371-6075

## COVERT BEE CAVE

*A Family tradition since 1909*



16501 SWEETWATER  
VILLAGE DR. AUSTIN, TX 78738  
(512) 954-9300

## COVERT BASTROP

*A Family tradition since 1909*



www.covertbastrop.com

702 HIGHWAY 71 W  
BASTROP, TX 78602  
(512) 303-2311

FIND NEW ROADS™

SIX GENERATIONS OF COVERTS  
THANK YOU



# IN MEMORIAM

This column honors the memory of retired University of Texas at Austin faculty and staff and retired University of Texas System staff whose deaths have been made known to us between December 1, 2022, and April 30, 2023. Every attempt has been made to identify the university affiliation of each individual or their contributions to the university community. Also included, when known, are spouses of retired faculty and staff members, as well as notable friends of the University. Any additions or corrections to the list should be addressed to Barbara Frock, Historian, at [jbfrock@gmail.com](mailto:jbfrock@gmail.com)

**John E. (Jack) Breen, 91**

*Al Rashid Chair, Civil Engineering*  
February 14, 2023

**Mary Brennan-Kerr, 86**

*Chief Collections Officer,  
Deputy Assistant for Collections &  
Information Resources, UT Libraries*  
April 22, 2022

**Carmen N. Chesney, 96**

*Administrator to the Dean of Women*  
January 5, 2023

**Debbie Giles Dillingham, 61**

*HR Director, Student Union*  
February 1, 2023

**Robert Henry Flake, 88**

*Professor, Electrical &  
Computer Engineering*  
February 15, 2023

**Lawrence Sherman Graham, 86**

*Professor Emeritus, Government*  
January 8, 2023

**Brian Graham-Moore, 87**

*Professor Emeritus, School of Business*  
October 27, 2022

**Clifford Lincoln Gustafson, 91**

*UT Baseball Coach*  
January 2, 2023

**Lucille Harrell, 99**

*UT Bureau of Economic Geology*  
February 12, 2023

**Jerry S. Harris, 82**

*Assistant Director, Texas  
Performing Arts*  
April 18, 2023

**Clemith Houston, 93**

*Assistant Director of Personnel*  
October 8, 2022

**Monty Jones, 76**

*Director of Public Affairs, UT System*  
October 22, 2022

**Barbara Ann Daigle Lightsey, 84**

*Manager, Bauer House, UT System*  
December 5, 2022

**Andrea Lynn Marr, 69**

*Library Assistant, Cataloging,  
UT Libraries*  
December 25, 2022

**Martha Guynes Morgan, 80**

*Machine Translation Lexicographer,  
Linguistics Research Center*  
April 18, 2023

**Patty Puig Mueller, 91**

*UT Development Board*  
April 2, 2023

**Paul D. Ortega Jr**

*Sr. Systems Administrator,  
Chandra Department of Electrical  
& Computer Engineering*  
December 10, 2022

**Delbert Ottmers Jr, 85**

*Professor, Chemical Engineering*  
February 10, 2023

**Beeman Noel Phillips, 95**

*Professor Emeritus,  
Educational Psych*  
Feb 8, 2023

**Joe Alvin Pils, 95**

*Administrative Assistant, Facilities  
and Support Services, UT Libraries*  
April 9, 2023

**Jack Mehew Reed, 98**

*Senior Lecturer, Advertising*  
November 27, 2022

**Phyllis Lucille Richards, 103**

*Professor Emeritus, Human Ecology*  
April 18, 2023

**Sherry Denise Roan, 76**

*Staff, Petroleum Engineering;  
Architecture*  
February 13, 2023

**Roy Schwitters, 76**

*S.W. Richardson Foundation  
Regental Professor of Physics;  
Chair, Physics*  
January 10, 2023

**Russell Allen Smith, 57**

*Professor, Steve Hicks  
School of Social Work*  
February 17, 2023

**Wallace Morgan Smith**

*Chairman, Chancellor's Council*  
February 17, 2023

**Paul Verdayne Thomas, 97**

*Hospital Administrator, UT  
Student Health Center*  
January 16, 2023

**Roxanne Kuter Williamson, 94**

*Professor, Architecture*  
January 10, 2023

**Eleanor Custis Wright, 98**

*Widow of Charles Alan Wright*  
January 21, 2023

*Respect and Honor*  
for Austin area families.

Weed-Corley-Fish North  
512-452-8811

Weed-Corley-Fish South  
512-442-1446

Weed-Corley-Fish Lake Travis  
512-263-1511

Weed-Corley-Fish Leander  
512-452-8811

*Weed-Corley-Fish*  
FUNERAL HOMES & CREMATION SERVICES



## Serving UT Faculty, Staff, and Students for 80 Years

University Federal Credit Union has proudly served The University of Texas™ faculty and staff for 80 years and counting — nearly a lifetime. At UFCU, we strongly believe in fair and honest products, and we’re committed to building life-long personal relationships with our Members.

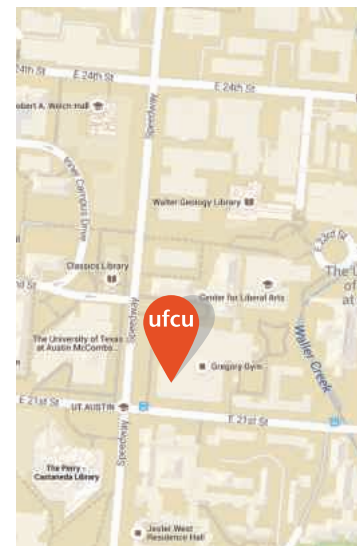
Visit [UFCU.org](http://UFCU.org) or stop by any location to talk to a representative about how we can help you while you’re in town, or on the go:

- **Manage your money whenever, wherever with Online Banking and Mobile Banking.**
- **Use your UFCU debit card to *pay recurring monthly bills automatically*.** In essence, set and forget the expenses such as your electric, gym membership, or toll fees, to name a few.
- **Work with a representative at any of our Austin-area or Galveston County financial centers to *create solutions that will meet your unique needs*.**
- **Get fee-free services at more than 300 ATM locations in Central Texas, and more than 5,000 national shared branch locations.**

Whether you’re enjoying retirement or planning for the next big thing, we look forward to continuing to serve you.



**UFCU University**  
2244 Guadalupe St  
Austin, TX 78705



**UFCU Gregory Gym**  
2101 Speedway  
Austin, TX 78712

**For more locations, visit [UFCU.org](http://UFCU.org).**

[UFCU.org](http://UFCU.org) | (512) 467-8080 | (800) 252-8311



## RFSA

The University of Texas at Austin  
c/o Texas Exes | P.O. Box 7278  
Austin, TX 78713

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
AUSTIN, TEXAS  
PERMIT NO. 1595



### THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RETIRED FACULTY-STAFF ASSOCIATION

The Retired Faculty-Staff Association of The University of Texas at Austin provides the point of connection, continuity and communication for the mutual benefit of its members and The University. A complete statement of the purposes of the association can be found in the constitution. Submissions may be emailed to [donnabell1015@gmail.com](mailto:donnabell1015@gmail.com) or mailed to Carol Barrett, RFSA Coordinator, Texas Exes / P.O. Box 37278 / Austin, TX 78713.

Spring/Summer 2023 • © 2023 Retired Faculty-Staff Association • [sites.utexas.edu/rfsa](https://sites.utexas.edu/rfsa)

*Produced by the Texas Exes / RFSA photographs by Miles Abernathy*