

RFSA MAGAZINE

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

SPRING MEETING

pg. 6

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

pg. 14

RFSA VISITS PERU

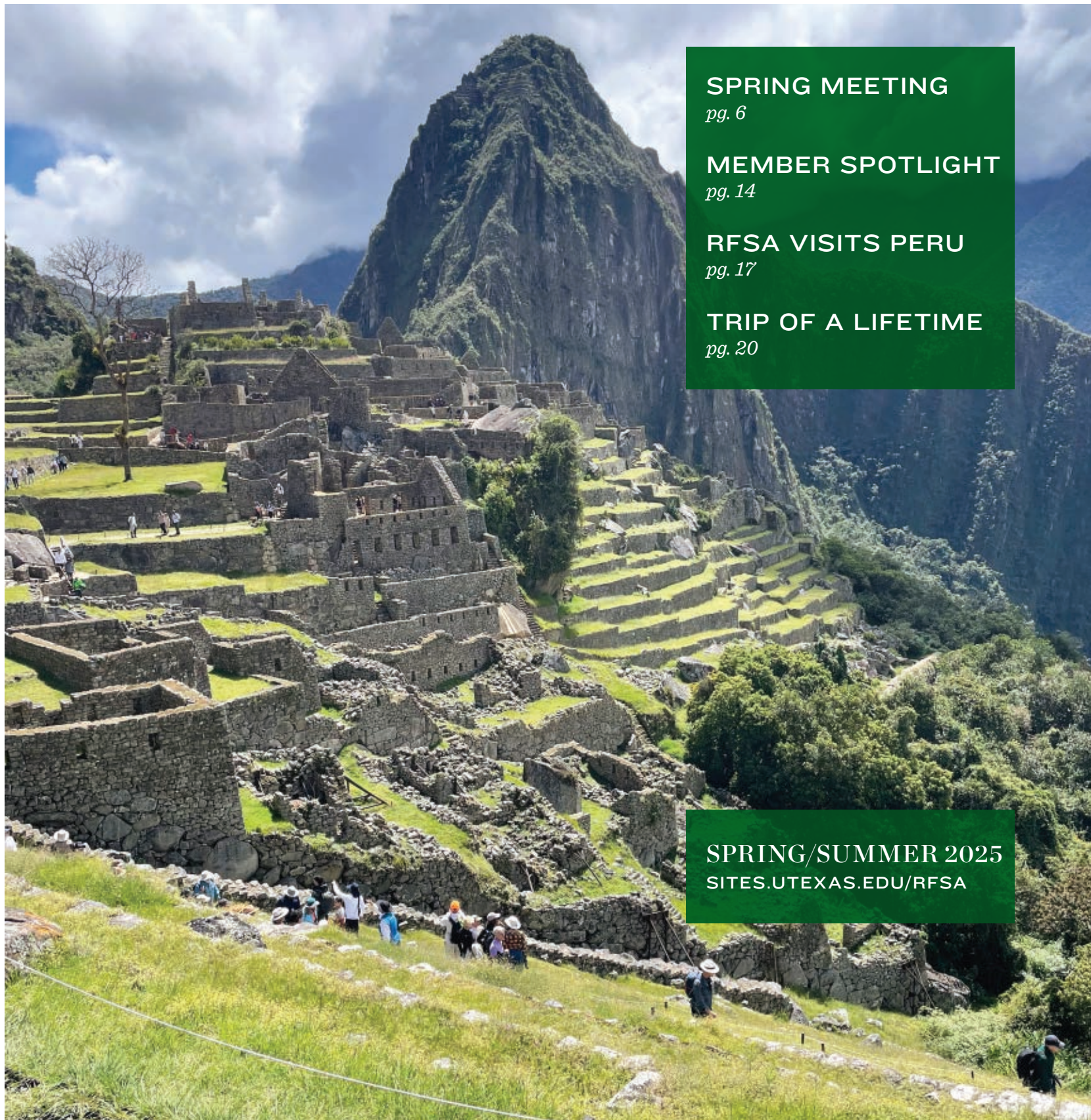
pg. 17

TRIP OF A LIFETIME

pg. 20

SPRING/SUMMER 2025

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2024-25

2025-26

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TRAVEL	Kathy & Richard Armenta	Kathy & Richard Armenta
INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT & COORDINATION	Carol Barrett and the Texas Exes	Carol Barrett and the Texas Exes

Front Cover Photo: Machu Picchu. Photo credit: Richard Armenta

Back Cover Photo: Hogg Auditorium Interior. Courtesy of University Marketing and Communications

TABLE OF CONTENTS

02	RFSA BOARD MEMBERS	20	TRIP OF A LIFETIME
04	A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT	22	NEW BOARD MEMBERS
05	SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS	22	SPECIAL PROGRAMS
06	SPRING LUNCHEON MEETING	23	A NEW ERA FOR HOGG MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM
10	INTEREST GROUPS	24	LEGACY MEMBERSHIP
14	MEMBER SPOTLIGHT	25	SCHOLARSHIPS
17	RFSA VISITS PERU	30	IN MEMORIAM

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



► Hello Again Everyone...

A year can go very fast, and this past year has been no exception. By the time you are reading this I will have stepped down from the RFSA President position and Martha Hilley will have stepped into the position.

In retrospect, a year does not seem like a long time. However, it does cause a person to think back on things that were done and things yet to come.

Things that we have accomplished over the past year:

Legacy Membership implementation: We have a Legacy Membership level up and active on the website. There is an article later in the magazine that talks about the road from concept to implementation.

RFSA Resources on our website: Robin Jarman led the committee that reviewed retirement questions, this was originally called an FAQ committee. However, after the committee met amongst themselves and we met with UT HR and the Provost, new thoughts developed. As a result, the Resources link was revised on the RFSA webpage (with the assistance of Holly Thompson), and the HR retirement page was reviewed and revised. This took a lot of work and is much appreciated.

The Table Topics review: This committee was led by Tany Norwood. They went over all the items that came out of our first Table Topics discussion a couple of years ago. The committee looked at what was completed, what was yet to be done and the feasibility of other items on the list. This report is up on our website in two areas: under Photos/Articles and within the Meeting Minutes Archives.

In my last message in the Fall magazine, I wrote about the evolution of our organization. It is important to change, adapt...and evolve. It does not benefit us to remain stagnant, and in fact, is detrimental to growth. Some change is by choice and we have more control over what is happening. To this point, I would have to say that

participation in RFSA is growing and making us an even stronger organization. Martha Hilley is now the current President, Mary Knight is President-Elect, Annela Lopez has agreed to chair our Membership Committee, Gayle Hight has accepted the Sponsorship Co-Chair position, and Hillary Hart and Karen Kelton have volunteered to be on the Membership Committee. The new people in these positions will give us a new and broader perspective as we move forward. Alan Freidman and John de la Garza have agreed to continue as Members-at-Large, which will be important in maintaining continuity and consistency for our organization.

Some change is predicated on the environment around us; this evolution reacts to things we have little control over. The University has a new interim President, Jim Davis; there is a new interim Vice President for Human Resources, Tony Hunt (Roger Cude left the University in March); there is a new interim Provost, David Bout; and, a new Executive Director of the Texas Exes started on May 1, Robert Jones. We will be working to create new relationships and maintain current relationships with people and offices on campus. Certainly, nothing that we have not done in the past.

I have said this before, and I will say it again...we are a strong organization and we will get stronger over time (yes, that evolution thing again). When I talk to people about RFSA, I speak about it with pride as a member. I hope we all share that feeling of pride to be a part of this organization.

It has truly been a pleasure to serve as President of this organization. I want to thank the Executive Committee, the Board and the RFSA membership for their confidence and support over the past year. I will still be around in my capacity as Past President (and Foodies Chair) and look forward to continuing our relationships.

In appreciation.

ROBERT LAWRENCE

President, 2024-25

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Federal Credit Union, the Westminster Retirement Community, Fast Park & Relax, and Capital City Village. 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.

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SPRING LUNCHEON AND BUSINESS MEETING

HIGHLIGHTS

- President Robert Lawrence presided over the Spring Luncheon and Business Meeting, held Tuesday, April 15, 2025

TREASURER'S REPORT

Mary Knight provided a financial report as of January 2025, as approved by the RFSA Board. There was a beginning balance of \$26,109, Income of \$18,705, and Expenses of \$28,888, resulting in an ending balance as of January 31, 2025, of \$15,926.



President Robert Lawrence presenting gift to Charles Roeckle as he completes his term



Dr. Terry Sullivan addressing the audience

FEATURED SPEAKER

Dr. Terry Sullivan, “Old School: From the Classroom to the Administration and back again.” Dr. Sullivan is President Emerita and University Professor Emerita at the University of Virginia. Prior to that role, Dr Sullivan served as Executive Vice President, Provost, Chief Academic Officer and Budget Officer at the University of Michigan; and VP and Graduate Dean at UT Austin and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at UT System. Dr. Sullivan is a demographer, an author, an award-winning professor, and a powerful speaker, as witnessed by the engaged luncheon audience. Her remarks generated many questions from the audience. Dr. Sullivan’s remarks are available on the RFSA website.

New Officer Election

The Nominations Committee, Charles Roeckle (chair), Martha Hilley, Alice Reinarz, Hillary Hart, and Bob Lawrence, nominated Mary Knight for President-Elect. The vote was unanimously approved. Other additions and changes to the Board for 2025-26 are included in the Board list on page two of this issue.



From left, Obie Hasty, Lael Hasty, Cathy Kinsey, Robert Lawrence, Uli Beisbier, and Donna Bellinghausen

GUEST SPEAKERS

Kathy & Richard Armenta, Travel Committee Co- Chairs, shared the three trips that are offered for 2025. Read their report in the Interest Group section.

Phil Kelton & Alice Reinarz, Speaker Series Co-Chairs, announced two upcoming fall presentations. Read their report in the Interest Group section.

Folakemi Elekolusi, 2024-25 scholarship recipient and one of five students in attendance shared her appreciation of the RFSA Scholarship.

More luncheon photos are found on the website <https://sites.utexas.edu/rfsa/>.

Photo credits for the luncheon meeting: Holly Thompson and Joyce McClendon

SPRING LUNCHEON AND BUSINESS MEETING

HIGHLIGHTS

SPONSOR APPRECIATION

RFSA is grateful for the generous support of our ten business sponsors (several of whom were in attendance as our special guests):

Capital City Village: Gayle Hight

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Westminster Senior Living Community:

Jordan Bleeker & Tessa Cannon

New sponsor: Bramlett Partners

Real Estate: Nancy Guilloteau

Their support help provide the funding needed to match donations to our scholarship account, so that every dollar donated is doubled. Members were encouraged to patronize our sponsors when shopping for goods and services.

SPECIAL THANKS

President Jay Hartzell and his staff for support hosting the luncheon. Since 1982, the Office of the President has provided support for RFSA in many ways, including the luncheon. We are grateful for the ongoing recognition and support.

The Blazers and Orange Jackets, UT student service organizations, for their assistance with our event.

Texas Exes staff for their support and assistance year-round, especially the IT and Administrative staff (Patricia Shampton, Carol Barrett and Ann Clary Old).

Appreciation was given to the RFSA donors and supporters of the UT Outpost. Valeria Martin, Christina Ciaburri, and Althea Honan from UT Outpost were acknowledged.



Robert Lawrence with five of our 2024-25 Scholarship recipients

John McKetta Attendance Awards

Five attendees received a John McKetta \$100 Attendance Award. See group photo for details.



McKetta recipients from left: Robin Jarman, Ted Aanstoos, Peggy Rhea, Vivian Goldman-Leffler, and James Brown

President Robert Lawrence remarks

Announcement of the new Legacy Membership. See Bob's article in this issue.

In answer to a previous question, UT System retirees cannot obtain a UT Austin ID card.

Due to the work of a committee led by **Robin Jarman**, the information on our RFSA Resources page has been revised. For specifics, you can find *Retiree Resources* under the *About RFSA* tab.

The Table Topics committee, led by **Tany Norwood** reviewed the many items that surfaced from the Table Topics discussion a couple of years ago. The committee's report is found on the website under Photos/Articles and within the Meeting Minutes Archives.

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INTEREST GROUPS



FROM LEFT: Neil Crump, Madeline Sutherland-Meier, Sally Van Sickle and Docent Larry McCullough

ARTS AND CULTURE INTEREST GROUP

► The Arts & Culture Interest Group had a busy winter/early spring. In January, members attended the play, *Honor: An Artist Lecture*, at McCullough Theatre. The performance was followed by a discussion with the author, Suzanne Bocanegra, and the actor Lili Taylor, who plays the part of the lecturer. Also in January, Laraine Lasdon led members on two tours: one of works at the Blanton Museum entitled "How Artists Engage Us with Storytelling, with Materials and Symbols," and a second through an exhibit on Ansel Adams at the Harry Ransom Center. In February, some saw *Jersey Boys* at Zach Theatre.



Arts & Culture Group in Blanton Museum with Docent Laraine Lasdon

In April, members joined us for two events (April 22 and 24):

1. A docent-led tour of current highlights of the Blanton collection, including pieces in the gallery dedicated to Latino Art and the exhibit *In Creative Harmony: Three Artistic Partnerships* (one of which is Arshile Gorky and Isamu Noguchi ("Outside In").

2. A Laraine-led tour through two exhibits at the Harry Ransom Center, "Words and Wonder: Rediscovering Children's Literature" and "Freedom to Write, Freedom to Read: The Story of PEN." The RFSA group for this tour was sizeable (12 or 13 folks).

For May, we plan a couple of outdoor gatherings, one to hear and discuss readings from Pamela Overeinder's book *Sacred Kinship* and another on a Tuesday evening at the Wildflower Center to hear music, see Athena the owl, eat good food, and appreciate the flowers.

For more information, contact

Co-Chairs Hillary Hart
(hart@utexas.edu/512-423-5022) and

Madeline Sutherland-Meier
(madelinesm@austin.utexas.edu/512-565-0906)



George Frock, Phil Kelton, and Tom Barnes enjoying a bridge game in May

BRIDGE

► The RFSA bridge group has met monthly at the Alumni Center to play "party" bridge (not duplicate) every month since September. We meet on the first Monday of each month from 1-4 pm, unless Monday is a holiday. We plan to continue meeting throughout all of 2025, including the summer months. Since we play in tables of four (usually two or three tables, but we can have up to four tables), please get on the

INTEREST GROUPS

mailing list for invitations by contacting the bridge chairperson, Mary Kay Hemenway. You need not bring a partner to play bridge with us.

For more information, contact Mary Kay Hemenway at mk.hemenway@utexas.edu.

EXERCISE

► The RFSA exercise group meets in Gregory Gym on Monday mornings from 9:00 to 10:00 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 (cateswylie@gmail.com).

FOODIES

► Foodies remains a popular group; we have on average about 25 people at each lunch. This is great, but also presents challenges; in particular, finding restaurants that can handle a reservation for that many people. So far, everything seems to be fine, although we may have to repeat more places as we try to find new places.

This year, I wanted to try something different. After each lunch, attendees are sent a brief survey asking to rate three items: Food, Service, and Atmosphere; on a 1 to 5 scale (5 being the highest). This will give sort of an RFSA Foodies Review of the places we have been that I wanted to include in the magazine. Without further ado, here are the places we have been to so far this year, with the ratings:



Foodies enjoying lunch at New Fortune 2

January: **The Grove Wine Bar & Kitchen**
(on Woodhollow), 33 Attendees, 23 responses

Average Ratings:

FOOD: 4.6, SERVICE: 4.9, ATMOSPHERE: 4.6

February: **New Fortune 2**, 21 Attendees, 14 Responses

Average Ratings:

FOOD: 4.7, SERVICE: 4.7, ATMOSPHERE: 4.5

March: **DeSano Pizzeria Napoletana**
(on Burnet), 33 Attendees, 16 responses

Average Ratings:

FOOD: 4.5, SERVICE: 4.8, ATMOSPHERE: 4.3

April: **Azul Tequila** (on Mesa), 27 Attendees, 12 responses

Average Ratings:

FOOD: 4.2, SERVICE: 4.5, ATMOSPHERE: 3.7

Clearly, these surveys and ratings are not very scientific. They are just the overall impressions of the people that were there and just meant to be a fun thing to do. We will continue this throughout the rest of the year and include the ratings in the next issue. We hope you enjoy the information.

For more information, contact Chair Robert Lawrence (rjlawrence1031@gmail.com).

INTEREST GROUPS



Dr. Mike Mackert speaking to RFSA members

RFSA SPEAKER SERIES

► The Speaker Series had four meetings during the first part of 2025. All meetings were held at the Howson Branch Library, 2500 Exposition. We had excellent discussion at all of our recent meetings and thank everyone for that.

Mr. Robert Luedtke was our speaker on January 22. Robert is a private investor and RFSA member. This was a meeting about investing and his talk was titled "Less Risk, More Return".

Dr. Mike Mackert of UT Austin was our speaker on February 26. His talk was titled "Designing Effective Health Messages to Promote Behavior Change". Dr. Mackert is Professor in Population Health at Dell Medical and Director of the Center for Health Communication in the UT College of Communication.

Ms. Kasey Ford was our speaker on April 2. Her topic was "The Use of AI at UT Austin to Advance Teaching and Learning." She is a Senior Academic Technology Specialist and AI Designer for UT Austin.

Dr. Phil Kelton was the speaker on May 14. His talk was titled "Touring the Universe with an AI-driven Smart Telescope from near Mopac and 2222." He is a UT Retiree and RFSA member and was a long-time employee of McDonald Observatory.

Co-Chairs for the Speaker Series are Alice Reinarz (areinarz@tamu.edu) and Phil Kelton (pwkelton@gmail.com).

TRAVEL

► 2025 RFSA Travel Tours are well underway. By the time you read this issue, sixteen travelers will have completed an amazing bucket list adventure in "Mystical Peru," exploring Machu Picchu, Lake Titicaca and much more. Check out the article and photos in this issue as well as on the RFSA website.

A second group of RFSA travelers have just completed a trip through Colorado and New Mexico, featuring rides on three historic trains, visits to Santa Fe, Bandelier National Monument and Mesa Verde National Park. You will be treated to a detailed article on this adventure in the Fall/Winter issue of the RFSA magazine.

The last 2025 trip is scheduled for October 1-10th, through the northern region of Italy – specifically Tuscany. There are still some seats available for this wonderful tour, that includes Florence, Pisa, and Siena. Hurry to secure your spot for exploring UNESCO World Heritage sites, visits to Lucca, San Miniato, Pienza and Arezzo with explorations of architecture, history, culture, cuisine and of course – the beautiful Tuscany countryside.

Our Travel Group recently did a survey of RFSA members about travel interests and feedback. We had a terrific response that has provided guidance for our upcoming planning of trips. Our group is well underway in finalizing plans for 2026 tours.

At this time, we can MAKE A BIG ANNOUNCEMENT that the first trip planned for 2026 --- by popular demand --- is a Danube Cruise from Budapest to Prague, March 29-April 7, 2026!! Mark Your Calendars and watch for details on this trip and two additional tours, all to be announced this summer, on the website, social media, and email outreach.

For more information and reservations for the Tuscany trip, be sure to explore the trip itinerary and webinar at: www.relaxedescapes.com/groups. Please contact Lori Threatt from Relaxed Escapes Travel Consultants at lori@relaxedescapes.com or by phone at 737-228-3680.

Or contact Kathy & Richard Armenta, RFSA Travel Co-chairs, karmenta@utexas.edu or richardarmenta@ymail.com.



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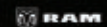
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WHERE DID YOU GROW UP?

► I was born at an army base, Ft. Monmouth NJ, at the end of WWII. My father was overseas with the medical corps in Karachi which was in India at that time. As soon as mom could travel, we went to Southern Illinois to my grandmother's home. We were there with two of mom's sisters, also home with their infant children while their husbands were also overseas. I have great photos of my three cousins and me - infants all- frolicking in baths and taking naps. After the war, my parents divorced. Mom and I stayed in Southern Illinois with my grandmother. Mom was a registered nurse and had good career options. I lived there until I left for college - whee!!

My family was oriented to the St. Louis area as we lived about fifty miles to the east. My



ABOVE: Whispering in Santa's ear, age 5

parents both went to school there – my father to medical residency and my mother to nursing school. My aunts and uncles all earned their post high school education and started their careers in the St. Louis areas. I had the best of both worlds living rurally with immersion in the arts and culture, food, and shopping of a big city fully in my life.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY

► I grew up in an Italian matriarchy in a town populated and led by women.

My maternal grandparents had emigrated from Northern Italy in the early 1900's. My grandfather died before I was two years old. They had eight children, six of whom were female. My mother, grandmother, and aunts influenced me greatly. As an only child in a sea of twenty-one first cousins, I never felt isolated or bored. There were too many of us.

When I was two, my small town was impacted by a deep shaft coal mine explosion which killed 111 men in our area. My grandfather was one of them. That tragedy coupled with the number of local men who died in the war left this community and surrounding area void of men. Growing up, the postmaster, bank president, school principal, and of course the teachers were women. The farms and dairy businesses, grocery store, and other local businesses, were owned and led by women. No one had to tell me that women could do it all because they were doing it in the 50's when I was a kid.

TALK ABOUT YOUR CAREER

► Being in college in the 60's was an exciting time. My horizons were expanded aided by a general studies curriculum with exposure to many subjects I wouldn't have selected. I was a good and active student in honors classes, as well as leadership positions. My early extracurricular activities focused on civil rights and women's rights participation and demonstrations. I loved that I was an early member of SNCC and chosen as an outstanding student in my class.

I earned a master's degree in higher education – student personnel focusing on leadership and organizational development. This interest was the center of my career throughout my professional life.

In higher education, I worked in Leadership Development positions at both campuses of Southern Illinois University – Carbondale and Edwardsville. From Illinois I came to UT Austin in 1973 working for Shirley Perry, an important leader in my profession as well as at UT. I was the assistant director of the Texas Union at the young age of 28. I stayed at UT through

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

CORKY HILLIARD

the closing of the Union for remodeling. I then took a position at Cornell University, still focused on leadership development through student union programs. I returned to UT to work in political and governmental areas.

Back at UT I was at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, responsible for conferences and programs for practicing public sector professionals from city and county officials to state and legislative leaders. After five years there, I was asked to lead the Texas State Management Development Program in the Office of the Governor. The Center developed and presented management education for state agency managers. Later, the Center created the Governor's Executive Development programs for leaders of state agencies and Institutions of Higher Education. These programs are still offered now through the LBJ School of Public Affairs. Throughout my time at the Governor's Office, I was fortunate to keep close ties with important UT Austin and UT system faculty and administrators. Many of them served on my advisory boards and were faculty and speakers in the Center's programs.

After 10 years, I left the Center to serve in several public agency executive positions. I was active in Ann Richards campaign for governor. As governor, she asked me to serve in various leadership positions. After completion of several stints, I opened an organizational strategies consulting business which I closed this past December after 32 years. I thought it might have a 5 year run. Wow, who knew! My primary business service was strategic planning and strategy development with boards of directors and trustees of public and private organizations.



ABOVE: Making pasta in 2024



LEFT: Corky and cousins in San Miguel de Allende during the Day of the Dead Holiday in 2023

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME IN RETIREMENT?

► I closed my consulting business at the end of 2024. I had been scaling back my work for the past five years. So, retirement is not a real change. My current volunteer activities include service on a local NFP board, a UT Advisory Council, and a City of Austin Commission. My travels both internationally and nationally continue. This year I'll be in France, New York, later to Italy and some short hops in between. This Spring and Summer are busy with home landscaping projects, recovery from a flooded kitchen, and cleaning out a la Marie Kondo.

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

► The short answer is renewed friendships and connection with UT which include meaningful social enrichment and service opportunities.

I first interacted with RFSA in early 2000, traveling with friends who were RFSA members. Those trips are so much fun providing opportunities for renewed friendships and great traveling experiences. I became a RFSA board member about 10 years ago – membership as a “friend of UT” due to my ongoing involvement with UT through my public service and consulting careers.

Participating in RFSA is a great part of my life. I feel so fortunate to be involved and hope to be so for many more years...and many more great travel adventures.

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Machu Picchu and Andes vista,
photo credit: Robin Jarmon

RFSA VISITS **PERU**

APRIL 29-MAY 8TH, 2025

KATHY & RICHARD ARMENTA **TRAVEL CO-CHAIRS**

► Sixteen travelers embarked on a nine-day RFSA adventure to “Mystical Peru,” a very appropriately named tour that provided a deep exploration and experience of culture, history, archeology, astrology, spirituality, Indigenous communities as well as extraordinary scenery. Local guides with both professional knowledge and personal, lived experiences provided invaluable knowledge and context with each aspect of the tour.

After a day of travel, our tour in Cusco began at a language school for a Spanish lesson that included common phrases and local idioms. We also were introduced to Muña and Coca teas, helpful beverages in high altitudes. A scenic drive through the surrounding hills with eucalyptus trees took us to the Awanacancha Textile Center that included a historic presentation of the four types of wool, how it is dyed and used to create beautiful woven items. The Center engages with people from a variety of communities, each focused on keeping the traditions of the Inca’s textiles. This locale also provided our first encounter with some llamas and alpacas that

RFSA VISITS

PERU

are the source for the valuable wool used at this Center.

The group continued through the Sacred Valley of the Urubamba river, marveling at the spectacular vistas. The Pisac Market in the Sacred Valley village, offered both shopping and interaction with locals providing traditional Peruvian handicrafts.

The next day our group visited the Inca fortress and citadel of Ollantaytambo, continuously inhabited since the 13th century, and once served as a country retreat for Inca royalty. Walking through the village of cozy cobblestone streets and adobe buildings, our guide provided the history of the Incan city planning using a grid formation and irrigation channels. Later in the day, our group visited the rural community of Misminay, where local hosts dressed in traditional attire, providing a greeting with music and dance. Our group learned about ancient techniques and tools and helped to prepare a typical Andean sauce used for our lunch. The meal included delicious local specialties, including couscous, trout, pico, corn, potatoes, chicken and cuy (guinea pig). Before saying goodbye to our new friends, we participated in a “blessing of the earth” ceremony and tribute to “Pachamamma,” Mother Earth.

The following day, with just a small bag or backpack in tow, we began our Vista Dome train journey through the Andean highlands to the beginnings of the Amazon jungle in Machu Picchu Pueblo. The next few hours included an amazing visit and tour of the legendary “Lost City of the Incas,” Machu Picchu, one of the world’s most impressive archaeological sites. This UNESCO World Heritage Site, in the middle of a tropical mountain forest, was a complex of stone stairs, ruins and tunnels with extraordinary beauty and opportunities for photos. This experience was a definite check-off on the bucket list for many. After that tour, our hotel provided a class in the making of Pisco Sours (yum) and Ceviche (yum yum). What a day to remember!!



Viewing the Sun Gate at Machu Picchu, photo credit: Guide EJ Montalvo



Dragon boat on Lake Titicaca in the Floating Islands, photo credit: Richard Armenta



Local weaver at Awanacancha Textile Center, photo credit: Kathy Armenta



Marketplace stroll in Ollantaytambo, photo credit: Robin Jarmon



Group with Machu Picchu in the background, photo credit: Guide EJ Montalvo

The next day after a lunch in Machu Picchu Pueblo, we journeyed back to Ollantaytambo by train and were treated to Peruvian folk dancers, music, and a short fashion show of alpaca garments.

The following day, our group toured the city of Cusco, the Imperial City and archaeological capital of South America. We toured the Sacsayhuaman Fortress, a ceremonial compound and magnificent example of Inca military power. The next stop was an alpaca factory and compound for vicuñas (deer-like animals) and alpaca. Beautiful garments made onsite provided an exciting shopping opportunity. The group next visited the Plaza de Armas and the Ascension Cathedral which dates from Spanish vice royalty times. After exploring the plaza, we concluded the evening with a delicious meal and entertainment.

The next day, the group traveled to Juliaca and Puno to visit Lake Titicaca and the region. Enroute, we were treated to a beautiful lakeside picnic lunch on the Umayo Lagoon and our adventure included a visit to the Sillustani Tombs and funeral towers, a pre-Incan burial ground on the shores of Lake Umayo.

The next day, our guide led our motorboat excursion through the islands of beautiful Lake Titicaca, the

highest navigable lake in the world (12,550'), to meet the local inhabitants. We visited with some members of the Uros community, living on the "floating islands," handmade by "Totora" – a living reed of the papyrus family. Our group learned about traditions and art forms, passed down through the generations, in everything from social systems to unique hand-weaving techniques. We then visited some of the inhabitants of Taquile Island, and learned about terrace agriculture, weaving, knitting and some aspects of their social structure. Community members provided a delicious lunch of savory regional dishes and shared some of their customs and norms.

The final day of the trip, upon returning to Lima, included a panoramic city tour of the Historical Center of Lima, the Plaza San Martin, local government buildings, and the beautiful coastline vistas of the Pacific.

RFSA travelers departed for home with a treasure trove of both memories and photos.

See more photos on the RFSA website:

<https://sites.utexas.edu/rfsa/peru-may-2025/>

and Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/131246400563201>

TRIP OF A LIFETIME

PART 2, SILVERSEA FAR EAST-WEST WORLD CRUISE 2024 JANUARY 15 – MAY 26, 2024



Tany and Campbell in front of the Borobudur Temple in Java, Indonesia

BY TANY NORWOOD
RFSA PROJECT MANAGER

► Part 2, Australia to Vietnam

Three relaxing sea days after leaving New Zealand, we arrived in Sydney, Australia! I had heard so many comparisons of Australia and Texas that I was very interested in seeing this massive island country for myself. On the first day we toured the iconic Sydney Opera House, and it was stunning – the scale and beauty of this structure was a fitting welcome to Australia. But it was clearly summer in February, over 100 degrees, so yes, that part was just like Texas. Next was Newcastle. The adage “as foolish as taking coals to Newcastle” refers to Newcastle, United Kingdom, but it also applies to Newcastle, Australia. Coal was discovered here and is still one of the country’s largest exports.

Other stops in Australia included snorkeling on the Great Barrier Reef (Campbell, not me!), learning to throw a boomerang, and observing Australian fauna. We saw Tasmanian Devils, Monitor Lizards, kangaroos, wallabies, koalas, crocodiles, and

cassowaries. I had heard of all those native animals except the cassowary. It’s a large flightless bird, looks sort of like an ostrich, but has some beautiful blue feathers. If it is in a bad mood, it can easily kill a human by charging toward you, jumping up and kicking you in the stomach with its three toed foot. The middle toe has a huge sharp nail which would pierce your abdomen, then it would curl those toes, grab your guts, and eviscerate you. Our tour guide told us that if you encounter a cassowary, go stand behind a tree so you can’t be kicked. There are dangerous animals, snakes, sea creatures, insects and even plants in this part of the world. Luckily, the cruise didn’t offer a camping excursion, or Campbell would have convinced me to go, and I would probably have discovered one of Australia’s hazards on a personal level.

The highlight of Australia was an excursion to Uluru, formerly called Ayers Rock, in the center of the country. This massive red sandstone monolith is sacred to the area’s Aboriginal people, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Tourism since the 1930’s led to degradation of the rock and surrounding areas. Then in 1985, the Australian government returned ownership of the site to the Pitjantjatjara people, and in 2019 climbing the rock was officially banned. In the evening, we dined on a bush-inspired meal that included kangaroo meat – it was delicious, but it felt strange eating the animal on their national flag!

On a personal note, I appreciated how both New Zealand and Australia were making changes to the names of various sites and locations, returning to (or at least acknowledging) the names used by the natives instead of new names created by Europeans. It made me think about our own Enchanted Rock near Fredericksburg. It was also considered sacred by Native American tribes and made me wonder what their name for it was and what it would take to return to that name. Not very likely, in our current political climate. At least Enchanted Rock is granite and not as easily damaged by climbers as Uluru’s sandstone.



Uluru (formerly Ayers Rock) in central Australia

TRIP OF A LIFETIME

PART 2, SILVERSEA FAR EAST-WEST WORLD CRUISE 2024 JANUARY 15 – MAY 26, 2024



Tany and Campbell and the Komodo Dragon on Komodo Island, Indonesia

After eight ports in Australia, we headed to Indonesia. First stop – Komodo Island. It was so awesome to be able to visit the Komodo dragons in their natural habitat instead of seeing them in a zoo. Small groups of passengers, accompanied by tour guides and numerous men holding large, forked tree branches to hold back the huge lizards if they got too close. They have a forked tongue that smells “in stereo,” to help detect the direction of prey. They can smell blood from several miles away, and will head in that direction, assuming it is a wounded animal. (For that reason, the excursion didn’t allow any passengers to go on the tour who had open wounds.) We also went to Bali, where we saw amazing art and textiles. I could have easily filled a suitcase with the beautiful items they sold. Our next Indonesian stop was an overnight excursion that included a visit to one of the king’s palaces, where we were entertained by traditional dancers and hosted to lunch, attended by the king and queen. That evening we had dinner at Prambanan, Indonesia’s largest Hindu temple. Soft lights colored the intricately carved spires of the temple while we watched locals perform a traditional play. It was an unforgettable experience. Our final stop was in Java, where we toured the Borobudur temple complex, the world’s largest Buddhist monument and a UNESCO World Heritage Site built in the 8th century. Relief carvings depict Buddha’s life, so you can learn about his life from childhood to enlightenment as you climb up the levels of the monument.

The ship finally turned northward, and we visited a number of island nations between the Indian Ocean and the southern Pacific, all close enough to the equator to be blazingly hot. Singapore was very clean, and you did feel safe, due to very strict rules enforced by a strong police presence. It was dazzling and focused on the future, with evening laser light shows on the buildings and waterfront areas. Malaysia was the opposite, not highly developed, but nice hotels indicated it was a popular tourist destination. Vietnam was our final country on this leg of the journey. It was interesting to see the places we all heard about in the news during the Vietnam war. We visited the Majestic Hotel in Ho Chi Minh City, the hotel of choice for journalists and VIP’s during the war, and it was easy to imagine those visitors having a drink on the rooftop bar after a long day. Next, we docked in Chan May (Hue/Danang) in an industrial area that shipped a lot of coal. Huge piles of coal powder in the port were constantly being loaded onto barges. That night, there was a big dinner party for the passengers on the pool deck of our ship. After mysterious black smudges started appearing on our faces and clothes, we realized that the entire deck was covered in coal dust, deposited by the slight breeze in the harbor. Luckily, free laundry service came to the rescue.

It felt wonderful to be moving away from the equator toward more temperate climes. In my final installment, I will cover our trip from Hong Kong back to California.



Sydney Opera House

MEET OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS

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



► **Gayle Hight is the new Sponsorship Co-Chair.** Gayle earned her BS and MBA degrees from UT Austin. After a career in the fashion industry, she joined the university's School of Human Ecology faculty in 1974 as an Assistant Professor in Textiles and Clothing. In 1981, she went to work for Bank of America. She returned to UT Austin in 1995, in the McCombs School of Business, where she worked for 27 years in several areas: Texas Executive Education, MBA student services, and the Office of Communications and Marketing. She joined the executive education program in the Cockrell School of Engineering in 2022. She retired from UT in 2024. She earned the President's Outstanding Staff Award in 2019. Her husband and two of her three children are UT Austin graduates.



► **Annela Lopez is the new Membership Chair.** Annela began employment at The University of Texas at Austin in the Office of Accounting, Report Division, in October 1986. In July 1988, she moved to the Office of the Vice President for Financial Affairs, where she was the Open Records Coordinator. There she coordinated the university's responses to open records requests submitted under the Texas Public Information Act. She retired from the university in December 2017, after thirty-three years of service.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

PEGGY MUELLER SPECIAL PROGRAMS CHAIR

► As retirees from the University of Texas at Austin (and UT System) we have many, many opportunities to support UT. We volunteer, host, serve as docents and regularly participate in activities on campus and off. RFSA members specifically make contributions to the following:

Orange Santa November-December 2024

Donations are made to help make the holidays brighter for children of UT students, staff, and faculty. RFSA members made online donations and additionally contributed \$740.00 in cash and checks at the Holiday Reception on December 11. The campus assisted 1,395 children, from 649 families, with \$50.00 each. Total donations of \$41,325 were raised campus-wide including President Hartzell's match.

40 Hours for 40 Acres May 7-8, 2025

Online giving campaign for UT programs, colleges, departments, and organizations across UT. RFSA participates by asking for donations to the RFSA

Scholarship Fund which are then matched by the operating fund; four members contributed \$400 with \$400 matching, for a total of \$800 contributed to the RFSA Scholarship Fund.

UT Remembers April 25, 2025

Memorial program honoring and remembering students, faculty, staff, and retirees who have died in the previous year. Both the flag lowering and the program were held on the Main Mall this year.

UT Outpost 2025

The Outpost is a free food pantry for students experiencing food insecurity. RFSA members brought non-perishable food to the Spring Luncheon and Business Meeting (April 15, 2025) and filled two large bins. Individual members contributed professional clothing to the UT Outpost clothes closet for students to wear to interviews and to new jobs, as needed, when they enter the professional work world.

Thank you for your generosity for these and other contributions to Longhorn Nation.

AN AWARD-WINNING NEW ERA FOR HOGG MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

JESS CYBULSKI
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

► Hogg Memorial Auditorium's transformation into a lively hub of student activity and destination for live music, performances and events has not gone unnoticed since reopening in October 2023. The ninety-two-year-old facility has garnered eight accolades from local, higher education and industry organizations for preserving its architectural and cultural heritage while bringing it into the 21st century.

But what is happening with students inside the reimagined space is probably the most validating recognition. Longhorns are celebrating the new cutting-edge technology that enhances the audience and performer experience while expanding opportunities for hands-on learning that translates into meaningful careers and lives.

Students were the catalyst for initiating the renovation project in 2011 and worked with the Division of Student Affairs' leadership to secure funding and develop a plan. Updates include state-of-the-art audio/visual and lighting systems, and stage and production equipment, which offer students a space to develop their skills in live performing arts and event planning.

"I am very fortunate that I get to learn with this technology. We have access to state-of-the-art equipment that you would not easily find, especially at a venue for students. This unique technology motivates us to learn more about our crafts," shared Joy Williams, a University Unions' student employee who works as a lighting operator, board designer, technician, and stagehand and a sophomore theatre and dance major from Pharr, Texas. "I am gaining a lot of skills that can transfer to my future career. I had never truly had the chance to interact with clients before this, so this job has given me the confidence to consult and deliver with different clients and their needs," she added.

Academy-award winning director Wes Anderson is proof of the auditorium's transformative atmosphere. He was a student projectionist with University Unions in the early nineties at UT Austin. Anderson recognized the auditorium's impact on his career trajectory in a special video message played before the screening of his *Asteroid City* movie at the venue: "I watched a lot of movies in this room, and it's one of my favorite cinemas in the world."

Since reopening, 81 events have taken place at the auditorium, with 33 of those events hosted by student organizations. Campus Events+Entertainment, the largest student programming organization on campus,



Texas Revue Group, courtesy of University Unions

hosted the annual Texas Revue, the University's student talent show, and screened the *Barbie!* and *Asteroid City* movies.

"We are able to do much more with the new technology as well as offer an increased quality of events. It feels like a UT space – it enhances the student experience," noted Thien Nguyen, the Showtime Committee chair and a junior management information systems major from Houston.

Keeping with the auditorium's legacy dating back to 1933, some big names have taken the stage in the past year, especially during the grand reopening celebrations. The first event held was a visit from U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and blues-rock musician and Austin-native Gary Clark, Jr. headlined the first concert there.

Events of this scale show what is now possible following the \$27.8 million renovation. University Unions collaborated with partners across campus, resulting in multiple recognitions that celebrate the innovative approach to preservation and energy-efficient design – ultimately putting students first.

If you have not experienced the wonders of the renovated auditorium, make plans to attend a performance. For additional information, visit the University Unions web page.



Students on stage during Texas Revue in March 2025, courtesy of University Unions

LEGACY MEMBERSHIP

ROBERT LAWRENCE PRESIDENT 2024-25

► By now a number of people have heard of the Legacy Membership option for RFSA members. What is it and how did we get here?

First things first, a description of the Legacy Membership:

It is our third membership option, in addition to our regular Individual and Joint memberships at the one-year and three-year levels. Legacy Membership is a lifetime membership option for RFSA members. They pay once and become a member for life. We chose *Legacy* as the name because the Texas Exes already have a Life membership and did not want to confuse their option with ours. Our Legacy Membership rates are \$400 for an individual and \$550 for joint membership. Membership information is found in the “About RFSA” tab on our website.

As a by-product of the Legacy Membership development, we added an Auto-Renewal option for the one- and three-year membership levels.

How did we get here?

It took a while, longer than expected, to get to this point. As we investigated creating a lifetime membership option, flaws in the current system became known and we had to address those in the process.

The concept of having a lifetime membership level was proposed and passed by the Board at the last meeting before COVID hit. Corky Hilliard, RFSA President at the time, developed the proposal with other members of the Executive Committee and Carol Barrett. That places the initial proposal at about six years ago. During the

pandemic, it was put on hold, as was just about everything at that time.

The discussion of the lifetime membership resurfaced approximately two to three years ago. As we scrutinized the membership cycle, we discovered that messages were not going out to members to alert them when their membership lapsed. This needed to be fixed before we added something new to our membership options. Ultimately, all of this was corrected, but it took time for the changes and the testing.

About a year and a half ago the lifetime membership discussion resurfaced in earnest. Major software projects for the University are contracted by Sales Force. The Executive Committee voted to spend the money to create that membership option, and we worked with Sales Force through the Texas Exes. While this was happening, we needed to choose a name for the new membership level. Several options were brought up (Gold and Platinum being two choices), *Legacy* was the name that won the vote.

In December of 2024, the Legacy Membership went live on the RFSA website. Seventeen renewing members chose the Legacy membership level prior to our Spring Luncheon.

Liz Hastings chaired a committee to see what, if any, benefits could come with a Legacy Membership level. Several options were presented, and we decided to start with the Legacy Membership ribbons you may have noticed at the Spring Luncheon.

We hope that the Legacy membership option will be of value to our members now and in the future. As always, we appreciate your feedback on this, or any other initiative.

STAY CONNECTED ONLINE

► There are 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, 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, 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.

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. Several 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.

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 12368
Austin, Texas 78711-2368

Donate Online

You are also able to donate online through the UT Online Giving website at **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.

RFSA SCHOLARSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS

GIFTS RECEIVED FROM NOVEMBER 16, 2024 – MAY 1, 2025

James Hsu

Karen White

Carolyn Wylie

Phillip and Karen Kelton

Sherry Melecki

Susan Kessler

Michael Corley

In memory of Tom Melecki

Joyce McClendon

Madeline Sunderland-Meier

Virginia Phillips

Carmen and Norman Arn

In honor of Peggy Mueller

Lori Threatt

Lael Hasty

Ted Aanstoos

Martha Boyd

Bobby R. Inman

TEXAS CONNECT

► We are delighted to announce a new Retired Faculty-Staff Association benefit for our dues paying members. *Texas Connect* magazine is available on the RFSA website.

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.

RFSA advertises in Texas Connect with a goal of letting faculty and staff learn about our organization before they retire. You can find the latest issue at this location on our webpage at **texasconnect.utexas.edu** or in the "Magazines" tab if you are on our site.

SCHOLARSHIPS

2024-2025 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Folakemi Elekolusi

Houston, Ile-lfe, Nigeria, London
College of Liberal Arts
Government

Chelsi Lam

Dallas, Texas
College of Natural Sciences
Neuroscience

Austin Le**Ayeman Maknojia****Caleb Phillips****Soriah Montemayor**

Baytown, Texas
McCombs School of Business
Accounting

Mattea Gallaway

North Richland Hills, Texas
Moody College of Communication
Radio-Television-Film

Ashryn Pinkston**Marcos Ramirez****Erik Lara Barrientos**

Lockhart, Texas
School of Nursing
Nursing

Iliana Almendarez**Brandon Bui****Rylei Ripley****Jonathan Simon****Rwainee Chaka****Kiana Swiatkowski****Arnav Jain**

Katy, Texas
Cockrell School of Engineering
Electrical and Computer
Engineering

Dayanara Chavez**Payton Cooper****Courteney Heyward****Anna Vu**

Chi Minh, Vietnam
Jackson School of Geosciences
General Geology

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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 November 15, 2024 – May 15, 2025. 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 jbfrack@gmail.com.

Susana Imelda Aleman, 70

*Assistant Dean for Student Affairs,
Law School
March 21, 2025*

James Bieri, 97

*Professor, Clinical Psychology and Literature
April 18, 2025*

Jean McGill Abercrombie Bohls, 88

*Administration Assistant
May 5, 2025*

Arno Rudolf Bohm, 88

*Associate Professor, Physics
December 29, 2024*

Thomas Lyle Bowie, 67

*Building Manager, Event Planner,
Pharmacy
March 21, 2025*

Christopher Shane Davies, 85

*Professor, Geography
February 6, 2025*

Donald G. Davis Jr, 85

*Professor, Graduate School for
Library & Information Science
November 21, 2024*

Morris Daywood, 88

*30 Year Career at UT Austin
January 12, 2025*

Richard Wilson Furlong, 96

*Professor, Structures
April 25, 2025*

Alla Goodwin, 92

*Assistant to the Dean, Law School
December 25, 2024*

Rondald Bailey Helton, 88

*Architect & Planning Advisor
December 10, 2024*

George P. Huber, 88

*Professor, Management,
McCombs School of Business
January 14, 2025*

Richard Michael Kerker, 71

*Office of Academic Affairs, UT System;
Associate Vice Provost, UT Austin
January 6, 2025*

Kathryn Beth Kramer, 75

*Assistant Dean for Development,
Social Work
December 17, 2024*

Elizabeth “Liz” Anne Mabry

*Staff, UT System
January 7, 2025*

Bassett Maguire, 98

*Professor Emeritus, Integrative
Biology & Marine Science
January 15, 2025*

Fred McDowell, 85

*Research Scientist,
Geological Sciences
November 21, 2024*

Thomas Gustave Muir, Jr 86

*Assistant Director for Basic
Research & Education, ARL
January 22, 2025*

Daniel Orozco, 67

*Librarian,
Architecture & Planning Library
April 6, 2025*

IN MEMORIAM

Richard Henry Pells, 83

Professor, History

April 30, 2025

John Anthony Roan, 79

*Assistant Vice Chancellor
for Finance, UT System*

January 15, 2025

Robert Hinkle Ryan, 87

*Associate Director,
Construction Industry Institute
Brigadier General, US Army, Retired*

April 28, 2025

Frank T. Shirley, 73

Professor, Mathematics

December 1, 2024

David Walter Sloan, 87

*Assistant Director of Music, University
Interscholastic League*

January 7, 2025

Paul Alan Terry, 72

*Librarian, Head of Serial Acquisitions,
Perry-Castañeda Library*

January 21, 2025

Takeshi Udagawa, 92

Professor, Nuclear Physics

March 24, 2025

George Villalva, 89

Taught Design & Drawing, Architecture

February 5, 2025

Elizabeth Worthington, 94

*Staff, English; Assistant to the Vice President
& Dean of Graduate Studies (and later, Acting
President of the University), William Livingston*

April 12, 2025

Darrell Hugh Williams, 92

Professor, Kinesiology

August 24, 2024

RFSA

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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 or mailed to Carol Barrett, RFSA Coordinator, Texas Exes / P.O. Box 12368 / Austin, TX 78711-2368.

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