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A publication of the University of Southern Mississippi School of Mass Communication and Journalism

Inside: ‘Ed Said’ is a hit, four inducted into MCJ Hall of Fame, College Hall work continues and five pages of alumni news

Shining Stars
Tena Clark and Diego Velasco made it to the top by starting at the bottom
Ask Southern Miss alumni from any era and they’ll rattle off the names of professors whose classes they took in College Hall. When it opened as the original academic building on campus in 1913, it housed all of the university’s classrooms, the library and offices for the faculty and administration; the third floor was an auditorium.

The renovation of the building is well under way, and the School of Mass Communication and Journalism will relocate to College Hall in the fall of 2013. The move to the new facility represents the culmination of years of planning and a strategic vision designed by the school’s faculty six years ago.

It also represents a new era for the school. Students pursuing an education in mass communication and journalism at Southern Miss have rarely benefited from state-of-the-art facilities; indeed, much of that education has taken place in the dank basement of Southern Hall and other subterranean spaces scattered across campus.

The university’s decision to relocate the School of Mass Communication and Journalism to a newly renovated College Hall speaks well of the past, present and future of mass communication and journalism education at Southern Miss.

Many of the university’s most prominent alumni work in the media industry. They include media entrepreneurs, Pulitzer-winning photojournalists, newspaper editors and publishers, TV station managers, television network correspondents, filmmakers, music producers, public relations professionals and advertising executives. You can read about a number of them in this edition of the MCJ Journal, including music producer Tena Clark and filmmaker Diego Velasco, who have earned national and international acclaim.

The school currently serves more than 600 students, offering nine undergraduate degrees, two master’s degrees and a Ph.D. in mass communication. The school’s faculty and student body are among the most culturally diverse of any mass communication program in the country. Many of our current students – like many of our successful graduates – are among the first generation of their families to earn college degrees.

The school has embraced its mission to serve that diverse population, and our ability to do that will soon be greatly enhanced. The new College Hall will feature high tech classrooms, labs and studios. The building’s third floor will house state-of-the-art television and recording studios and offices for The Student Printz, WUSM-FM, a student-run record label, video production crew and a public relations and advertising agency.

Our new facilities will afford students the opportunity to develop skills and prepare for a future in a media industry that is in the midst of a digital revolution. Former USM President Martha Saunders, who championed the school’s relocation to College Hall, has observed that the most historic building on campus will soon become its most high tech.

Beginning with the The State Teacher’s College News in 1918, Southern Miss has provided thousands of students with an excellent mass communication and journalism education.

We may just be getting started.

--Dr. Christopher Campbell
By Tish Butts

Southern Miss media production alumna Catherine “C.J.” Burks is racking up honors for the puppet she created to teach small children healthy eating habits. Burks, who became a producer at Mississippi Public Broadcasting after graduating in 2008 with a degree in television and video production, is the creator and producer of “Ed Said,” an Internet-based television program that teaches children from kindergarten to second grade to develop healthy eating and exercise habits. In the fall 2011, the program was recognized with a national Parents’ Choice Approved Award for its website, www.EdSaid.org. In 2011, it was a finalist for two regional Emmy awards. The idea for “Ed Said” came to Burks after a meeting with officials at the Mississippi Office of Healthy Schools and Kay Strictly, a physical education teacher at Corinth High School, who would later develop a degree in television and video production, is the creator and producer of “Ed Said,” an Internet-based television program that teaches children from kindergarten to second grade to develop healthy eating and exercise habits. In the fall 2011, the program was recognized with a national Parents’ Choice Approved Award for its website, www.EdSaid.org. In 2011, it was a finalist for two regional Emmy awards. The idea for “Ed Said” came to Burks after a meeting with officials at the Mississippi Office of Healthy Schools and Kay Strictly, a physical education teacher at Corinth High School, who would later develop the program’s curriculum. Burks said she hopes to decrease the rate of obesity in Mississippi by offering an easily accessible, downloadable and free program that provides young children with facts about fruits and vegetables. “Ed’s a little boy who is in school and hangs out on the playground with his friends. He has a reputation for his raps and rhymes, and that’s where he gets his hip-hop name, ‘Ed Said,’” Burks said.

The Parents Choice Award was especially meaningful for Burks. “It’s such an honor to have the website recognized. Howl Design helped me to bring Ed’s world to life. We chose to make “Ed Said” a web-based program because of its accessibility for children and teachers. I think it is wonderful that our local production is available to anyone with an Internet connection. Ed’s healthy messages can reach children everywhere.” Established in 1978, Parents’ Choice is the nation’s oldest nonprofit guide to quality children’s media and toys. The Parents’ Choice Foundation’s panels of educators, scientists, performing artists, librarians, parents and children identify the optimum products for children of varied ages, backgrounds, interest and skill levels. Fewer than 15 percent of products submitted to the Parents’ Choice Awards program receive any level of recommendation. Burks’ team of 17 visited schools around the state last fall as part of the “Moving with Fruits and Vegetables Tour” to promote awareness of Ed Said to teachers and students. The team travels with a life-size version of Ed Said, and Burks said she hopes having the puppet on tour will help her and the team ignite interest in healthy habits in young Mississippians. “At the time I created Ed Said, we were number two in the nation for childhood obesity,” Burke said. “Now, we’re the first.” Having the puppet brings a little more life. We can take him to the school, and that makes it even more fun because he can go out there and dance with the kids. By taking him to the schools, we are getting them jazzed and excited,” she said. “And it’s been really awesome for me to see the response as far as the kids’ rapping the music. I feel like since he is a rapper, it’s about his music. When I see the kids’ bopping their heads and clapping along with the dances, that’s the best part. I love it.”

Burks submitted 12 minutes of music to be considered for the Emmy award. “I never thought, when I wrote that first song, that we would ever get acknowledged, but we submitted all 11 songs,” she said. “It’s pretty exciting, especially since I love music. That’s my favorite part about the project was actually being able to sit down and make music.” The work garnered two nominations but was ultimately not a winner. MPB Director of Production Scott Colwell said being nominated for the award is an honor itself. “It shows the quality of the work,” he said. “The fact it was nominated speaks volumes.” The MPB team is currently looking for funding for the project to shoot another season and create software apps for Internet-savvy children, Burks said. “I want to do an iPhone and Android app for Ed, and really take him to that next level,” she said. “Kids nowadays, they walk around with their cell phones. I want to try to catch up with that and appeal to those smart kids with cell phones.”

Ed Said was Burks’ first production project at MPB. She has been at the broadcasting company for about three years directing, producing and running the camera – all aspects of production, she said. The Arkansas native evacuated to Hattiesburg from the University of New Orleans, where she studied television production, when Hurricane Katrina devastated the Louisiana city. She said she moved to New Orleans from Chicago after her love of the South overwhelmed her. Burks studied sound production at Columbia College during her time in Illinois.

Colwell said that he enjoys being able to give back to future generations of Mississippians through work like that of Burks. “She’s got a lot of creativity, and she’s got a lot of enthusiasm,” he said. “It’s nice to have someone here who promotes the team atmosphere.”

One of Burks’ teammates and closed caption supervisor, Keri Horn, agrees. “She can write a song about anything,” Horn said. “Give her a strawberry, and she’ll write a song about it.” Horn added that Burks is very detailed oriented and organized. “She has a plan. Before she steps into it, she knows what needs to happen,” Horn.
Professors discuss book on race and news

Three faculty members in The University of Southern Mississippi School of Mass Communication and Journalism released a new book, “Race and News: Critical Perspectives,” with a discussion and signing at the Trent Lott Center in October.

Published by Routledge, a leading publisher of cultural studies research, the book examines how issues related to race and ethnicity are covered by local, regional, and national news organizations.

“The book looks at a variety of events, including coverage of Barack Obama’s presidential candidacy, Hurricane Katrina, the Don Imus controversy, even the Virginia Tech shootings,” said Kim LeDuff, associate professor and associate director of the School of Mass Communication and Journalism. “We try to examine the coverage in terms of its impact on contemporary racial attitudes and public policy.”

LeDuff’s co-authors are Chris Campbell, professor and director of the School of Mass Communication and Journalism; Cheryl Jenkins, assistant professor in the school; and Rockell Brown, assistant professor in the School of Communication at Texas Southern University.

“My own interest is in the racial diversity in newsrooms and how that affects coverage,” Jenkins said. “I’m also interested in challenging some journalistic traditions – including the very notion of objectivity – because they have an impact on how race and racism are framed in the news.”

Campbell, who in 1995 authored “Race, Myth and the News,” said the research for the new book was an opportunity to see if much had changed over the last few decades. “Unfortuately, many of the problems I identified in my first study remain. I wish I could say that American journalism had improved its approach to the coverage of race and ethnicity, but there isn’t much evidence to make that case,” he said.

The College of Arts and Letters and the Center for Black Studies at USM sponsored the book signing. Sherita L. Johnson, associate professor of English and the interim director of the center, moderated the discussion saying that it was an opportunity to acknowledge and interrogate racial discourses we often disregard living in what some would like to think is a ‘post-racial’ America.

State broadcasters mentor MCJ students

Leading broadcasters from across Mississippi met with and mentored students for the Mississippi Association of Broadcasters Day in April at The University of Southern Mississippi’s Hattiesburg campus.

The Mississippi Association of Broadcasters Day gave selected students the opportunity to engage in one-on-one portfolio reviews with media professionals in the broadcasting, production and advertising fields.

“This was an excellent opportunity for students to receive honest critiques from professionals,” said Mary Lou Sheffer, associate professor in the Southern Miss School of Mass Communication and Journalism and the organizer of this year’s MAB Day. “This event allowed students to network and gain professionals’ insight regarding their fields of study.”

The Mississippi Association of Broadcasters is a nonprofit trade association for radio and television stations in Mississippi. Its purpose is to assist members with broadcast industry and general business-related challenges. MAB members are offered educational seminars, legal hotlines, lobbying representation, updates on industry trends, and opportunities to network with other broadcasters.
Southern Miss’ LeDuff chosen 2012 Black History Month Educator of the Year

By David Tisdale
USM Communications

“The most important aspect of embracing diversity is for individuals to recognize that no matter how different we all seem from the outside, we’re all still human and face similar challenges.”

That’s the philosophy held by The University of Southern Mississippi’s Dr. Kim LeDuff, associate professor and associate director of the School of Mass Communication and Journalism, who says her work as an educator allows her to fulfill her commitment to inclusiveness and educating people about the importance of diversity in an increasingly multicultural society.

A panel from the Mississippi Institutions for Higher Learning chose LeDuff as the IHL Black History Month Educator of the Year for 2012. The honor was announced at IHL offices in Jackson Feb. 16. LeDuff was chosen from among nominees from the state’s public universities.

“It’s what we have in common that allows us to see beyond difference,” LeDuff said. “I believe it is essential that my students come to this realization, especially when given the power to tell stories that represent groups and individuals. That’s why I do my best to encourage a conversation about the importance of diversity through my teaching.”

Dr. Chris Campbell, director of the School of Mass Communication and Journalism, said that this is a well deserved award. “Dr. LeDuff has been an incredible addition to the Southern Miss faculty, and she’s been instrumental to our school’s success in building a diverse faculty and a curriculum that addresses issues related to living in a culturally diverse world,” Campbell said.

LeDuff, a New Orleans native, embraces teaching, mentoring and motivating her students, not because it’s expected but because those activities are integral to her lifelong commitment to “pay it forward.”

“I believe in serving my university as well as extending myself and my skills to the surrounding community,” LeDuff said. “In my own life I have been fortunate to have support and encouragement to fulfill my own goals. My mission is to pay it forward in all aspects of my life.”

LeDuff conducts research on race and representation in mass media, as well as on journalism education. She is the author of “Tales of Two Cities: How Race and Crime Intersect on Local TV News” and co-author, along with Southern Miss colleagues Campbell and Cheryl Jenkins, of “Race and News: Critical Perspectives.”

Riva Brown Teague of Jackson, Miss., a doctoral student in mass communication, says LeDuff always provides practical examples as part of her approach to instruction so her students can better understand difficult theoretical constructs and concepts.

“She’s an excellent educator who engages her students to think deeper and reach higher, and she also helps them outside the classroom to excel academically and professionally,” Teague said. “We’re fortunate to have a professor of her exceptional caliber on the faculty, and the school is a better place for students as a result.”

When LeDuff teaches a course titled Race, Gender and Media at both the graduate and undergraduate level, she does a demographic survey of her class and pairs her students based on difference (gender, race, religion, extracurricular activities, hobbies, age, etc.)

“The first assignment is for them to take one another on a ‘cultural field trip,’” LeDuff said.

One semester LeDuff had a white female student invite her black male partner, a Southern Miss football player, to work an hour of her shift as a receptionist at a hair salon. In turn, he had her train with him during an early morning workout session. In the fall 2012, LeDuff assigned a student from Bangladesh to invite her American partner to dinner and only speak to him in Hindi, allowing him to experience what her family encountered when they arrived in America.

Each pair writes a reflective essay and then discusses their experience with one another and with the class. In the end, most report gaining new perspectives on those they first identify as “different.”

“Very often, they find that they are more alike than they ever imagined upon their first meeting,” LeDuff said. “I’ve had students tell me that everyone should be required to do this assignment. I remind them that we are fortunate to have this forum for discussion, but that they can take the conversation beyond the classroom.”
‘You Are Not So Smart’: Alum’s first book celebrates self-delusion

By Tish Butts

Multitalented David McRaney is well on his way to conquering the literary world by meshing ideas of psychology with journalism in his new book: “You Are Not So Smart.”

Published by Gotham, this hardcover compilation of psychological reasoning, released last October, comically addresses the rationalizations people tell themselves from situation to situation.

“The book is about the celebration of self-delusion -- how psychology discovers and quantifies how we tell ourselves little lies,” McRaney said.

McRaney, a 2007 University of Southern Mississippi journalism graduate, said he was inspired to write the book after realizing the magnitude of followers his blog, youarenotsosmart.com, had generated.

He said psychology gave him “epiphany after epiphany” that he wanted to share with others. “I always wanted to do a psychology blog,” said McRaney. “I tried to concentrate on one specific topic. This is McRaney’s first book, but he has some ideas that could lead to a sequel. And it all began with a blog.

“The world of journalism has changed so much that an individual writer could become an institution,” said McRaney, who is director of new media at WDAM-TV in Hattiesburg. “If you build a big enough audience on the Internet, you could get a publisher interested in your work.

Maggie Williams, USM journalism instructor who was advisor to McRaney when he was editor of The Student Printz, has deduced after having read the book that the work is not the type of reading to be taken lightly. The book, she said, shows people why they think how they think.

“He takes things that are logical, and he explains why they’re logical. [He] explains why we don’t approach them sometimes quite as logically as we should,” she said. “It’s interesting. I would predict success for it. I would think major success.” She credits much of his ability to his studies in psychology at USM.

His supervisor at WDAM-TV, News Director Randy Swan, agrees with Williams’ forecast of McRaney’s career. “He’s going to become such a big author and writer, I just hope we can hang on to him a little while longer,” Swan said. McRaney goes outside his job description to help new reporters write properly for WDAM.com, the station’s website, Swan said.

“He excelled as editor of The Student Printz because he would take people under his wing and say, ‘If you really want to learn to write, or if you really want to learn to report, or if you really want to learn to edit, or whatever the case may be, I’ll help you,’” Williams said. McRaney worked at The Student Printz as a writer, managing editor and executive editor.

McRaney received the honor of being one of the top 10 journalism students in the United States when he earned a scholarship from the Scripps Howard Foundation in 2006. He has also twice received recognition by the William Randolph Hearst college journalism awards and has won multiple awards from the Mississippi Press Association.

He was the keynote speaker at the 2011 Mass Communication and Journalism Symposium.

Wheeler to exhibit travel photographs

Retired photojournalism professor Ed Wheeler will celebrate his 75th birthday with a photography exhibit on July 17 at the Hattiesburg Cultural Center.

Wheeler will show more than 20 photographs from his travels from Maine to New Mexico to Big Bend, Texas. “I still find it exciting to see photographs,” he said. “When you start shooting, things appear like composition, texture and patterns.”

Wheeler served on the faculty of the School of Mass Communication and Journalism from 1977 to 1995. He worked at the Dallas Morning News for 12 years before earning his master’s degree from East Texas State University.

The Hattiesburg Cultural Center is located at 723 Main Street, on the corner of McLeod Street, in Historic Downtown Hattiesburg. Opening night exhibit hours are 5:30 p.m.-7 p.m. The show will be on display through the end of August.

Maine, 2010
Photo by Ed Wheeler
The University of Southern Mississippi School of Mass Communication and Journalism hosted its fifth annual symposium Nov. 10, 2011. “From Here You Can Go Anywhere: Southern Miss and the Future of the Entertainment Industry” was held in the Thad Cochran Center on the Hattiesburg campus.

The symposium included the induction of four alumni into the Mass Communication and Journalism Hall of Fame, which was created in 2006 to give the School of Mass Communication and Journalism a way to honor its most distinguished graduates. Among the alumni honored at the symposium was a Grammy-winning music producer, the director of the biggest box office hit in Venezuelan history and the veteran general managers of south Mississippi’s two most influential television stations.

This year’s inductees were:

**Jim Cameron**, general manager of WDAM-TV since 1992, whose broadcasting career spans four decades, beginning with his involvement at the Southern Miss campus radio station as a freshman. He worked his way through school as a disc jockey and announcer on commercial radio, and he managed his first radio station at the age of 24. He was named a lifetime member of the Mississippi Association of Broadcasters in 2003 for “outstanding contributions to broadcasting in Mississippi.” He is best known to television viewers in the Pine Belt for his regular editorials and commentaries on the “Viewpoint” segment of WDAM News, for which he has won numerous awards.

**Tena Clark**, a music producer who has written award-winning country hits, contributed to multi-platinum movie soundtracks, written songs for television shows and was the creator of the instantly recognizable national campaign theme, “Have You Had Your Break Today,” for McDonald’s. She produced Natalie Cole’s “Still Unforgettable,” which won two Grammy awards, and she is the founder and CEO of DMI Music & Media Solutions.

**Diego Velasco**, a filmmaker whose five short films have won a total of 26 awards, including one that was considered for an Academy Award. Velasco premiered in 2010 his first feature film, “La Hora Cero” (“The Zero Hour”), which broke all box office records in Venezuela, making it the highest grossing Venezuelan film of all time. It has won more than 20 awards, has been screened at many different film festivals, and has secured distribution in the United States and Latin America.

**Dave Vincent**, vice president and general manager of WLOX-TV in Biloxi. Vincent joined WLOX-TV in 1977 and worked as a reporter, anchor, assignment editor and news director before becoming station manager in 1996. Under his leadership, the WLOX news department won numerous national awards, including the prestigious Peabody, duPont and Murrow awards in 2006 for the station’s heroic 12 days of coverage of Hurricane Katrina.

“Each year, I become more amazed by the remarkable talent that has come through Southern Miss,” Dr. Chris Campbell, director of the School of Mass Communication and Journalism, said. “The alumni we are honoring this year are exceptional role models for our current students, who we hope will follow in their footsteps.”

Proceeds from the luncheon support scholarship endowments established in the School of Mass Communication and Journalism in the names of former professors Gene Wiggins and the late Larry Albers.

The keynote address at the luncheon was delivered by Southern Miss journalism grad David McRaney, whose hilarious self-help book, “You Are Not So Smart,” was given a national release by Gotham Books. His popular blog, “You Are Not So Smart: A Celebration of Self Delusion,” caught the attention of a New York publisher and led to the publication of the book, which is subtitled, “Why You Have Too Many Friends on Facebook, Why Your Memory is Mostly Fiction, and 46 Other Ways You’re Deluding Yourself.” His appearance at the luncheon is part of a national book tour that began in October, and he signed books after the luncheon. McRaney is currently the director of new media at WDAM-TV.

Clark and Velasco conducted master classes for students in the recording industry and film programs while on campus. Velasco was also on hand for a screening of his film, “The Zero Hour,” at the Fleming Education Center auditorium on the Long Beach campus Nov. 11.

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**Four inducted into MCJ Hall**

Television veterans, entertainment industry professionals honored

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**Steve Coleman**
Grad student Byrd honored for thesis

Robert Byrd, a first-year doctoral student in The University of Southern Mississippi’s School of Mass Communication and Journalism, recently received the Outstanding Master’s Thesis Award for Social Sciences, Business and Education at the University of South Alabama, the highest honor a thesis can receive from the university.

Byrd also won the Top Student Paper in the Cultural and Critical Studies Division at the Midwinter Conference of the Association for Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication in Norman, Okla. That paper examined representations of athletes in a special edition of Out magazine.

“Robby is a talented scholar with a promising future,” said Fei Xue, associate professor and coordinator of the graduate program in the School of Mass Communication and Journalism.


His thesis adviser, associate professor Vanessa Murphree, said this timely topic explores an important era that “helps us better understand diversity and misinformation about a historic and continuing public health epidemic.”

Murphree, who will join the Southern Miss faculty in August, described Byrd as an “exceptional student” who is a “talented researcher and writer” who also brings “a great deal of creativity and critical analysis” to his work.

“Working with Robby was a great learning experience for me,” Murphree said. “I know that his work will inspire and influence others, just as it has inspired and influenced me.”

USM doctoral student Robert Byrd, right, receives the award for Outstanding Master’s Thesis from Dr. B. Keith Harrison dean of the graduate school University of South Alabama.

Printz wins press awards

The staff of The Student Printz won first place in the General Excellence category at the Mississippi Press Association’s 2012 Better Newspaper Contest senior college and university division. Awards were announced at the 14th annual O.C. McDavid Journalism Conference in Jackson, March 29.

A panel of professional judges deemed the entries, “The strongest mix of good, interesting copy and excellent art. Best Reporting and story mechanics of contenders. Strong, interesting newspaper.” Printz staffers also took home eight first place plaques including Travis Thornell for Best Sports Story and Best Sports Feature, Stormy Speaks for Best Feature Story, Justin Sellers for Best General News Photo, Jordan Moore for Best Sports Photo, Eli Baylis for Best Feature Photo, Kiza Jordan for Best Single Ad and Lisa Gurley for Best Newspaper Design. They also garnered another 13 second and third place awards.

Earlier in the year, The Student Printz competed in the 2012 Southeast Journalism Conference and received six, top-ten awards. Eli Baylis took top honors as No. 1 press photographer for a portfolio of feature and sports photographs.

It is the second year in a row that a Student Printz photographer took home this honor. Bryan Hawkins, who is now on the photo staff at the Hattiesburg American, won in 2011. Baylis is currently a staff photographer for the Vicksburg Post.

Managing Editor Hannah Jones gained the No. 2 spot in the category of Best Arts and Entertainment Writer. Ashton Pittman was chosen the No. 8 Opinion-Editorial Writer. Travis Thornell was named No. 7 Sports Writer. Jordan Moore was the No. 8 Press Photographer and www.studentprintz.com was named the No. 8 Best College Newspaper Website.

College newspapers from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee took part in the contest.
Fifteen attend high school workshop

By Tish Butts

The School of Mass Communication and Journalism welcomed 15 high school students from across Mississippi in June 2011, to work with USM students and faculty on multimedia journalism projects during the second annual Southern Mississippi High School Journalism Workshop.

The students produced a television newsmagazine, read the news for WUSM-FM, shot photographs of events on campus, created public service announcements for DREAM of Hattiesburg, produced a newspaper and created a Web site to showcase their work.

"Over the course of the week, we divided them into groups so they get exposed to a variety of media," said Dr. Kim LeDuff, the workshop director and associate director of the School of Mass Communication and Journalism. "They rotate through television, the web, newspapers, radio and photography."

Several USM mass communication and journalism faculty, staff and students mentored the students during their week on campus. Dr. Steve Coleman led the photography and multimedia portion of the workshop. Dr. Cheryl Jenkins and The Student Printz adviser Chuck Cook oversaw print journalism. WUSM-FM station manager Justin Martin provided instruction in radio news. Facilities manager Rodney McDonald and graduate student Jarred Hollingsworth oversaw the production of the video projects.

Senior journalism students Keona Anderson and Jonathan Andrews served as the dorm counselors and provided the high school students with insight into college life.

Students practiced some public relations for the 2011 workshop, working with DREAM of Hattiesburg, a drug and alcohol prevention nonprofit organization.

The group developed the "Above the Influence" campaign through PSAs for radio, television and print "essentially saying that they were above the influence of drugs, alcohol, bullying," LeDuff said.

"One day, we had representatives from the Department of Health and from DREAM. The next day, we had a panel on diversity in Mississippi with representatives to talk about the state's Native American community and the local African American community," LeDuff said, adding the group focused on some social and economic issues in race and diversity in the state.

"Then they had them go out and actually cover camps that were happening on campus. So they enjoyed doing that. The last couple of days, they had to pull it all together," she said.

"PSAs aired on the radio station, and the ones they did for television were like commercials," LeDuff said. "They did a newscast at 5 p.m. every day on WUSM. Yolanda Cruz, now a USM freshman who attended the camp, said the workshop offered learning experiences that helped her build a body of work to support her major in news-editorial journalism.

"I’m glad I could work in all the disciplines. In case I decide to change (my major) later, I will have things to pull from my portfolio," she said.

She said of the disciplines taught during the week, she benefited from print the most. Working with USM print journalism students and faculty gave Cruz an idea of what to look for in a story, "what to include in a story, what not to include."

Jenkins showed participants the difference between writing traditional essays and writing as a journalist. "The writing style is different," she said, adding that the students were given a variety of assignments.

After all the stories were written, the group worked with Jenkins and Cook to design the newspaper, which was printed so that the campers could take them home.

For the anti-drug PSAs, each group had to complete their assignments on deadline. This was beneficial in the high school students’ getting real world experience, video instructor McDonald said.

McDonald along with other mass communication faculty and staff agree that the workshop benefitted the students by giving them experience in college campus life as well as offering them new skills to either take back to their high school student papers or to use in their future.

They also believe the workshop is a useful tool in recruiting exceptional students to USM. Three students from the 2010 and 2011 camps are current students.

Participants came from Oak Grove High School in Hattiesburg, Biloxi High School, St. Patrick Catholic High in Gulfport, Columbia High School, Vicksburg Catholic School, Newton County High School and Piney Woods School. The group impressed the faculty, LeDuff said.

“This group was just a really smart group, just really mature. They were motivated. They got things done sooner than we expected. They were just a really strong group,” she said.

Although the workshop was free for each student, costs for housing, meals and lessons were more than $500 per camper, but LeDuff said the department hopes to offer the workshop again during the summer of 2012. The Mississippi Press Association, the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund and DREAM of Hattiesburg co-sponsored the 2011 workshop.

“Our goal is to keep developing it and making it more interesting and exciting as we go along. The hope is that, if we can find more funding, then we can have more students participate. It’s a really good opportunity for students to learn about the field and to get a realistic experience of what it’s like to be on a college campus. We told them from the beginning, ‘Our expectations of you are the same as our expectations of our incoming freshmen,’” LeDuff said.
Reinventing Herself

McDonald’s to Air Force One: Tena Clark moves upward through the music business

By Justin Mitchell

University of Southern Mississippi alumnus Tena Clark is no stranger to success or fame. She has quite an extensive resume.

Clark was the producer behind Natalie Cole’s album “Still Unforgettable” that garnered two Grammy awards. She also contributed to the movie soundtracks of “Hope Floats,” “The Five Heartbeats,” “Where the Heart Is” and “My Best Friend’s Wedding.”

In the television sector, Clark wrote for hit ABC television show “Desperate Housewives” and created the “Have You Had Your Break Today” campaign for McDonald’s.

Clark founded California-based DMI Music & Media Solutions 15 years ago and currently serves as CEO and Chief Creative Officer of her company. DMI currently programs President Barack Obama’s music for Air Force Once. She has worked with countless artists such as Patti LaBelle, Aretha Franklin, Natalie Cole and Gladys Knight to name a few.

A native of Waynesboro, Clark always seemed to have a passion for music, especially drumming. Her mother said she used to beat on the crib as a toddler. She played drums in junior high and high school before coming to USM on a music scholarship.

Clark graduated from Southern Miss in 1975. In 2005, she served as the Southern Miss commencement speaker and told David Tisdale of the University Communications Office at the USM she was thrilled to speak.

“USM really offered me a chance to grow when I was a student there, and I made lifelong friends,” Clark said to Tisdale. “I just think it’s an incredible school. I hope I will be able to make a grain of salt’s difference to (the graduates) when I speak.”

Clark toured the country as a drummer with dozens of different bands, until she decided she didn’t want her children to have to tell people their mom “plays down at Joe’s Bar and Grill” for a living.

In 2008, Clark told Alana Semuels of the L.A. Times that she realized the music industry was going to change drastically because of the Internet and saw an opportunity for a different career in music, by connecting consumers to brands. “Any brand has its colors, its font, its logo, but what is their sound?” Clark said. “We help them figure out what their sound is.”

Clark was invited to attend the School of Mass Communication and Journalism’s Fall Symposium in 2011 and was inducted into USM’s Mass Communication and Journalism Hall of Fame.

Assistant Professor Paul Linden of the Mass Communication and Journalism school at Southern Miss said that Clark gave a master class to select students after she was inducted into the Hall of Fame.

“Students had to apply to be invited,” Linden said. “Tena talked for three hours to about 15 students.”

Linden, who teaches music business and audio production, said Clark gave students a positive reinforcement regarding their future careers.

“One of the main lessons she gave students was the importance of reinventing themselves and wearing several hats to negotiate their way around the music industry,” Linden said. “Students left feeling invigorated, on fire and energized about finding careers in the music business.”

Linden said many students in the entertainment industry and media production fields have attained jobs locally, regionally and nationally.

“Students have been placed in production companies and record companies as well,” he said.

Martina Lindstrom, a native of Stockholm, Sweden, graduated from the entertainment industry program at Southern Miss in May of 2012. She attended the master class that Clark spoke at in the fall of 2011.

“The most important thing Tena told us was to be persistent,” Lindstrom said. “It’s very important to be persistent without being annoying.”

Pass Christian native Tyler Allen graduated from USM in May with an entertainment industry
degree. He attended the master class Clark gave after the Fall Symposium and said he gained some knowledge about the industry from Clark.

“One thing about Tena that I took to heart was an understanding of the need to ‘evolve’ with the ebb and flow of the music industry,” Allen said. “She began her rise to fame in the industry as a session drummer and then producer.”

Allen said that Clark is an inspiration to any college graduate ready to embark on finding a suitable career in any respectable area.

“Her knack for seeing the shift in the industry and capitalizing on it is essential for any career path in any occupation,” Allen said. “You must be willing to evolve in order to succeed in life.”

Allen now works as an account coordinator at Zehnder Communications, Inc., a Louisiana-based advertising agency.

Clark currently lives in California. To learn more about her, visit her website at www.tenaclark.com. To learn more about her company, DMI music, visit the website at www.dmimusic.com.
When he was 11 years old, Diego Velasco moved thousands of miles from Buffalo, N.Y., to Caracas, Venezuela, and then immersed himself in American popular culture.

"I would go to the movies, buy music and watch a ton of television," Velasco said. "I was such a huge fan of pop culture that I always wanted to be surrounded by it."

Velasco moved to Mississippi when he was 18 and decided to attend the University of Southern Mississippi and major in film. He graduated in 1995 and was inducted into the Hall of Fame of the USM Department of Mass Communication and Journalism in the fall 2011.

Since he left Hattiesburg, Velasco has written, produced or directed numerous film and television projects in the U.S. and Venezuela. One film he wrote and directed, "Cédula Ciudadano," was considered for an Academy Award in 2000.

During his time at USM, Velasco found his passion for film. While he was a self-proclaimed academic under-achiever in high school, he excelled at Southern Miss. "I couldn't get enough of the film studies program," Velasco said. "I ended up making the Dean's List. This is coming from a guy who failed the sixth grade. I spent a lot of nights editing in Southern Hall not because of deadlines but because I wanted to be there."

Film professor Dixon McDowell taught Velasco during his time as an undergrad. McDowell said he knew Velasco would be successful because he was energetic and highly motivated. "He worked really hard," McDowell said. "Diego always had a strong sense of where he wanted to go and what he wanted to do."

Velasco now has nearly 20 years of experience in the film industry. He started at the bottom in the camera department as a loader and worked his way up to where he is today.

"It's a funny feeling to look back and see that you've been doing the same thing for over 20 years and how each film has taught me so much," Velasco said. "The ones that taught me the most were the films that didn't turn out so great."

Velasco said the key to producing a good film is putting in the right amount of effort to receive
Diego Velasco, center, with USM-MCJ film professors Phillip Gentile and Scott Dixon McDowell after his induction into the Hall of Fame.

Steve Coleman

BELOW: Velasco’s 2010 film “La Hora Cero” (“The Zero Hour”) became Venezuela’s highest-earning film of all time.

the best end result possible.

“You can’t cheat the process,” he said. “You just have to put in the time, make the mistakes, pick up the pieces and celebrate the success no matter how small it may be. It’s not an easy path to succeed, but nothing is easy if you really want to be good at it.”

Velasco began his career in New Orleans working in a camera department that made films and commercials. However, Velasco began to get bored with it and wanted to make films that represented him and his culture.

“I was intimidated that I could never make a film like ‘The Godfather’ or ‘Psycho,’” Velasco said. “But, as the years went by, I realized that I have things those directors that I admired don’t have. My culture, ideology and ideas are the things that make me who I am, and if I just look into myself I can find something that nobody else has.”

With that mindset, Velasco directed his wildly popular short film “Cédula Ciudadano” in 2000 that depicts how bureaucracy affects society. “No matter where you live in the world, bureaucracy is always affecting you,” Velasco said. “For me, this film marked my initiation into directing.”

McDowell said the film was impressive and attractive. “It was a very accomplished short film,” said McDowell. “He cast great actors and he did it right.”

From there, Velasco tried his hand at television and directed “Planeta de 6th,” the first Latin American sitcom. Velasco said the show was produced just like sitcoms in Los Angeles.

“We did two seasons of the sitcom,” he said. “I remember going to Los Angeles and visiting the studios to take notes, ask questions and apply all of the things I learned at USM all over again.”

“Planeta de 6th” may have only lasted for two seasons (2001 and 2002), but it opened the door for Velasco to direct bigger things.

Velasco then went on to direct his first feature film in 2010, “La Hora Cero” (The Zero Hour), that broke box office records in Venezuela. Set in Caracas during a 24-hour national health strike in 1996, “La Hora Cero” follows a hit man who takes control of a private hospital to save his friend, a pregnant woman who was the victim of a shooting.

“The theme of the film is that nothing is black and white but thousands of shades of gray between those two colors,” Velasco said. He prides himself on making Latin American and Venezuelan films that are heavily influenced by American popular culture.

“I find ‘The Zero Hour’ to be remarkable,” McDowell said. Velasco’s next project is an action film for Anthony Zuiker, the creator of the hit American television series “CSI.”

Velasco credits USM for his success today. “The friends that I made there with teachers and students are very dear to me,” he said. “Many people believe that big schools are better, but in my case USM was the perfect size. I received a lot of one-on-one time with my professors and always had access to all the labs, facilities and film gear that many other schools can not provide to all of their students.”

This past spring, Velasco also spoke to film students at the University of Southern Mississippi’s Gulf Coast campus about becoming a successful filmmaker.

McDowell said the advice Velasco gave students was imperative to become a success today. “Students came away with knowing that you have to take every opportunity you receive and learn from everything,” McDowell said.

McDowell said Velasco told students that the product of filmmaking will never be satisfying if you don’t enjoy the process.

Velasco attended the Fall 2011 MCJ Symposium this year, and he had several remarks for students in the Mass Communications and Journalism program. “Never give up on your dreams,” Velasco said. “If you see it, you can make it happen.”
Alumni News

1950’s

Billy Ray Quave (’57) retired from The Daily Herald (Biloxi) where he worked as a reporter and assistant city editor. Quave continues to enjoy his retirement and service to the people of Biloxi through his involvement in various civic clubs.

Kirby Darwyn Smith (’57) worked with Mississippi Power Company as a staff assistant for 30 years until he elected early retirement in June 1993. Smith still resides in Gulfport.

Charles Dawkins (’58) is living in Hattiesburg and is retired from textbook publisher Scott, Foresman & Co.

Robert (Bob) Pilcher, Sr. (’59) was regional vice president of sales and marketing for an international cologne and gift manufacturer, Rothschild, Inc. Pilcher retired from the sales industry and began working in administration and public relations for AmeriPath, an international pathology lab firm, until his retirement in 2011.

1960’s

Kathleen (Dankert) Alexander (’62) describes herself as semi-retired but is the director of corporate communication for Global Shop Solutions, a software company she and her husband, Dick, founded in 1976 in Houston that has grown into a manufacturing software provider with 127 employees. She began her career with Spiegel Catalog in Chicago where she started as a copywriter and was promoted to copy chief. The Alexanders and Global Shop Solutions have been instrumental in supporting the Montgomery County (Texas) Homeless Coalition.

Ron Meyer (’62) worked in radio and television in Mobile, Ala., before going to the seminary in 1974. He held pastorates in Louisiana, Florida, and Illinois. He served as State Evangelism Director in Illinois before returning to the pastorate and retiring in Rockford, Ill. He is frequently involved with theater at Rock Valley College in Rockford.

Sharon R. Hoiles (’63) is an attorney for Hoiles, Desinger, Hollon & Copeland, P.C. based in Robertsdale, Ala. Hoiles specializes in domestic relations.

Jerome Hartford Drane (’64) is retired and he and his wife reside in Davis, Calif. Drane has a daughter who is a cellist in New York City and a son who works in the entertainment industry in Los Angeles.

Michael Shumake (’64) worked with the U.S. Air Force as a public information officer in Charleston, S.C., until retiring in 2002. During his time as a Public Information Officer, he worked at the Charleston Naval Shipyard and Naval Base as well as the Department of Defense Finance Center. Shumake has received several honors and awards including the Air Force Commendation Medal, Chimpino Editorial Writers Award, United Way Volunteer Excellence Award in Marketing, Navy Mentoring Service Medal and the Naval Base Charleston Employee of the Year.

David R. Austin (’65) is the owner/director of Southern Celebrations DJs in Winchester, Tenn., and is a freelance writer for Pro Mobile D J Magazine.

Charlyn Maguire Bridges (’65) is a realtor specializing in older homes for Howard Hanna Real Estate Services in Canton, Ohio. Bridges has also been serving as director of the Stark County Association of Realtors since 2011, and was the RPAC chair in 2011, 2003, 2001, and co-chair in 2007. She has earned her specialist in historic homes credential and Graduate Realtor Institute designation along with other honors and awards including top producer, rookie of the year and the Quality Service Award. Before beginning her real estate career, she taught communication at Daystar University in Nairobi, Kenya, earned feature writing and cover design awards with Episcopal Communicators and was a licensed lay reader in the Episcopal Church.

Chuck Kershner (’65) and his wife Cynthia are now in their 21st year of ownership of the 166-year-old Clinton Courier Newspaper (www.clintoncourier.com) in Clinton, N.Y. On Jan. 1, Chuck Kershner effectively retired as executive editor to become emeritus editor, but still cover sports (writing and photography) and education (college and public schools) and writes editorials and an "Editor's Notebook" column for the op-ed page. He has also begun work on a memoir documenting his 52 years as a photojournalist and news executive that began in 1960 when he worked as a paid high school sports writer and photographer for a daily newspaper in Vermont. He is a member of the School of Mass Communication and Journalism Board of Advisers. Cynthia continues as publisher.

Irv Cuevas (’67) organized and moderated one of the top panel discussions at the National Association of Hispanic Journalists’ annual conference in Orlando last summer. The topic: “From the Classroom to the Newsroom.” Drawing on his more than 35 years in TV news, most at KABC-TV Los Angeles, Cuevas brought together major broadcast professionals to educate students about the transition from campus to the “real world” of TV news. He is now a freelance writer/producer and an adjunct professor teaching broadcast news courses at California State University-Fullerton. He resides in Seal Beach, Calif.

Alumni News, Continued

James H. “Hoppy” Bennett (‘68, ‘69) is a sales agent for Consouth, Inc. He and his wife, Patricia T. Bennett (‘68), reside in Hattiesburg.

Kenneth Blakey (‘69) worked in Los Angeles 35 years as director of photography on 66 feature motion pictures, second unit cinematographer on 40+ feature films and DP on three TV series. He was cinematographer on the documentary “A Day In The Life of Bonnie Consolo,” which received an Academy Award nomination. His large format landscape photography won Blue Ribbon Honors at the Ansel Adams Gallery in Monterey, Calif. He is an active member of International Photographers Guild, IATSE Local 600 in Hollywood.

Larry Hogue (‘69) was named the Paul Harris Fellow by the Greene County Rotary Club in Leakesville. The club designated $1,000 to Rotary International in his honor, and the club also received a presidential citation for Hogue’s leadership of the organization as president. A major focus of his presidency was a “Go Green Program” which encourages people to shop locally.

Perry Wayne Martin (‘69) was commissioned as 2nd lieutenant in the U.S. Army in 1969, served a tour in Vietnam as captain, and devoted seven years to the U.S. Army 101 Airborne Division before becoming a special agent with the FBI. Martin retired from the FBI in 1998, became the deputy director of Alabama in 2003, and retired from the Emergency Management Agency in March 2011. A decorated veteran, Martin was inducted into the USM Military Hall of Fame November 2011. He now resides in Pelham, Ala.

Clifton R. Topp (‘69) is general manager of Big Thicket Broadcasting, a radio station group in Rock Springs, Wyo., that serves most of southwestern Wyoming. He is the president of the Rock Springs Kiwanis club.

1970’s

Kathryn Schledwitz Lewis (‘70, ‘71) retired from Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Perkinston Campus, where she was a speech and theatre instructor/director, and also served as chair of the Fine Arts Department. Lewis received the Mississippi Humanities Council Preservation of Mississippi History Award in 2011, National Storytelling Network Oracle Award Southeast in 2010, and was also recognized as one of Mississippi's Top 10 Business Women.

George Johnson, ‘70, is a full professor at James Madison University teaching in the School of Media Arts and Design. He was the founding director of the JMU School of Media Arts and Design and stepped down in 2008 after serving as director for 14 years.

Lester R. Potter (‘70) is a senior lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication and Communication Studies at Towson University, Md. He is a candidate for a doctorate in Instructional Technology at Towson. Potter also serves as faculty adviser to the Student PR Group, comprised of PRSA and IABC student chapters. Potter is a member of Kappa Delta Pi, the invitation-only professional association for educators, The International Association of Business Communicators, the Public Relations Society of America, and the Association of Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Janie Walters (‘70, ‘71) lives in Madison and is owner and CEO of Champion Communications, serving as a motivational speaker and corporate trainer. She is the author of two books: “Blow A Bubble, Not A Gasket: 101 Ways To Reduce Stress and Add Fun To Your Life” and “Develop The Habit Of Joy: A 21-Day Devotional.”

John (Jack) S. Breyer (‘71, ‘82, ‘87, ‘04) is retired after working 28 years as director of the Matthew Maury Oceanographic Library at Stennis Space Center. Breyer received the U.S. Navy Meritorious Civil Service Award in 2011, a Civilian Service Medal in 2005 and the Naval Oceanographic Office Educational Achievement Award in 2004.

Timothy C. Burney (‘71), a published photographer and designer, is also the owner/creative director of Visual Sense Design in Atlanta, which specializes in home furnishings, product design and showroom design. Burney has designed for a variety of manufacturers including The Bradburn Gallery, Elizabeth Marshall and Ambella Home Collection. He also recently appeared as a guest designer on “Flip This House” on the A&E network. Burney’s work can be viewed at www.timothybdesigns.com.

Jill J. Easton (‘71, ‘86) was chosen president of the Southeastern Outdoor Press Association at the outdoor communicators annual conference in Branson, Mo. Easton is only the second woman to hold this position in the 48-year history of the organization. She has received many awards for writing and photography in her 25 years as a freelancer.

Michael Joseph Falcone (‘72) has received multiple fundraising awards for his work as a March of Dimes fundraiser. Falcone’s experience includes being a radio executive for WVIX radio, president of Wheels Auto Parts and marketing manager for Chief Auto Parts in Dallas, Texas. He now enjoys retirement in Pensacola, Fla.

Mike Chance (‘73) is a commercial real estate agent and property manager for Coldwell Banker in Pearland, Texas. He was named Commercial Agent of the Year in 2011.

Sandra (Sandy) May Bynum (‘74) is the director of communications and advertising for the Mississippi Division of Tourism for the State of Mississippi Development Authority. Bynum has served on the Communications Committee for U.S. Travel and the Tourism Committee for Appalachian Regional Commission. She was recognized in 2002 as one of Mississippi’s 50 Leading Business Women and selected for Who’s Who in Mississippi in 2006. Bynum has also received several awards for her work including the PRAM Grand Award, Silver Microphone Award and numerous ADDIES and Mississippi Association of Broadcasters Awards.

Steven Doyle (‘75) took over in 2008 as editor of his hometown newspaper, The Sentinel-News in Shelbyville,

Cleveland to lead Miss. Sports Hof

After 46 years as a professional writer, Clarion-Ledger sports columnist Rick Cleveland (75) became the executive director of the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame on May 1.

Cleveland started writing sports at age 13, covering prep games for the Hattiesburg American, a job he continued until his graduation from Hattiesburg High School. He started full time at the Hattiesburg American in 1970, and would until his USM graduation, earning a degree in journalism with minors in English and history. After a stint at the Morning World and News Star in Monroe, La., he started his reporting and writing career at the Clarion-Ledger in August 1979.

In his last column for the Clarion-Ledger, Cleveland wrote, “I have covered 25 Super Bowls, a dozen Masters, a couple of U.S. Opens, several Final Fours, several Major League Baseball World Series games, several College World Series, countless college football bowl games, a Pachaean execution, the aftermath of the worst hurricane in U.S. history, three or four floods and two killer tornadoes. Yes, and I have jumped out of an airplane and written about that. Once. Never again. That was the only time I ever had to change my britches before writing.”

Cleveland was awarded the Richard Wright Literary Excellence Award in 2011, an award previously given to Eudora Welty, Willie Morris, Shelby Foote and John Grisham. The award honors a body of literary work given to living writers with a strong Mississippi connection.

He says that the best advice on writing came from Robert “Ace” Cleveland, his father and longtime sports information director at USM. He said to, “Write it like you would tell it, son, just write like you’d tell it.”

Cleveland called the museum a “showcase of what Mississippi does best.” Fellow Clarion Ledger columnist Rusty Hampton said Cleveland is the perfect man to run the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame saying, “No body in Mississippi is more well-known or well-connected in athletic circles. And nobody cares more about Mississippi and its athletic past – and future – than Rick.”
Alumni News, Continued

Ky., after 27½ years in management at the Orlando Sentinel. In the last three years the The Sentinel-News has been named best in its class by the Kentucky Press Association and has won more than 100 awards in a variety of categories. His wife, Stephanie, is editor/publisher of Shelby County Life magazine.

Doyle C. Rogers (’75) is a veteran enjoying retirement in North Carolina.

Lyle Jackson (’76) began his television career as a videographer at Louisiana Public Broadcasting, then moved to Nashville in 1982, where he worked for WSMV-TV, The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center and United Methodist Communications. He is currently employed as a Media Content Producer for Vanderbilt University. Along the way, he has won dozens of national journalism awards, including the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award, the George Peabody Citation, the Telly Award, the Communicator Award, the American Psychological Association Award, the National Headliner Award, the Videographer Award, the Hermes Creative Award and awards from the American Bar Association, the National Mental Health Association and the National Press Photographers Association. Additionally, he has won 12 Emmy Awards (and 30-plus nominations) from the Midsouth Regional Emmy Awards.

Jim McCool (’76) is the director of Federal Legislative Affairs for the Southern Company in Washington, D.C. He and his wife, Kathy Berry McCool (’77, ’78) reside in Virginia.

Benjie Coats (’78) serves as the county administrator for Neshoba County. Coats and his wife, Reina, who is also a Southern Miss alum, call Philadelphia, Miss. their home.

Gracie Bonds Staples (’79) is a features writer for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution and recently received an Award of Excellence for a series of stories on Alzheimer's disease.

Stephen Coleman, Ph.D (’81, ’98, ’07) an instructor in the USM School of Mass Communication and Journalism, will showcase photographic images from the 1996 Summer Olympics and various other works during August 2012 at Oddfellows Gallery in Hattiesburg. He and his wife, Dianne Coleman (’90), reside in the Pine Belt.

Howard Lips, Jr. (’81) is a certified RIAA Gold and Multi-Platinum singer-songwriter with sales of more than 18 million copies of three songs recorded by the legendary pop group called the Platters. Lips is currently working with eight-time Grammy winner Tom Pick and Adonda Records president Harrison Tyner on the completion of his second CD, to be recorded by Adonda Records. His previous involvement with the Nashville music scene includes being a staff writer for Porter Wagoner and Dolly Parton’s Owepar Publishing Company at the height of their RCA recording career. Lips is also a United Methodist minister pastoring the New Augusta and Beaumont United Methodist Churches.

Kathleen Koch’s (’81) book, “Rising from Katrina,” which traces her Mississippi hometown’s recovery from Hurricane Katrina and her experiences covering it, won the gold medal for Best Non-fiction in the Southeast Region in the 2011 Independent Publisher Book Awards. It also received an honorary mention for Book of the Year in the regional category from ForeWord Reviews.

Judy Isbell (’83, ’93) is the director of web services at the University of Southern Mississippi Long Beach campus.

Jay Ussery (’83) is Colquitt Broadcasting’s general manager for WMTM FM & AM. In 2011, Ussery, was selected as the Community Service Man of the Year for Colquitt County, Ga.

Joe S. McClammy (’86), after returning from Afghanistan where he was employed as a broadcast editor in 2010, accepted a position as a video production specialist with the US Army Medical Education Training Campus (METC) at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. In 2011, he transferred to a similar position with the Department of Homeland Security, US Border Patrol, Del Rio Sector Headquarters Public Affairs office in Del Rio, Texas.

Michael Falgout (’86) is a freelance cameraman and producer who primarily shoots sports for ESPN and other networks. He resides in Pelham, Ala.

Randy Kwan (’87) is instructor and chairman of the Entertainment Media Technology program recently created on the Pearl campus of Hinds Community College.

Willie Craig, Jr. (’88) is the director of A Blessed Community Home Consulting Inc. in Milton, Fla.

Johnnie Odom (’89) is employed with the Richton (Miss.) School District, teaching 5th grade English and speech.

1990’s

Susan Gonzalez (’91) is a teacher in the Caddo Parish School District located in Shreveport, La.

Cindy Carter (’92), a reporter at WZTV in Nashville, recently received three MidSouth Regional EMMY nominations for best light feature news report, best feature news series and best morning newscast. Carter has received a total of eight EMMY nominations since she began working in Nashville more than six years ago. She also won the 2011 Tennessee Associated Press award for Best Long Light Feature.

Robert A. Carroll, Ph.D. (’92) is currently serving as professor and coordinator of the public relations major at York College of Pennsylvania in York, Penn.

Rebekah Ray, Ph.D. (’93, ’07) is on the faculty and serves as an editor in the Department of Communication at Mississippi State University.

Jean Robert Hunter Deuling (’94, ’95) is hoofd directeur (head director) of RopeMedia NV in Vlissingen, Zeeland, Netherlands.

Tracie G. Bertaut, APR (’94, ’96) coordinates communications and marketing activities and manages media relationships for the American Cancer Society in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Birmingham, Memphis, Nashville and Louisville. Bertaut recently co-chaired the organizing committee for a new Public Relations of Louisiana chapter in New Orleans and is currently serving as chapter president, state board president-elect, and representative on the Southern Public Relations Federation Board of Directors.

Elizabeth Barefoot Chrestain, Ph.D (’94, ’08), an assistant professor of journalism at Louisiana Tech University, has been elected to serve as vice president of Louisiana Press Women for the 2011-2013 term. She was also awarded six top spots in this year’s Louisiana Press Women Communications Contest. Christian, who published her first book in December, won first place for book edited by entrant, for “Rock Brands: Selling Sound in a Media Saturated Culture,” which was published by Lexington Publishers. Additionally, the music marketing blog Christian writes monthly for Rowman & Littlefield’s site, Lexington’s parent company, was awarded first place for blog (web content for corporate site).

Liz Harding (’94) was promoted in 2011 to associate curator at the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings, Mont. She been with the museum for eight years. She was also accepted to the American Association of Museums’ Peer Review Board for the Museum Assessment Program.

Lorenzo January (’95) is a videographer/editor for Grace Church in Woodbridge, Va.

Christa Clark Bell (’96) had a paper titled “Tragedy and Touchdowns: A Fantasy Theme Analysis of Sports Coverage of the Alabama Tornado” accepted for presentation at the Northwest Communication Association conference in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho in April.

Mike Christensen, (’96) is a copy editor for an agriculture-oriented web site, AgFax.com. He also does freelance...
Mims’ documentary film honored

Steve Mims (BA, Film Production, ’81) received the 2011 Innocence Network Journalism Award for the documentary “Incendiary: The Willingham Case,” which he co-directed.

The Innocence Network is an affiliation of organizations dedicated to providing pro bono legal and investigative services to individuals seeking to prove innocence of crimes for which they have been convicted and working to redress the causes of wrongful convictions.

The journalism award annually honors the “investigative reporter or reporters whose work best brings to life the process of identifying and exonerating wrongfully convicted individuals.” An independent panel of investigative journalists is assembled each year to review the nominees, and determine who among them best embodies excellence in investigative reporting.

“Incendiary” documents the story of Cameron Todd Willingham, whose three daughters died in a Corsicana, Texas house fire. Convicted largely on faulty arson evidence, Willingham was sentenced to death for the murder of his children. Despite overwhelming expert criticism of the prosecution’s “junk science,” he was executed in 2004. Subsequent investigations of the case landed the Willingham issue in a national spotlight made brighter and more intense by the presidential campaign of Texas governor Rick Perry. The film focuses on the science available to the criminal justice system and how its interpretation is often determined by jurisdiction, politics and personalities. Earlier in 2011, the film won the Louis Black Award at the South By Southwest Film Festival in Austin.

Mims is an Austin-based filmmaker whose award-winning films have screened widely in film festivals, theatrically and on television. He earned a Master of Arts in film production from the University of Texas at Austin and over the years has taught Film One, Film Two and Film Editing there.

Sports writing for various publications in Jackson and maintains a blog devoted to baseball in Mississippi (allmississippi.baseball.blogspot.com). He has also authored a book about Mississippians in Major League Baseball that he hopes to publish.

Jim Carlson (’96, ’98), chapter relations director for the honor society Phi Kappa Phi, is ABD at Northeastern University with an expected graduation date of December 2012.

Chandria Metevia (’97) is employed with Entergy, Inc. in Jackson as an administrative assistant III.

Scott Walker (’97) anchors the 4, 5 and 10 p.m. newscasts at WDSU-TV, the NBC affiliate in New Orleans. He joined WDSU in 2009 from WESH 2 News in Orlando.

Byron McCauley (’98) is the director of public relations for KnowledgeWorks in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Tekella Miller Foster (’98) is a producer/director for Leopard Films, USA in New York.

Jane Alvarez-Wertz (’98) is the current digital executive producer at WAVY TV 10, the NBC affiliate in Portsmouth, Va. In this role, she oversees the daily posting as well as feature content on multiple websites. While under her leadership, WAVY.com has been recognized with a regional Murrow award for Outstanding Website, a best website award from the Virginia Association of Broadcasters as well as numerous other honors.

Brian Woods (’98) recently graduated with his master’s degree from Ohio University in Communication and Development Studies. The program is a collaboration between the School of Media Arts and Studies and the Center for International Studies. Upon completing his coursework, Woods departed for the Republic of Georgia to work as an organizational communication and advocacy specialist with a Georgian NGO via the Peace Corps Response program.

Eric Langevin (’99) recently joined the board of directors of Friends of the Children-Cincinnati. Langevin currently works as an assistant division director for Hoxworth Blood Center, a part of the University of Cincinnati.

2000’s

Chanda Pitts Brandt (’00) has joined the staff of the Midwest Division of the American Cancer Society in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area in community relations. She oversees five Relay for Life events in Hennepin County.

Tracie Ray (’01) recently accepted the position of area marketing manager with Luckie & Company in Birmingham, Ala. Prior to joining Luckie & Co., she worked at Red Square Agency in Mobile, Ala. as an account executive.

Jana Bryant (’02) recently joined Georgia-Pacific as public affairs manager at the Leaf River Cellulose Mill in New Augusta, Miss. She previously spent nearly 12 years at USM in several communications roles, including manager of public relations for the College of Business, director of social media and assistant to the president for university communications.

Thomas Demenico (’02) is the current mid-day sports reporter on Sports Radio 96.7 along the Mississippi Gulf Coast and co-host/producer of the “Johnny Ballpark Franks Show.” Demenico is also the play-by-play radio announcer for Biloxi High Football and for the Mississippi Surge of the SPHL.

David Garraway (’03, ’10) was promoted to video program manager at Mississippi State University in June 2011. He provides leadership to the University Television Center and University Relations in the areas of creative services, videography, editing, general production techniques and multimedia content creation. In addition, Garraway works with numerous external clientele to produce multimedia projects and serves as a participant in various university marketing and communication groups. His work can be seen on MSU’s social media presence and on nationally broadcast television productions.

Emily Foley Hall (’04) is the graphic artist for Hattiesburg Publishing, which produces Signature Magazine, the Lamar Times, the Petal News and the Camp Shelby Reveille. She also acts as fashion director for Signature Magazine during production of the fall and spring fashion issues. In her spare time, she does freelance graphic design through her home-based company, Artiste Design.

Carla Finklea Green (’05) works for Old Dominion University as a faculty administrator and is currently attempting to break into the improv and stand-up comedy scene in Norfolk, Va.
Alumni News, Continued

Jessica Russell ('05) was named Copywriter of the Year for the Mississippi Gulf Coast Region of the American Advertising Federation at the ADDY awards in 2012. In February, Russell celebrated four years at GodwinGroup in Jackson.

Dana Elise Smith ('05) attained a distribution deal with Underground Railroad Company and URC Media Studios for her film “Cagin of Chrysaint.” It released worldwide Sept. 6, 2011. The film is distributed by Underground Railroad Company founded by critically acclaimed filmmaker, actor and director James Bond III. “Cagin of Chrysaint” is a faith based film produced entirely in Hattiesburg.

Lindsey Mayhall Binion ('06) was promoted to art director at Maris, West & Baker, a Jackson agency, in July 2011. Previously the traffic manager at MWB, she now concepts and oversees the artistic design of advertisements and print materials, as well as the filming of television commercials for various clients.

Jessica Bueto Breazeale ('06, '09) was promoted to tobacco prevention director of Family Links, Inc. in January, where she is able to use her public relations background to promote the Smoke-Free Alabama initiative in an effort to reduce tobacco use and exposure and create smoke-free policies. Breazeale recently accepted another position as the grassroots manager for North Alabama with The Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Alabama.

Samantha McCain ('06, '09) joined the Corporate Planning and Development department at Hattiesburg Clinic as the advertising and design manager in April, 2012. McCain and four other Mass Communication and Journalism alumni also launched a virtual freelance communications firm, Three to Five Creative Communications, in 2011. Partners include McCain, Samantha Yeager Kinard ('09, '12), Amber Ross Hartfield ('09), Lisa Parker ('09, '10) and Leyla Goodsell (' 95). More information can be found at www.threetofivecc.com.

Amber Narro, Ph.D. ('06) is employed with Southeastern Louisiana University as an assistant professor and is working to launch a successful student media website for students to post and share their work. The startup site is located at southeasternreupereporter.com.

Shawn Walker ('06) creative director and co-owner of HERO/Farm along with his business partner, Reid Stone, was selected as the 2011 Business of the Year by the International Association of Business Communicators, New Orleans Chapter and named in YFS Magazine’s Top 20 Young Entrepreneurs of 2011, a list featuring the 20 most popular success stories of the year as chosen by their readers and staff. Recently, Walker and Reid were selected as 2012 Spotlight on Success honorees by the March of Dimes, New Orleans Chapter.

Ethan Bratton ('07) was named Hong Kong bureau chief and news desk manager for SNL Financial in March. In his new role, Bratton is responsible for organizing the launch of SNL's news coverage of Asian financial institutions.

Jessica Klein ('07) is the camp and children's director for the Jewish Community Center in Metairie, La.

Katie Miller Ward ('07) opened her own bridal store in downtown Fairhope, Ala. Ward lives in Fairhope with her husband, Bill, and their two dogs.

Cathy Jo Burks ('08), creator and producer of “Ed Said” at Mississippi Public Broadcasting, received a second Parents’ Choice Recommended Award from the Parents’ Choice Foundation for Ed and his web-based series. Ed is a rapping and rhyming puppet who teaches children about healthy eating habits.

Trea’mone Hicks ('08) joined WDAM-TV in May 2010 as a camera operator and in January 2011 was promoted to full-time technical director.

Lindsey Kirk ('08) is vice president of public relations with Magnolia Physical Therapy in Harahan, La.

Christy Lofton ('08) is the marketing specialist for Career Services at USM. Lofton is responsible for developing marketing strategies to inform and educate students on the various services provided by Career Services and promote the annual Career Fair held at Southern Miss. She also serves as the liaison to student activities and the School of Mass Communication and Journalism, develops the annual career guide and oversees the ambassadors program.

Tearanny Street ('08, '09) has served as a copywriter for the Georgia Tech University Library since June of 2011. She is the sole copywriter for library publications, publicity items and social media. Prior to June 2011, Street served as PR and recruiting manager for the College of Arts and Letters at Southern Miss.

Andrew Geswein ('09), after spending two years as a marketing producer at KAIT-Jonesboro, relocated to the Little Rock market in November to serve as the primary commercial producer/editor for Fox16-Little Rock. In this role he produces commercials for local businesses seeking to advertise on Fox16 and throughout the state of Arkansas.

Lisa Parker ('09, '10) accepted a position in July 2011 at Mississippi Public Broadcasting as the communications coordinator for education.

Carmelita J. Hanshaw Scott ('09), program officer for Hope Enterprise Corporation, received the Hope Mission and Service Award for five years of dedicated service to the company.

Michael Williams ('09) works regionally as a 1st AC, camera operator and director of photography. Williams just celebrated the two-year anniversary of his video and photography production company, Shedopen Productions, located in West Point, Miss. His latest short film “Illumination” is currently running on the independent film circuit, and he was named Best Director at the Magnolia Film Festival.

2010’s

Deborah Jae Alexander, Ph.D. ('10) is teaching at the University of Phoenix-Louisville ground campus.

Andy Hess ('10) is a board operator for Sirius XM Satellite Radio in Washington, D.C.

Ali Holston ('10) is executive producer for the morning news show on the Fox television affiliate in Jackson.

Kate Hunte ('10) became in May 2011 a member of the Global Issues Team at the public relations firm, Finn Partners, a company of the Ruder Finn Group located in New York City. As an associate there, Hunte serves several clients focused on the nationwide prevention of domestic violence, teen dating abuse and sexual assault. Her successes include securing media placements in top-tier outlets including The New York Times, New York Daily News and the Wall Street Journal.

Sophie McNeil ('10) was promoted from marketing coordinator to marketing manager of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau. McNeil also received the Association of Alternative Weeklies’ 2011 AltWeekly Public Service Award for her domestic violence coverage in the Jackson Free Press.

Scott Thornburg ('10) is the PR coordinator for the Red Square Agency in Mobile.

Ashley Tubertini ('10) accepted a position after graduation as an advertising account executive for WTVA/WLOV/WKDH in Tupelo.

Thomas Broadus ('11) accepted a position as director of interactive with The Focus Group in Gulfport, Miss. Broadus devises online marketing and promotional plans for websites, brand and products. In 2011 he was part of a South By Southwest Interactive panel that examined public media and he is currently the 2012 chairman of the PBS Interactive Station Advisory Council.

Fernando Bueno Da Silva ('11) works as an account executive for AdvVantage Advertising & Promotions, a small firm in Gainesville, Fla.

Kelsey Jones ('11) accepted a job with Sanderson Farms, Inc. in Laurel, Miss as their recruiting coordinator.


Ila Higginbotham Stuart ('11) and her husband relocated to Fort Hood, Texas and she is a graphic designer for the Fort Hood Sentinel.
Offering a uniquely historic setting, consider the Ogletree House for your next event.

Members of the Southern Miss Alumni Association are eligible for a 50% discount off the rental rate.

To inquire about rates and availability, contact Dawn Smith. 601.266.5013 | Dawn.Smith@usm.edu
Renovation work on College Hall moving forward

The $6.3 million renovation of College Hall at The University of Southern Mississippi is well under way, with university officials eagerly anticipating the project bringing the nearly century-old building back to its original grandeur. The historic structure will be home to the School of Mass Communication and Journalism once work is completed, likely by the fall of 2013.

The renovation, which is a State Bureau of Buildings project, is being funded with state bond monies. Construction/renovation work is being done by Yates Construction, with design by Dale and Associates architectural firm. Access to the building is restricted while renovation work takes place.

“We’re excited about this move, especially the opportunity to have all of our operations under one roof and to see this grand old building, which holds dear memories for so many of the university’s alumni, revitalized,” Dr. Chris Campbell, director of the School of Mass Communication and Journalism, said.

College Hall is one of the five original buildings at the university’s Hattiesburg campus, along with Forrest County Hall, Hattiesburg Hall, the president’s home (now the Ogletree Alumni House) and the industrial cottage for women. It was built at a cost of $150,000 and opened in 1913. In its early days, College Hall was home to then Mississippi Normal College’s academic departments, library, classrooms, faculty offices and the president’s office, along with an auditorium located on the third floor.

After the building’s renovations have concluded it will house classrooms and offices on the first floor; classrooms, offices, a digital photo laboratory, photo studio and two computer labs on the second floor and the Student Media Center, which will include The Student Printz newspaper; radio station WUSM-FM; The Agency at Southern Miss; and South City Records on the third floor.

The School of Mass Communication and Journalism currently shares Southern Hall with the Department of Mathematics and has video production facilities in McCain Library and McLemore Hall.

“I’m looking forward to seeing the historical integrity of the building restored,” Dr. Chris Crenshaw, director of the Southern Miss Physical Plant, said. “College Hall is one of the university’s original buildings and we’re excited to bring improvements that will ensure another 100 years of service.”