



HOUSTON  
**history**

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**Innovative  
Thinkers in  
the Arts,  
Education  
& Politics**



Center for Public History  
College of Liberal Arts  
and Social Sciences

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR – Innovative Thinkers in the Arts, Education, & Politics



Debbie Z. Harwell, editor.

**D**o you ever wonder when you see a new product, “Why didn’t I think of that?” (Sometimes followed by, “I’d be rich!”).

A Google search for the question, “how do we get ideas?” returned 4.4 billion responses. (That’s billion with a “B”!). So, I did what most of us do and focused on the first page of results. Many were blogs on positive life choices, but one entry written for *Scientific*

*American* in 2018 caught my eye. In it, Dr. Abraham Loeb, the Frank B. Baird, Jr. Professor of Science at Harvard University, posed and answered a similar question, “How could we cultivate an environment that nourishes ideas? The recipe starts with creating a culture that encourages informal questioning and inquiry, tolerates mistakes and promotes innovation.”

As we worked on the 100 Years of Stories: Documenting a Century at the University of Houston (UH) project, we came across hundreds of innovative thinkers among our alumni, faculty, and administrators who found that environment at UH. They thrive in a culture where they can freely explore and discuss questions in their disciplines and across disciplines to find intersections between them because no area of study operates in a vacuum. In those free-flowing conversations, questions are posed and new theories tested. Loeb’s mention of the need to tolerate mistakes is also key. Unshackled from the fear of failure, people explore ideas that may seem impossible at first but, instead, become the next great discovery.

Our goal with 100 Years of Stories is to bring to light the under-told stories of innovative thinkers who have made a difference in our community and beyond the Houston city limits. Many of those people may be well-known in their fields but less so to the public at large.

John Lienhard’s program *Engines of Our Ingenuity* on KUHF, Houston Public Media, has always fascinated me. Covering centuries of history, over 3,000 episodes explore the things innovative thinkers have conceived to advance the arts, education, science, engineering, medicine, philosophical thought, and more. Some of these programs explore work by people considered the greatest minds of all time, while other installments highlight extraordinary ideas from those we think of as regular people.

Marguerite Ross Barnett, who served as University of Houston president from 1990 to 1992, brought an innovative approach to her administrative role through community

involvement. She created networks with business and community leaders, as well as connections between the university and public schools, that set UH on a course to begin earning its reputation as a research university that was in keeping with the level of work being done there.

As a young boy growing up in New York, Nicolás Kanellos realized he could not find books that portrayed Latinos and Latino culture, even though they were widely available when he visited family in Puerto Rico. That sparked an idea that led to the founding of Arte Público Press, the nation’s oldest and largest publisher of Latino-oriented books, and more recent efforts to recover and digitize Spanish-language published materials.

The article on self-described political junkies Katy Caldwell and Nancy Sims demonstrates how their friendship created the safe space for them to freely explore their passions for politics and caring for others during the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. They made their marks working in political campaigns, serving in office or on the staff of elected officials, teaching, and in health care. Their time at UH and their friendship created the culture for their innovative thinking to flourish.

The Art Guys, Michael Galbreath and Jack Massing, brought innovative concepts to their art, including pieces that they wore, such as *SUITS: The Clothes Make the Man*. However, their campus installation, *The Statue of Four Lies*, challenges viewers to think creatively about the meaning of the piece, its codex, and the many ways they can interact with the statue.

Other articles also detail the approach of innovative thinkers. The “From the Archives” article explores the push by students to desegregate the UH campus and the administrators who, at times reluctantly, oversaw that transition. The Charity Guild of Catholic Women formed in 1922 to reduce the high infant mortality rates in Houston’s Mexican community. Starting out with fifty-nine women who each donated a dollar, they have taken that seed and grown into an organization that awarded \$7 million dollars to charities for children over the last twenty-five years. Following the flooding from Tropical Storm Allison, those impacted within the Greens Bayou watershed formed alliances that led to creation of the nonprofit Greens Bayou Coalition. Today it works to improve the quality of life through flood mitigation, economic development, and new parks, trails, and greenspace.

One of our goals at the Center for Public History and *Houston History* magazine is to train students who will be the next generation of innovative thinkers so they too can make a difference in their communities. The 100 Years of Stories project, supported by the gift from Carey C. Shuart, has set our students on that path by giving them unique opportunities to meet and be inspired by the history makers they have written about here. **■**

# HOUSTON history

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VOLUME 20 • NUMBER 1 • FALL 2022

## Innovative Thinkers in the Arts, Education, & Politics

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**Cover photo:** *The Albertus Magnus statue by German artist Gerhard Marcks has stood outside the University of Houston College of Law since 1971. Albertus Magnus (c. 1200-1280) was a noted philosopher, teacher, and prolific writer of his day, credited with establishing the study of nature as a form of science. He was canonized by the Catholic Church in 1931 as the patron saint of*

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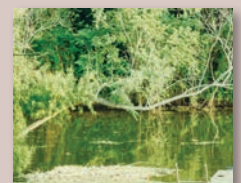
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*John Lienhard records an episode of Engines of Our Ingenuity. He provides new presenters a document with twenty practices for research, writing, and presentation on the radio, including word choice, speech habits, and staying within the three-minute time limit.*

*Photo courtesy of the University of Houston Cullen College of Engineering.*

# John Lienhard

## *An Engine of Our Ingenuity*

*By Cameron Thompson*

**O**ne cold October night in Minnesota, a boy and his father sat by their radio, like they always did, listening to the “grownup [sic] stuff” that aired in the evenings. At 7:00 p.m., listeners caught the start of the night’s production. The boy and his father, however, tuned in a few moments later – just in time to hear that a meteor had crashed in New Jersey, and something had come crawling out!<sup>1</sup>

Along with millions of Americans, the young John Lienhard listened to Orson Welles and his team as they “reported” on the fictional alien invasion on October 30, 1938. Lienhard recounted how that broadcast, a production of *The War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells, “stretched our minds ... and let our imaginations fill in the details.”<sup>2</sup> Listeners

tried to make sense of the “report,” some even mistaking the fictional event for fact.

Lienhard later realized how influential a single piece of technology could be. It was a testament to human ingenuity that a story on the radio could send some listeners into a panic because they missed the warning at the top of the hour; people who heard the broadcast still remember that day nine decades later.<sup>3</sup>

At the University of Houston, hundreds of important technological, scientific, and historical developments have a voice in Dr. John Lienhard. For over thirty-five years, he has combined his phenomenal storytelling ability with decades of academic research to bring over three thousand



Orson Welles, upper left, and the CBS Radio crew prepare for their infamous *The War of the Worlds* broadcast on October 30, 1938.

Photo by Acme Telephoto now in public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

stories of the *Engines of Our Ingenuity* to life. His passion for technology has inspired generations of listeners, made up of professionals, students, commuters, and more, to tune in to hear the next installment.

### The Man Behind the Microphone

John H. Lienhard was born August 17, 1930, in St. Paul, Minnesota, and moved with his family to Roseburg, Oregon, at age fifteen. Graduating a year later, John did not expect to become a teacher or a radio host; instead, he bounced between jobs, from dishwashing to surveying roads. Growing up in a town where “most of the kids [would] get a job in a lumber mill” after graduation, he could have pursued a similar career but did not.<sup>4</sup>

With a keen eye for draftsmanship – drawing up blueprints – Lienhard decided to study engineering. He worked his way through college, earning a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from Oregon State University in 1951. From there, Lienhard’s career path took many turns.



John Lienhard played Rackstraw in a production of *H.M.S. Pinafore* by Gilbert & Sullivan. Though much of his career and life is centered on engineering and history, John Lienhard has always loved the arts.

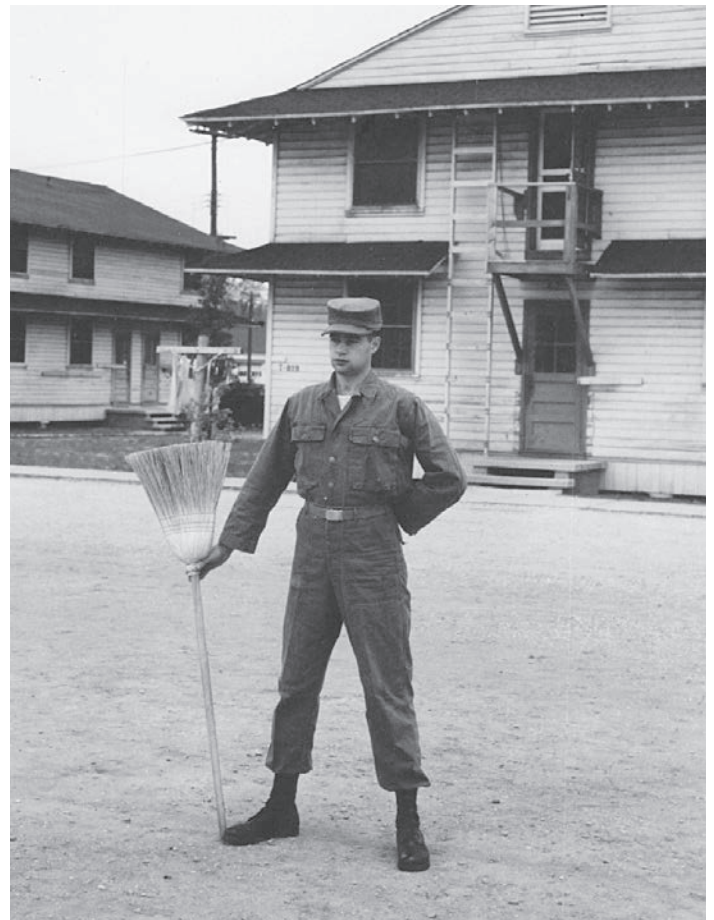
Photo courtesy of John Lienhard.

In 1952, he joined Boeing where he worked in the company’s “educational unit.” There, in his first classroom teaching experience, he instructed newer draftsmen. By the end of the following year, Lienhard left Boeing and completed a master’s degree in mechanical engineering at the University of Washington (UW).<sup>5</sup>

Fresh out of graduate school, Lienhard was drafted by the Army where he worked in the Signal Corps Engineering Labs. Throughout all of this, it became increasingly clear to Lienhard that he wanted to teach at the college level, and he soon returned to teaching. After moving from UW to the University of California, Berkeley where he got his Ph.D. in engineering, Lienhard found teaching positions at Washington State University followed by the University of Kentucky. He had become a distinguished professor with decades of experience when the University of Houston (UH) offered him a position at its College of Engineering in 1980.<sup>6</sup>

### “The Way Inventive Minds Work”<sup>7</sup>

After thirty years of classroom teaching, laboratory research, and lecturing for industry and engineering organizations, Lienhard recognized two intertwined problems were emerging between science and the public’s understanding of it: engagement and literacy. The lack of scientific literacy, created in part by the jargon and dry language of



John Lienhard standing at parade rest during his tenure in the Army Signal Corps Engineering Lab.

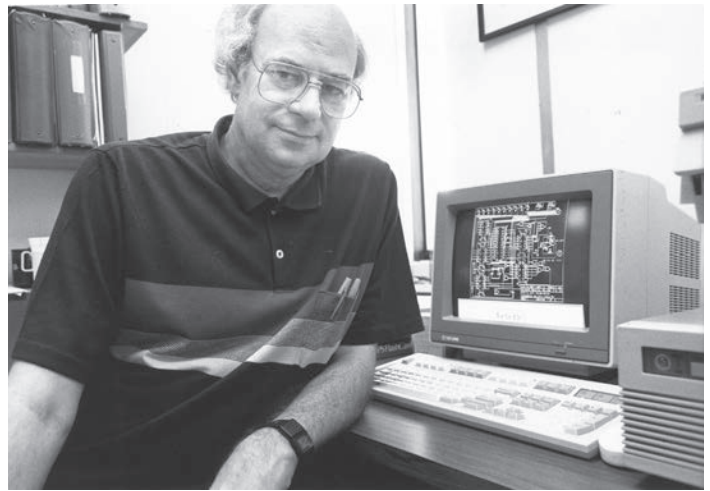
Photo courtesy of John Lienhard.

scientific writing, dissuaded public engagement in science. Furthermore, the lack of public engagement meant that scientific authors had no incentive to change their writing style. Therefore, over the course of the twentieth century, more and more people failed to hear what scientists had to say. Lienhard argued that if scientists wanted to renew public engagement, they “[had] to tell the lay public that engineering, science, and math are the work of human beings.”<sup>8</sup>

Lienhard, a professional scientist and college lecturer, summed up the problem in how each group responds to what it does not understand. The professional reader, “hungry for a well-told account of what we’re doing,” can dig into archives and journals for answers; likewise, the student in the lecture hall can raise their hand and ask for more details. But the public “simply switches channels” or walks away. As Lienhard understood it, scientific professionals had reacted incorrectly by turning inward and looking down on the public audience, a practice he called “peculiar mischief born of the noblest intentions.”<sup>9</sup> They packed their journals with jargon-filled language and passive voice, so detached from everyday language that the “facts [became] untouched by human hands.” At the same time, they wondered why the public tuned them out.<sup>10</sup>

In the summer of 1987, Lienhard created a radio program. He thought The University of Texas McDonald Observatory’s *StarDate* oversimplified the information and had a style that was too detached. As an educator, Lienhard had spent years creating and delivering lectures that combined knowledge in the field with respect for the audience and their intelligence. His program would make technology and science “a source of absolute wonder and delight” once again.<sup>11</sup>

Lienhard understood that “people wanted to hear about technology from inside a technologist’s head,” and he had an influential ally in John Proffitt, the director of KUHF, Houston’s public radio station headquartered on the UH campus.<sup>12</sup> Proffitt, whom Lienhard knew from church choir, encouraged him to make the show the way he wanted to make it. If Lienhard filled the station’s daily program slot, Proffitt would broadcast it.



Lienhard, seated in his office, examines a diagram on his computer.  
Photo courtesy of Digital Collections, University of Houston Libraries,  
ark:/84475/do269674768.

That fall was “hell on wheels” for Lienhard, given the sheer volume of work required. After three months, he emerged with sixty-five episodes, each roughly three minutes long, and the program’s musical theme composed by his son Andrew. On January 4, 1988, the first episode of the *Engines of Our Ingenuity* aired on KUHF, and to the surprise of “all the naysayers,” the program was a success. By March 1, KUHF submitted it to the National Public Radio (NPR) distribution system, offering it to any of its member stations around the United States. Lienhard and the collaborative collective behind *Engines* continued to produce engaging stories of technology about – as his tagline says – “the machines that make our civilization run, and the people whose ingenuity created them.”<sup>13</sup>

*Engines of Our Ingenuity*, like the machines from its stories, emerged from the circumstances of the era. The radio of the 1980s lacked the magic he remembered from his childhood when Orson Welles could incite a frenzy of imagination with a single broadcast. Modern audiences looking for that kind of magic went to the movie theaters. Fictional films such as *Star Wars*, released in 1977, did for contemporary audiences what *The War of the Worlds* had done for children of the 1930s. As for nonfiction, the televised evening news with Walter Cronkite eclipsed radio reporting on the national scale. Lienhard wanted to recreate the magic with his program, but in a new era “with a different public ... [and] a different sense of language,” but he knew he could not.<sup>14</sup> His target audience ranged from ages thirty to fifty, mostly academics and professionals, some of whom listened to the program with their children on their way to school. *Engines* served to bring technical knowledge to a wider audience and to recreate the magic for new generations.



Lienhard shows two UH students a laboratory experiment.  
Photo courtesy of the Digital Collections, University of Houston Libraries,  
ark:/84475/d01979h5046.

In some ways *Engines* has always been a family affair. John, left, was aided by his wife, Carol, third from right, who helped with editing, and his son Andrew, far right, who composed the theme song.

Photo courtesy of John Lienhard.



## “The People Whose Ingenuity Created Them”<sup>15</sup>

When writing episodes, Lienhard reminds himself of his goal to bring technical knowledge to his audience, but the task is not a solitary endeavor. Even in the early days, he sent his scripts through multiple rounds of editing. His wife, Carol, always took the first look, followed by his UH colleagues. After more than three thousand episodes, Lienhard knows his own expectations and those of the listeners. While production is always a collaborative effort, “you know that the voice you’re hearing” bears the responsibility, and the listeners will comment if an episode is not up to their standards.<sup>16</sup>

Those rigorous standards of *Engines of Our Ingenuity* extend beyond those set by Lienhard. He described the behind-the-scenes work on *Engines* as a “leaderless collective,” one in which each contributor writes and records their own episodes, but the success of the show depends on the group working together.<sup>17</sup> Of the total catalog of *Engines*

episodes, Lienhard estimates that he wrote around 2,500 of them, but numerous guest contributors have written and recorded their own episodes during the last twenty years. Guest contributors maintain the show’s variety in topic selection and the voices listeners hear.

Every guest presenter brings their unique perspectives and expertise to the show. Some are fellow scholars like Dr. Andrew Boyd, the show’s most credited guest presenter. Still others make guest appearances from across the nation and around the world to discuss topics in their field, including one special episode, no. 2693, that featured Dr. Michael Barratt from the Space Shuttle *Discovery* in orbit.<sup>18</sup> Regardless of who is presenting, *Engines* remains the same show at its core, whether the listeners hear a voice for the thousandth time or the first.



Andrew Boyd, left, is a frequent guest contributor to *Engines*, while Paul Pendergraft, right, worked at KUHF for over twenty years, including as the senior producer on *Engines*.

Photo courtesy of *Engines of Our Ingenuity*.

## The Engines of Tomorrow’s Ingenuity

For a show about the history and culture of technology, the emerging technologies over the past four decades presented significant challenges and opportunities for the *Engines* group. Lienhard intended the show to bring scientific knowledge and literacy back to the public, and *Engines* has succeeded at that goal. But I had to ask Lienhard where *Engines of Our Ingenuity* fits in the age of the internet.<sup>19</sup>

The internet, Lienhard contends, serves the same purpose as *Engines*: bringing knowledge to the public. Just as *Engines* overcame the barriers to scientific knowledge created by jargon and journals in 1988, so did the internet by the turn of the twenty-first century. The internet is “today’s cocktail party ... a mixed and stirred world, where science and the humanities are forced to engage one another,” he explained.<sup>20</sup> Not only does the internet bridge the language gap, which *Engines* sought to remedy, but the technology also exponentially increases the speed of communication, connection, and transaction.



*Mark DiClaudio, production engineer for Engines of Our Ingenuity and other Houston Public Media programs, helps connect the station's content to younger generations with podcast feeds.*

*Photo courtesy of Engines of Our Ingenuity.*

Houston Public Media (HPM) and Lienhard have now adapted *Engines* to the age of the internet, while retaining the fundamental style of the show. Lienhard has personally maintained a program website since 1997, a critical step in adapting to the digital era. Twenty years later, when HPM began releasing its programming as podcasts, Mark DiClaudio, the current production manager for the show at HPM, added *Engines of Our Ingenuity* to the network's early podcast lineup. In a way, podcasts are where the radio and the internet collide. The two media compete for the same audience, but podcasts hold a significant advantage. Listeners can download and play podcast episodes at any time, rather than waiting for the exact airtime of a radio program. Of Americans ages twelve and older, 83 percent listened to the radio on a weekly basis in 2020, while only 41 percent listened to podcasts. Although general radio audiences remain high, podcast audiences are steadily growing, and radio audiences are shrinking, albeit at a slower pace.<sup>21</sup> But thanks to the efforts of the *Engines* collective, the show now reaches both audiences.

Today, the program faces the same challenges it always has in finding a way to capture the magic. Advances in technology, particularly the internet, mean that everyone is connected to each other and to vast quantities of

information; but that hardly means *Engines* is running out of material. With all the “black boxes” in the modern world – pieces of technology which, while important, are not well understood by the public at large – the story-telling nature of *Engines* remains relevant.<sup>22</sup> Plus, newer technology means there will always be more stories to tell.

John Lienhard has informed audiences around the nation about “the machines that make our civilization run, and the people whose ingenuity created them” for over half a century and counting. From his early lectures to the program they inspired, the storyteller from Minnesota has brought humanity back into science and science to humanity.<sup>23</sup> Public understanding of science and its history would not be the same without the inventive mind of Lienhard, who, like the technologies featured in his program, is an engine of our ingenuity. **HH**

**Cameron Thompson** is a student at the University of Houston, where he studies history and political science. He served as an intern on the 100 Years of Stories: Documenting a Century at the University of Houston project in the Center for Public History and for *Houston History* magazine.



*Here Lienhard demonstrates a theremin, a musical instrument that is played not by touching but by moving one's hands to interrupt the magnetic fields to control its volume and pitch. The theremin is discussed in episodes 1818 and 3070 by Andrew Boyd.*

*Photo courtesy N99ag9 and Wikimedia Commons.*

To access all the *Engines of Our Ingenuity* episodes, visit <https://uh.edu/engines/>.



*The Board of Regents unanimously chose Marguerite Ross Barnett as president of the University of Houston in 1990, making her the first Black and first female president of the institution. Barnett avoided discussion of her identity; instead, she focused on the community surrounding UH, and the development of the university as a premier research institution.*

Photo courtesy of Digital Collections, University of Houston Libraries, ark:/84475/do7269m546b.



# The Legacy of MARGUERITE ROSS BARNETT: A Modern Vanguard in Education

*By Megan R. Dagnall*

**T**hree decades ago, in 1990, Marguerite Ross Barnett became the first woman and first Black president of the University of Houston (UH) and of any predominantly white American research university. Her stellar reputation in academia prompted many inquiries about how it felt to be a trailblazer. Determined to be acknowledged by her competence and not her identity, on one occasion, Barnett deflected questions about her race and gender by turning to her assistant, Wendy E. Adair, and asking, “Well, how does it feel to be the first red-haired associate vice president of the university?”<sup>1</sup>

Through her eloquent guidance and decisive leadership, Barnett consistently articulated her values of excellence at all levels by promoting diversification and partnerships, and elevating the University of Houston to a premier urban research institution. In her brief term, she significantly impacted the Houston community by establishing dynamic

programs, spearheading a successful fundraising campaign at UH, touching the lives of students and colleagues, and exemplifying a model for empowerment.

Marguerite Ross was born on May 22, 1942, to Dewey and Mary Ross in Charlottesville, Virginia. She grew up in Buffalo, New York, and graduated from Bennett High School in 1959. She entered Antioch College with the intent of becoming a scientist. However, her fascination with India’s modern political history altered her career path, and she developed a passion for political science. Receiving her bachelor’s in political science from Antioch College in 1964, she proceeded to earn a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1972. While at the University of Chicago, she married Stephen A. Barnett, and the couple had one daughter.<sup>2</sup>

Before coming to the University of Houston, Dr. Barnett established herself as an esteemed professor. She lectured at

*Marguerite Ross, shown here during her freshman year, pursued her bachelor's degree in political science at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio.*

Photo by Axel Bahnsen courtesy of *Antiochiana*, Antioch College.



the University of Chicago and subsequently taught political science at Princeton University. She chaired Howard University's Political Science Department for three years before transitioning to Columbia University. In 1980, the City of New York appointed Dr. Barnett as the professor of political science and vice-chancellor for academic affairs. From 1986 to 1990, she served as chancellor of the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL), where the community regarded her so highly that when she moved to Houston, UMSL sent furniture to outfit her whole house, even though she was heading to another school.<sup>3</sup>

In 1990, during the search for a new president, the University of Houston's presidential search committee selected Dr. Barnett and two other finalists for the position. The other candidates dropped out of the hiring process, however, because they "assumed she would win," according to Joe Pratt, a member of the search committee and former Cullen Distinguished Professor of History and Business (1986-2016). With only Barnett in the running, the Board of Regents in charge of confirming the president asked the committee to provide them with multiple presidential candidates. One of the alumni representatives argued that Houston was not ready for a Black woman president. In response, Pratt and the committee members affirmed that

UH was ready to take that step forward, and that Barnett was the most qualified person for the position. In the spring of 1990, the Board of Regents unanimously voted to hire Marguerite Ross Barnett as the eighth president of the University of Houston. Pratt described her as a "double first in the whole region" as the first Black and the first woman president of UH and any other major American university that was not a historically Black college or university.<sup>4</sup>

Despite Dr. Barnett's extensive credentials and the overarching support from students, faculty, and alumni, not everyone was pleased with her appointment as president of the University of Houston. According to Dr. Elwyn Lee, who was vice president of student affairs at the time, some of his colleagues disapproved of a woman president, and one colleague told him in confidence that he did not want to "report to a skirt." Lee worked closely with Dr. Barnett and recalled, "I'd often think, what was the biggest concern, her being Black or her being, female? And interesting enough I think the female part was pretty big among those who had problems [with her appointment]." He added that if Barnett found out people had issues with her being a woman or a person of color, "they would not be there long."<sup>5</sup>

President Barnett refocused the attention from her race and gender to her achievements and goals for the school. When asked about breaking new ground during her first session with top administrators, she shifted the attention to her qualifications by saying, "I come with a background having taught at the University of Chicago, at Princeton University, at Columbia University, so I come with a background that is certainly relevant to an institution that wants to become a world class research institution ... that involves increasing our sponsored research [and] supporting scholarship on campus."<sup>6</sup>

President Barnett came to Houston with the vision of elevating UH to a premier urban research and teaching university. On her first day on campus, she visited the Space Vacuum Epitaxy Center and remarked, "We want to support research ... to maintain the high quality of our instructional programs and to continue our strong reputation for service to the Houston community and to the state of Texas." To fund future research, Barnett undertook a fundraising campaign that raised more than



*Marguerite Ross Barnett had broad academic leadership experience and steered UH through an era of progress.*

Photo courtesy of Digital Collections, University of Houston Libraries, [ark:/84475/d09351hm34q](https://ark:/84475/d09351hm34q).



*Physicists Dr. Paul C. W. Chu and Li Gouding meet with Dr. Barnett, who was intent on raising UH's status as a premier research institution. To carry out her vision for UH, she prioritized raising and allocating funds for academics.*

Photo courtesy of Digital Collections, University of Houston Libraries, ark:/84475/do87375w94q.

\$150 million for the institution. Alumni John and Rebecca Moores donated \$51.4 million, which at the time was the largest grant made to an American public university. John Moores originally intended to dedicate the grant primarily to constructing new athletic buildings but increased the endowment so President Barnett could allocate funds to academics.<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Barnett's national academic profile brought positive attention to the University of Houston. Dr. Lee described his colleague as a strong executive who knew what she wanted to accomplish, saying, "She had high standards ... and great connections across the country." For example, one of her goals for UH was to acquire a Phi Beta Kappa chapter, representing the nation's oldest and most prestigious academic honor society. When a committee came to evaluate UH on the honor society's criteria, one of the committee members told Lee that President Barnett's respected reputation was the only reason the committee considered UH.<sup>8</sup>

Another one of Dr. Barnett's goals for the university was diversifying faculty to make the campus more welcoming to students of color. Shortly after her arrival, she increased the number of scholarships provided to them and added ten new faculty members of color, a 34 percent increase.<sup>9</sup>

During Barnett's brief yet groundbreaking term, she spearheaded significant strides in community outreach and partnerships. In an open letter to the Houston community, Barnett proclaimed that, "as

an urban institution, the pulse of the university is very much the pulse of the city." Because of Barnett's dedication to fostering cooperation in the Houston area, she enacted several programs to connect faculty, students, and the community. Barnett created the "President's Report to the Community" to highlight UH's accomplishments and stature locally and internationally. The local support Dr. Barnett enjoyed was evident when she delivered her first report to the community, an event that attracted a crowd of 800 people and an additional 200 people who were turned away due to lack of space.<sup>10</sup>

President Barnett implemented the Friends of the University of Houston to further the cordial partnership between the university and the campus community by establishing a network between them. The University Relations department printed the UH Friends publication bi-monthly to update calendar events and developments within the committee.

UH Friends included information on each college's impact on the university, community, and fields of research.<sup>11</sup>

To further promote collaboration between business, education, and community leaders, Barnett established the Texas Center for University-School Partnership (TCUSP), which thirty-seven Texas institutions joined. Through the TCUSP based at UH, Texas higher education institutions took a holistic approach to bridge the gap between grade schools and universities by working closely with school districts. The partnership provided college tutors to students who failed state-required tests and went beyond the classroom by giving back to the community.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, President Barnett enacted the Bridge Program, that encouraged high school students to increase their science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) abilities by completing four years of math and science in high school



*Marguerite Ross Barnett had a close working relationship with the vice president of student affairs, Dr. Elwyn Lee. He vividly remembers her brief tenure and the respect that she garnered at the university and in the Houston community.*

Photo courtesy of Digital Collections, University of Houston Libraries, ark:/84475/dog95569585w.

and participating in activities at the University of Houston, NASA, and local industries.<sup>13</sup>

Barnett also understood the need to protect Houston communities' quality of life in other aspects. At the 1990 Autumn Convocation she stated, "Houston is especially vulnerable to environmental problems due to our strong programs for research, energy, and chemical engineering. We need to develop equally strong programs in environmental assessment." The Texas Center for Environmental Studies she established used leadership from history, law, engineering, and political science to emphasize the importance of environmental issues.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to Barnett's administrative feats, she is the author of over forty articles and the editor or author of five books. In 1981, Barnett's book titled *Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India* won the American Political Science Association's award for the best work on ethnic and cultural pluralism. Barnett received numerous other awards throughout her academic career, including the Bethune-Tubman-Truth Woman of the Year Award in 1983 and the Association of Black Women in Higher Education Award for Educational Excellence in 1986.<sup>15</sup>

Barnett's presence at the University of Houston reached beyond her professional achievements by personally impacting students and faculty. Dr. Lee recalled his admiration for Barnett, saying, "This wasn't her first rodeo."<sup>16</sup> He described her as organized, businesslike, and focused; he also emphasized that Dr. Barnett supported women on campus and deeply cared about the students.

Unfortunately, health complications cut short President Barnett's time at the university. She first informed the public of a neuroendocrinological illness in a letter to the UH community in November 1991. Barnett was a private person who did not elaborate on her illness, and after her condition worsened,



*President Barnett delivered powerful remarks in her convocation and commencement addresses, inspiring students and outlining her goals to bolster the reputation and wellbeing of UH and the Houston community.*

Photo courtesy of Digital Collections, University of Houston Libraries, ark:/84475/do87719p01n.

when someone who's done great things in a short time and has awesome potential is suddenly taken from you." Pratt shared similar sentiments about Barnett's tragic passing, saying, "She was a person who was going to end up running Stanford or Harvard or something someday."<sup>18</sup>

To commemorate her accomplishments and contributions to the institution, the College of Social Science (now the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences or CLASS) embedded a bronze plaque on a stone in the flowerbed

she requested a six-month leave of absence. Barnett and her husband, Walter King, visited Hawaii, where they had previously spent their honeymoon. In February 1992, she died in Hawaii at the age of forty-nine.<sup>17</sup>

Barnett's death severely affected those who worked closely with her and the Houston community that admired her. Acting UH president James Pickering informed the public of Barnett's passing at a press conference where he solemnly stated, "Clearly, this is a sad day in the life of the University of Houston. Dr. Barnett was truly one of the most gifted administrators in this nation." The university held a memorial honoring Barnett in Cullen Performance Hall. Lee remembered the emotional day by recounting, "It's always tough

near Charles F. McElhinney Hall. Additionally, the African American Studies program created an annual endowment in her name.<sup>19</sup>

Marguerite Ross Barnett's daughter, Amy DuBois Barnett, spoke at the University of Houston's 45th African American Studies Annual Scholarship Banquet, which paid tribute to Dr. Barnett. In addition to Amy's success in digital media, she followed in her mother's footsteps by teaching as an adjunct professor of management and organizations at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. Amy shared lessons from her mother, saying, "She showed me



*President Barnett proudly displays her Cougar spirit with the University of Houston's mascot, Shasta.*

Photo courtesy of Digital Collections, University of Houston Libraries, ark:/84475/d063827c390.



The marker honoring President Marguerite Ross Barnett is located in the quadrangle outside Farish, Heyne, and McElhinney Halls on the UH campus. Photo courtesy of Dr. Monica Perales.

true competency, how to discover who I really am and how to be who I am, how to achieve at a high level, and how to live my own life and be happy.” Amy revealed the difficulty of losing her mother and how her memory inspires her to benefit others.<sup>20</sup>

Beyond Houston, people around the country mourned Barnett’s death. UMSL held a ceremony in her honor and later dedicated Chancellor Marguerite Ross Barnett Plaza.<sup>21</sup> Barnett’s family also held a private service in Scottsville, Virginia.

Dr. Barnett’s success as a top administrator served as a role model of strong female leadership, especially to women of color, by paving the way for women in higher education. As Lee noted, “She was a trailblazer here, and like most trailblazers, you have to overcome challenges that other folks won’t have in the future because you overcame them as being the first Black president, as being the first female president.”<sup>22</sup>



Dr. Barnett visits with Dr. James Pickering and Dr. Elwyn Lee in the African American Studies office. Lee keeps this photo in his office and likes to ask students that stop by if they know who Dr. Barnett is before explaining her legacy.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Elwyn Lee.

Comparison can be drawn between Dr. Barnett and Dr. Renu Khator, who became the chancellor of the University of Houston System and president of the University of Houston in 2008. Only the second woman to serve as UH president, she is the first female chancellor in the state of Texas and the first Indian immigrant to lead a comprehensive U.S. research university. Lee pointed out that Barnett and Khator share many similarities, “They both came to the university at about the same age, they both have doctorates in political science, they both did their major research and writing about India, and they both created a buzz when they got here.” Similar to Barnett, Khator prioritizes research innovation, diversification, and support of the Houston community. Under her leadership, UH achieved Tier One status in 2011 and a Phi Beta Kappa chapter in 2016, along with subsequent honors.<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Marguerite Ross Barnett is remembered as a woman of achievement with an impressive academic track record



Dr. Barnett talks with (left to right) Lois Stark, Carey C. Shuart, and Patsy Cravens. Dr. Barnett’s term as university president was characterized by initiative, leadership, and outreach with widespread support from students, faculty, and alumni.

Photo courtesy of Cynthia Macdonald Papers, Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries, 2010-019.

that culminated in her emergence as president of the University of Houston. She not only broke the glass ceiling at UH but was also widely acknowledged for her positive service to the university and the community at large. Barnett’s legacy resides in the programs she established, the people she touched, and the female leaders she empowered. Looking to the future at Autumn Convocation in 1990, she challenged her audience, saying, “We can either be bystanders to a passing twenty-first century historical drama of heroic proportions, or we can be leaders.”<sup>24</sup> **HH**

**Megan Dagnall** is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in history with a minor in education from the Honors College at the University of Houston. Expecting to graduate in spring 2024, she is a member of Alpha Chi Omega and works part-time at the Kinkaid School in Houston.



Photo courtesy of Shaden.studentpn, Wikimedia

# *A Writer's Hidden Gem in Houston: Arte Público Press*

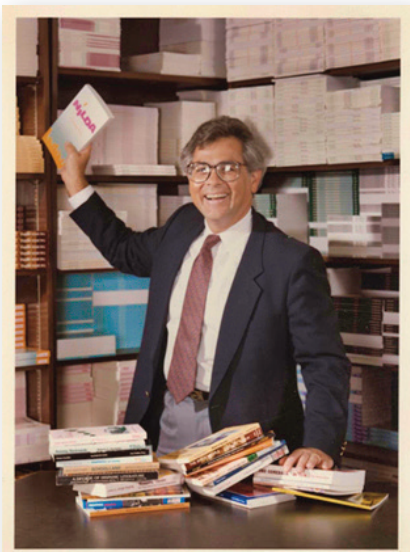
*By Aileen Mendoza*

**“As a child, Nicolás Kanellos couldn’t find books that accurately portrayed his Hispanic heritage. As an adult, he sought out and published the ones that did.”**

*– Emma Schkloven<sup>1</sup>*

**H**ouston is home to a rich, diverse Hispanic, or Latino, culture, including Arte Público Press, the largest publisher of U.S. Latino contemporary and recovered literature in the United States. The main goal of the press has always been to provide Hispanic writers access to publishing their works and, overall, to provide an accurate representation of Hispanic culture in the United States. Dr. Nicolás Kanellos founded the press in 1979 and continues to serve as its direc-

tor. With the help of his wonderful team at the University of Houston (UH), where the press is located, Arte Público Press has grown significantly, achieving a national identity as a successful publisher. More so, it has assisted numerous young writers in launching their careers and continues to advocate for Latino culture to continue its integration into the United States, from educational curriculums to social progression, and much more.



*Nicolás Kanellos, director and founder of Arte Público Press, continues to dedicate his work to helping Latino writers achieve a name in the United States.*

All photos courtesy of Arte Público Press unless otherwise noted.

## The Impact of a Diverse Childhood

From a young age, Kanellos was conscious of Hispanic culture and its absence from schoolbooks. Born in New York City in 1945, he spent most of his childhood moving back and forth between New York and Puerto Rico. He quickly noticed that his life in New York was very different from that spent with his family in Puerto Rico. In New York, he observed how Puerto Ricans were under attack by the mass media, an act he calls “yellow journalism.”<sup>1</sup> The media highlighted crime, the unfamiliar food Puerto Ricans ate, and even their religious practices, all with negative views. In addition, children like him received a poor education, which hurt their intellectual growth and access to higher education.

Meanwhile, in Puerto Rico, Kanellos clearly captured the capabilities of Hispanic peoples. There, he saw Latinos were able to become anything they desired. He observed, “In Puerto Rico, society functioned; Puerto Ricans were governors, they were politicians, they were firemen, teachers, they were everything. You could see all things that Puerto Ricans could do,” he continued, “but in the United States, you could see what Puerto Ricans weren’t allowed to do.” To Kanellos that was an eye opener.<sup>2</sup>

Although Kanellos grew up in a low-income family, he found creative ways to continue reading. His summers spent in Puerto Rico allowed him to indulge in reading his family’s Spanish-language books. By contrast, in New York, he did not have the resources to buy books, so he collected discarded pages from a nearby book bindery and put them together to create his own books. His fascination with reading did not stop there. Kanellos continued his education attending The University of Texas at Austin (UT) where he earned his master’s and Ph.D. in Spanish literature.<sup>3</sup> Overall, his childhood and his passion for reading impacted his perspective and developed his views and drive to make a change. These eye-opening experiences from childhood influenced Kanellos’s college years leading to his involvement in the liberal arts and political

movements to improve opportunities for the Hispanic community.

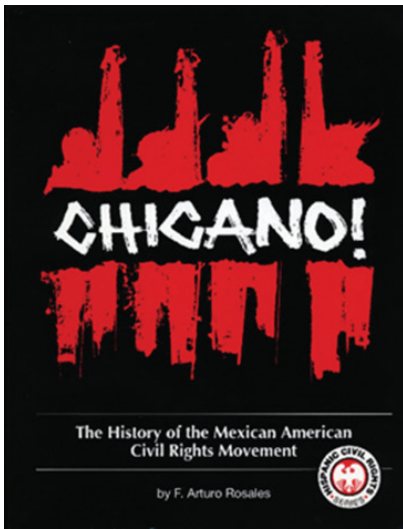
While at UT, Kanellos became involved in the Chicano civil rights movement of the 1960s. He began working with young writers and artists, using art and activism to support political issues. However, as the arts began to separate from politics in the late 1970s, Kanellos wanted more opportunities for writers to have their works added to the curriculum, popular culture, and ultimately the national identity of the United States. To achieve that, he explained, “I was there at every step of the way working with writers and artists, establishing magazines, then establishing the publishing house” to get their works published, distributed, and reviewed. Kanellos emphasized the importance of literature in pushing toward the future, expressing his belief that “social and political progress go hand in hand with the recognition of the culture and the expression of that culture through the arts.”<sup>4</sup>

## Revista Chicano-Riqueña

After completing his graduate education, Kanellos received an offer to teach at Indiana University Northwest in Gary, Indiana. Upon moving there, he continued his participation in marches, boycotts for bilingual education, and assisting up-and-coming artists and writers. In 1972, José González, Luis Dávila, and Kanellos founded *Revista Chicano-Riqueña*, a quarterly magazine that later became *The Americas Review*. Some of the goals included fostering a cultural dialogue by and about Latinos, creating a national forum for writers who had experiences with cultural conflict, and contrasting past and present oral folklore and contemporary literature. Additionally, it sought to strengthen the ties between Chicanos, Riqueños (or Puerto Ricans), and other Latinos; to challenge negative perceptions on bilingualism and bicultural realities; and to maintain a non-dogmatic, open editorial line.<sup>5</sup>



*Nicolás Kanellos leading a community group protesting in favor of bilingual education before a school board, mid 1970s.*



*The iconic book, Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement was written by F. Arturo Rosales.*

In 1986 and 1987, the journal received Citations of Achievement from the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines; the final issue was published in 1999. While *Revista Chicano-Riqueña* lasted for twenty-five years, the work that began there took flight in 1979 when Kanellos founded Arte Público Press. The main mission of Arte Público is to “publish, promote, and disseminate Latino literature with a commitment to reforming the national culture to more accurately include, value, and reflect Hispanic historical and contemporary contributions.”<sup>6</sup> In 1980, Kanellos took a position at the University of Houston and moved the press to Texas.

### The Development of Arte Público Press

With the growth of the press and lack of resources in Indiana, Kanellos found it beneficial to take a position at the University of Houston and relocate the team there. The university not only offered Arte Público Press more resources, but the city also had the added bonus of a central location between the West and East Coasts. Nevertheless, various obstacles surfaced for Arte Público. At one point, UH formed a committee to evaluate *The Adventures of the Chicano Kid* (Max Martínez), one of Arte Público’s texts, for obscenity and sexual language in an attempt to censor the work. This proved frustrating because minority authors’ works are three times more likely to be censored than those of Anglo authors, Kanellos explained. This caused delays in publication, so Arte Público “refused to subject its books to the whims of the UH printing plant and other bureaucrats who ignored academic freedom and the U.S. Constitution’s first amendment protections.” Today, Arte Público Press publishes its books without restrictions, although, Kanellos observes, censorship movements are once again attempting to keep Latino history and culture books from the hands of students in Arizona, Texas, and several other states.<sup>7</sup>

Another setback was that the university’s funding did not reach the level the press expected. This forced Arte Público to seek external resources. The leadership began to develop relationships with philanthropic organizations that enabled the press to survive and then thrive. Today, the press’s connection with major foundations has given it “a steady

funding base” that has made Arte Público “one of the two top fundraising organizations in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.”<sup>8</sup>

Lastly, one of Arte Público Press’s biggest challenges has been getting its books and authors the recognition they deserve. Latino authors have a hard time getting agents to represent them and the media is less inclined to read Latino literature—two things that hinder public awareness of their work. As a result, Arte Público developed a strong marketing department that enabled the press to become a portal for authors to get started. As seen throughout its journey, Arte Público has helped many Latino authors achieve success, from bestselling books to integration into educational curriculums.

Designated a Hispanic-Serving Institution in 2011, the University of Houston has come a long way, becoming one of the nation’s most diverse college campuses and embracing people of multiple ethnicities and identities. The main issue Arte Público faces today is the time it takes to integrate into other university programs. To solve this issue, Arte Público Press and UH collaborated to found a Spanish-language creative writing doctoral degree and provide employment opportunities for writers locally and nationally.<sup>9</sup>

### Recovering History and Helping Communities

In addition to supporting and publishing works by Hispanic writers, Arte Público Press launched the research program Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literacy Heritage, also known as “Recovery.” In 1990, the press held an initial meeting with leading Latino scholars and, with the help of the Rockefeller Foundation, established the program in 1992. Other foundations that provided support included the Mellon Foundation, the Meadows Foundation, and the Ford Foundation. The program works with an international board of scholars, librarians, and archivists to recover and access manuscripts and printed materials created by Hispanics who came from regions in existence from the colonial period to 1980 in the geographic area that has become the United States. The program has a collection of over 18,000 pamphlets and books.<sup>10</sup>

To date, Recovery has “digitized more than 500,000 items, ranging from published books and newspapers to



*Nicolás Kanellos and Tato Laviera, author of La Carreta Made a U-Turn, the first book published by Arte Público Press in 1979.*



manuscripts of varying lengths from the first encounters between Hispanic and indigenous peoples in North America to broadsides and photographs from the twentieth century – in short, all the materials that a literate community generates over centuries.”<sup>11</sup>

Growing up, Kanellos had an awareness of the rich Hispanic culture around him. However, throughout his college education, he found no literature reflecting that culture in the university libraries—a deficiency that led Kanellos and his team to embark on the Recovery Program. They set out to find all the publications by Hispanic writers that had been neglected in the United States. Even though many items were not collected by libraries, universities, and museums, Arte Público assembled thousands of documents, from magazines, to diaries, poems, and more.<sup>12</sup> Through this program, Kanellos and the Recovery Board wanted to emphasize the presence of Hispanics in the United States and their contributions, both negative and positive, and, in doing so, to rewrite history by including the writers’ voices that mainstream publishers and scholars had historically ignored. Today, the press remains the largest licensor of Hispanic literature in the United States to the entire textbook industry, as well as to electronic media, film, and television.

Arte Público launched the Piñata Books imprint in 1994 that is dedicated to publishing children’s and young adult literature to showcase and represent U.S. Hispanic culture.<sup>13</sup> Research indicates less than five percent of children’s books include Latino characters. Kanellos’s experience in the lack of Hispanic representation in books as a child continues to be a big problem in the United States. If children of color do not see themselves in books, they cannot identify with the characters in the stories. Keeping this in mind, Kanellos and his staff work to impact the educational system by creating books that allow children to see the portrayal of their lives in the United States, not solely the



*As part of the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Biennial Conference on February 20, 2020, Jasminne Mendez reads her poetry at the University of Houston-Downtown.*

Photo courtesy of DraChicana 1, Wikimedia Commons.

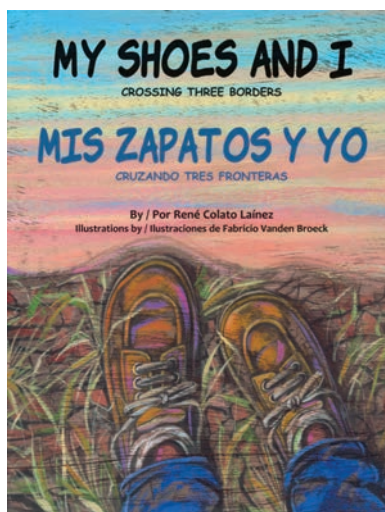
lives of Hispanic people living in Argentina, Spain or elsewhere with whom they could not identify. Most Piñata Books are bilingual to create “authentic language and cultural situations of the United States, rather than pedagogical books, for dual language and bilingual language education.”<sup>14</sup> Kanellos expressed how rewarding it is to see children enjoy Piñata and Arte Público books

and to inspire the next generation of Latino literature.

To further aid the Hispanic community, Arte Público Press also leads programs with the Houston Independent School District to teach families to prioritize reading at home. Through its books and programs, Arte Público strives to reach out about issues important to the community. For example, one is the obesity epidemic among Hispanic families, which results from the easy availability of fast-food restaurants and the lack of supermarkets with nutritious food in Hispanic neighborhoods. Arte Público’s program ¡Salud, familia! (or Family Health) created entertaining and inexpensive books that offer health and nutrition tips for children and their families.<sup>15</sup> Arte Público has also taken part in other programs, including Reach Out and Read, Reading is Fundamental, and Latino Children’s Wellness Program.



*The children’s and young adult imprint, Piñata Books, strives to accurately portray the Hispanic culture in the United States through bilingual books, short stories, and novels.*



## Accomplishments and Recognitions

Since 1979, Arte Público Press has done a great deal for the Hispanic community, especially its writers and artists by helping them publish their work and get name recognition to become bestselling authors nationwide. Even with the challenges that the press experienced early on, Arte Público remained true to its mission and ultimately achieved the success and recognition it deserved.

In 2018, the press received the Ivan Sandrof Lifetime Achievement Award given annually by the National Book Critics Circle to a person or institution with a long history of major contributions to the literary world. Other awards Kanellos has

received include the 1988 Hispanic Heritage Award for Literature presented by the White House, a 1989 American Book Award, a 1993 grant from the Lila Wallace–Reader’s Digest Fund through the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses (now CLMP), and the 1996 Denali Press Award from the American Library Association.

Nicolás Kanellos emphasizes the importance of his team to the press’s success, acknowledging that this is not one man’s work. Assistant director Marina Tristán, for example, a graduate in Communication from UH, has led the press’s marketing efforts for over thirty-six years. She has said that the Lifetime Achievement award not only helped Arte Público gain national recognition but also acknowledged the passionate effort of the staff as part of the university.<sup>16</sup> Gabriela Baeza Ventura, Ph.D, UH alum and an associate professor of Spanish in the Department of Hispanic Studies, is executive editor of the press and the co-director of Arte Público’s US Latino Digital Humanities Center with UH alum and Brown Foundation Director of Research, Carolina Villarroel, Ph.D. who helped the Recovery Program win the Diversity Award from the Society of American Archivists.

### The Future of Arte Público Press

Looking to the future, Arte Público Press seeks to incorporate several of its works and findings into public digital projects through its US Latino Digital Humanities Center (USLDH). The center serves as a venue for scholarship focused on the U.S. Latino written legacy that has been lost, absent, repressed,



*Specializing in U.S. Latino literature and women’s studies, Dr. Carolina Villarroel earned her Ph.D. in Spanish literature, from the University of Houston in 2008.*

Photo courtesy of Carolina Villarroel.



*Nicolás Kanellos speaks at the fortieth anniversary celebration for Arte Público Press in September 2022.*

or underrepresented. USLDH provides a physical space for the development, support, and training in digital humanities projects using Recovery’s vast collection of newspapers, photographs, and digital materials; creates opportunities and facilities for digital publication of Latino-based projects and scholarship; promotes and fosters interdisciplinary scholarly work; provides a communal virtual space to share knowledge and projects related to Latino digital humanities; and works to establish a Latino digital humanities hub.<sup>17</sup> USLDH is funded by grants from the Mellon Foundation and Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) and has achieved national and international recognition for its work.

As the Hispanic community continues to grow so will the culture.

Nicolás Kanellos describes how

Houston has become a more diverse community and predicts the city will cultivate various genres in writing and use more languages. Overall, Hispanic literature will become more integrated into the United States and other places throughout the world. Although Kanellos and those at Arte Público Press have accomplished a great deal, much more remains to be done, and they look forward to the challenge.<sup>18</sup> **HH**

**Aileen Mendoza** is a Hispanic student studying architecture at the University of Houston in hopes of using her creativity and design education to better communities around the world.



*Dr. Gabriela Baeza Ventura earned her Ph.D. in Hispanic literature at the University of Houston in 2001.*



*Katy Caldwell, left, and Nancy Sims, right, celebrate Nancy's thirtieth birthday together in 1989. The pair met while working on a political campaign in 1984.*

All photos courtesy of Nancy Sims and Katy Caldwell unless otherwise noted.

# Nancy Sims and Katy Caldwell Talk on Political Junkies and Poodle Hair

*By Max Ward*

**K**aty Caldwell and Nancy Sims both grew up in Houston in the 1960s. One was raised in central Bellaire and the other in eastern North Shore. Born into different circumstances, these two women met and forged a friendship spanning more than forty years, weathering numerous political administrations and countless hardships. Both are leaders in their respective fields: Katy Caldwell is the former CEO of Legacy Community Health, and Nancy Sims is a political consultant and lecturer in political science at the University of Houston (UH), but it is their shared history and friendship that can inspire future generations of leaders. The women shared their stories in oral histories with me in 2021 as part of the 100 Years of Stories: Documenting a Century at the University of Houston project.

Katy Caldwell was born in 1956 in Bellaire, Texas. She grew up going to the opera and Houston's museums. In addition to giving their daughter an appreciation for culture at a young age, her parents supported her education and instilled in her the idea that going to college was a given.<sup>1</sup> Growing up in a conservative environment,

*Sophomore Katy Caldwell, left, visits with friends Michelle Carter and Randy Young on the UH campus.*

Photo courtesy of the *Houstonian*, 1976, Digital Collections, University of Houston Libraries.



she wanted to go to a school that was more open-minded. Fortunately, during Katy's senior year in high school, a friend invited her to the UH campus, and Katy liked

the university's progressive atmosphere. So, when UH accepted her application, she quickly enrolled.

Katy began attending UH in 1974, majoring in biology. Her fondest memories were of The Quadrangle dorms. Reminiscing, she recalled, "We called it 'The Quad.' That's where I made friends that I still have today." She played on the dorm's intramural team called the Quad Squad, in addition to recruiting participants and managing the team in her junior and senior years.

When she was not competing in sports, Katy was studying. She planned to be a doctor but realized she did not have the grades or the desire for it. Despite that, she found herself working in healthcare eventually.

Nancy Sims was born in Harlingen, Texas, in 1959, but moved to the Houston area shortly after that, eventually settling in "Nor-Shore," where she stayed until finishing high school in 1977. Her father worked on the ship channel, and her mother was a teacher.<sup>2</sup>

Early on, Nancy developed a fascination for national news and grew up watching coverage of the Vietnam War on television. She remembered, "My parents didn't want me to watch it ... so when they were asleep, I would sneak down the hall and watch it." But it was the political scandal surrounding then president Richard Nixon that cemented Nancy's interest in politics. She explained, "In '72, Congress held these Watergate Hearings ... and I became obsessed. ... My friends would come by and want to play, and I couldn't. ... I was too busy watching these hearings!"



Katy actively participated in and recruited members for the Quad Squad's intramural athletic teams. Here, Nancy Matthews, Katy Caldwell, and Nancy Martini, left to right, take their positions at the Beauty Bowl.

Photo courtesy of the *Houstonian*, 1977, Digital Collections, University of Houston Libraries.

After high school, Nancy attended Sam Houston State University and got involved in campus politics with the Texas Young Democrats. She was one of three women majoring in political science in her class. When the department chair asked why she was not pursuing a teaching degree, Nancy told him, "I don't want to be a teacher. I'm going to *practice* politics."

Nancy graduated from college a year early so she could work on Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign. Though she did not work with him directly, she was hired by the Steel Workers' Union to help organize his campaign, working at Carter's mobile White House based at Houston's Warwick Hotel. Nancy's job was to coordinate the celebrities who came out to endorse Carter. Through this, she met famous Astros players Joe Niekro and Joe Sambito, who she thought were, "the cat's meow." Nevertheless, she added, "I didn't get star-struck or anything [by them], which apparently impressed a lot of people."

In 1982, then lieutenant governor William P. "Bill" Hobby, Jr. asked Nancy to work on his reelection campaign, and he soon became her friend and lifelong mentor. She served as Hobby's driver whenever he made appearances in town. She remembered Hobby's "very dry sense of humor," and how no one would laugh at his jokes because "normally people ... were [too] awed by his power." But Nancy understood his humor and laughed when others were too afraid, which led her to conclude, "He took a shine to me. ... That was one of the biggest blessings of my life."

In 1984, Hobby assigned Nancy to work on the campaign of John Glenn, the first astronaut to orbit the



The Quad Squad's big rival in flag football was Moody Towers dormitory, with their annual game dubbed the "Beauty Bowl." The Quad Squad lost its first three contests but won Katy's senior year.

Photo courtesy of Bob Andrews.

Earth. She admitted, “I was awed by the space program. ... Hanging out with presidents and senators and all that, I never got very impressed. But the one thing that impressed me was astronauts. ... I almost couldn’t work; I was just so awed.”

Nancy and Katy first met at the 1984 Democratic Convention, both volunteering on the Gary Hart presidential campaign. Nancy claimed, “It was our shared love of politics that helped build our friendship.” That same year, they also both stepped up to help in the wake of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

In the 1980s the HIV/AIDS epidemic hit Houston’s LGBTQ community, which faced unparalleled troubles. Katy recalled, “It was the first time ... you saw civil disobedience and that kind of activism around a disease, at least in that part of the twentieth century.” Katy was part of the Colt 45s, an organization that helped people with AIDS by raising money to pay their rent and utilities so they could remain in their homes. Nancy remembered, “Katy held my hand when I was going through hell at City Hall. ... When my very best friend Randy was sick, Katy was like a rock for me. And she was friends with Randy too. She was there when I got the call he had passed.”

Nancy attended and still attends Bering Memorial



*In the 1980s, Nancy Sims worked on multiple political campaigns and met a variety of political and community leaders. She also became an ally and a helper to those affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Houston LGBTQ community.*

Photo courtesy of Nancy Sims.

Methodist Church (now Bering Memorial United Church of Christ) where she first witnessed the impact of AIDS when people started getting sick in about 1985. “My church ... got very engaged in serving the AIDS population,” she explained. The congregation was “about [one] third gay men. ... We were taking care of people that nobody wanted in their congregations[,] ... their medical facilities, nobody wanted them anywhere. My church [took] it upon itself to build a dental clinic for AIDS patients.”<sup>3</sup>

Nancy’s service to the LGBTQ community did not go unnoticed; Houston’s mayor, Kathy Whitmire, invited Nancy to work at City Hall passing local policy to help people with AIDS. “I was part-and-parcel to the public policy response to AIDS in Houston,” Nancy said. When the federal government started allocating money to help mitigate the crisis, Nancy’s job involved making sure that it was properly allocated for AIDS care.

Katy assisted the cause in a different way through the Montrose Clinic. Antiretroviral medications were being developed in labs on the East and West Coasts, which gave people access to experimental medications. To provide access to experimental medications in community-based settings in other parts of the country, amFAR, the Foundation for AIDS Research, developed a network of clinics across the nation. Katy explained the process, “Montrose Clinic board and staff stepped up and applied to be part of the network. We were accepted, I think, to everyone’s surprise!” She added, “It was a huge benefit to Houston. ... There are, I’m sure, people alive today that had access to some of those medications that never would be alive if they hadn’t had them.”<sup>4</sup> Katy got more involved when



*Nancy is currently a member of Bering Memorial United Church of Christ, and was so at the height of the AIDS crisis. Bering offered assistance to those with AIDS when other organizations turned them away.*

Photo courtesy of WhisperToMe and Wikimedia Commons.

things got personal after her friend Jim was diagnosed with HIV. She recounted, “[T]hat really set me back ... [and we] started volunteering, actually, at the clinic for a time.”

In retrospect, Nancy observed, “Through its own strength, [Houston] built up Bering; it built up the Montrose Counseling Center, which is now the Montrose Center; Legacy, which was the Montrose Clinic at the time. ... These now-out-standing organizations that are thirty-five and forty years old actually rose out of the AIDS movement.”<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, having gotten a taste for politics, Katy ran for Harris County treasurer and won in 1991. She noted, “You had to learn how to work with both sides of Republicans and Democrats ... you really had to figure out how to get things done. What really prepared me was managing an intramural team at UH!” Her years with the Quad Squad taught her about leadership and how to manage people. Though her education inside the classroom is what got her jobs, what she learned outside the classroom led to her professional success. She remarked, “After I was summarily unelected in a Republican sweep in 1994, I did some public policy work with Nancy’s company. My friend gave me a wonderful supportive place to land.”

Katy served on the Montrose Clinic board which asked her to take the helm following the departure of the executive director. She recalled, “I took the job, figuring I’d be there three or four years ... and here I am twenty-five years later. It’s been a great career.” Having turned a small nonprofit clinic into one of the largest federally qualified health centers in Texas, Katy credits her success to her experiences in the financial sector where she worked after she graduated. She explained, “I had an analytical background from my degree in biology. And UH ... taught me . . . how to critically think, and that has definitely played into my success at Legacy over the years.”

As a way of showing her appreciation for that education, Katy Caldwell is on the UH Alumni Foundation Board and hopes to see more involvement from other alumni, whether through donations to UH programs or by getting more involved on campus. She reflected, “When you’re my age and you start to look back ... all the way back to my time living in the dorms in UH, to now ... everything [you do] helps you become successful. ...



*Katy Caldwell became executive director at the Montrose Clinic, now Legacy Community Health, and served there for twenty-five years before retiring.*

*Photo by Alex Rosa/OutSmart magazine.*

Always realize that no matter where you are ... you learn something that will either help you be a better person or help you in the future. And never burn a bridge.”

Upon retiring from Legacy, Katy said, “I don’t know what I’m going to do next, other than relax, learn how to live without stress, enjoy participating and volunteering, and stuff that I want to do and not have to do. ... It’s just going to help make this next decade the best ten years of my life.”

In 1989, Nancy founded Quantum Consultants, a firm “redefining the science of politics.” She observed, “I had a team in place and had a big office and was making okay money for a Democratic political consultant.” She personally consulted Katy with her election to county treasurer. And when Katy became CEO of Legacy, Nancy noted, “She had to hire me to facilitate some conversations [with her staff]. Because it was all new, and people were learning, and everyone had an opinion.”<sup>6</sup> However, Nancy soon realized, “‘Oh my god, I’m still just a political hack at forty years old!’ So, within two years I got my



*Nancy Sims teaches numerous classes at UH, including Women in Politics. She says that class never gets old because there is always something new to discuss.*

*Photo courtesy of Nancy Sims.*

*Friends going for forty years, Katy, left, and Nancy, right, made a visit to Las Vegas together.*

Photo courtesy of Katy Caldwell and Nancy Sims.



master's degree, got married, and got pregnant, in that order." After the birth of her daughter, Nancy thought she needed a more family-friendly career. She worked at Pierpont Communications Inc. for sixteen years, while also serving as a pundit on the KUHF program *Houston Matters*. Having received her graduate degree from the University of St. Thomas, she became a professor at UH in 2002.

Nancy has taught Women in Politics for twenty years, as well as courses in U.S. government, Texas government, and political campaign management. She declared, "[The] Women in Politics class is my favorite. ... Somebody asked me, 'Aren't you tired of teaching that after twenty years?' I say, 'How can one ever get tired of it? Because every semester something [new] happens.'" The course includes "six weeks of 'her-story' because no one's ever been taught [that]." She covers topics from pre-Christian warrior women up to the time when women first gained the right to vote in the United States. The class then follows current events in "her-story" as well.

After teaching at UH for twenty years, Nancy said, "I always tease my students that I learn more from them than they learn from me, and it really is true. ... I've learned from my students that they're diverse, so incredibly diverse. So, I'm always learning culture from them. ... Teaching has become the greatest joy in my life."

Katy and Nancy met through politics, but their friendship was built through shared experiences. Nancy pointed out, "[When] Katy ran for county treasurer, and I was her consultant, then we really grew close." Katy reminded her, "Actually you helped me run for state rep in '88, but you were still working at City Hall, so you had to do it behind the scenes." Nancy agreed, saying, "Forty years later and we're still political junkies."<sup>7</sup>

Katy summed up their friendship, saying, "In both of our cases, we were plowing new territory for women ... but we were equals. We could say things to each other that we couldn't say to a mentor. ... The fact is that that's a big way we've supported each other, on the work side. We're a sounding board for each other. ... You always need

friends who tell you, you have 'poodle hair.' But what's also important ... is that you have someone who you know is not just going to blow smoke up your skirt. It's incredibly important: the trust factor, the honesty factor. And that takes time to build. But I think it's at the root when you have somebody you're close to. ... Over the years, that's just been built. I would lie down and die for Nancy."<sup>8</sup>

While the trajectory of Katy's life changed over time, one constant feature has been her desire to leave a lasting imprint on the lives of others. She achieved this by employing lessons first learned at the University of Houston and then applying them as a volunteer helping those affected by HIV/AIDS, as county treasurer, and as the executive director of Legacy Community Health.

Nancy nurtured her politically inquisitive mind from a young age. Her early association with politics at all levels, as well as her community service, laid the foundation for her future career path. It enabled her to become an authority on the local, state, and national political climate and to share her knowledge in Houston Public Media radio broadcasts and in classrooms at the University of Houston.

I have known Katy and Nancy my whole life, yet only now, after sitting down with them to hear their stories, can I appreciate all that they have been through together. Their tenacity in the face of hardships and their steadfast loyalty serve as an example to friends and colleagues everywhere who want to make a difference. **H**

**Max Ward** is a senior at the University of Houston, majoring in English. He served as an intern for the 100 Years of Stories: Documenting a Century at the University of Houston project and *Houston History* magazine.

# The Art Guys: The Creators Behind The Statue of Four Lies

By Sydney Rose



A pair of bronze figures stand in a little plaza in Lynn Eusan Park on the University of Houston (UH) campus. Though *The Statue of Four Lies* sits conspicuously outside a dormitory, students frequently pass by it without a second glance; at other times, the artwork beckons

them onto the plaza to examine its truths and fabrications more closely. Beneath the surface, *The Statue of Four Lies* embodies more than thirty years of the creativity, curiosity, and camaraderie that defined its creators, The Art Guys, throughout their careers.



*The Art Guys frequently showcased their unique style by using themselves as part of their creations.* Photo courtesy of Jack Massing.

Michael Galbreth and Jack Massing began their friendship by collaborating on a music festival task in 1983 while students at UH. Neither Jack nor Michael were native Houstonians; Jack was born in Buffalo, New York, and Michael was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but their friendship blossomed in Houston, once they realized their mutual fondness for creativity and just the right amount of oddity. As Massing put it, “We were both very curious, ... [and] it just so happened that we clicked.” After the music festival, they talked about working together on different ideas, agreeing that the work would occur every solstice and every equinox, which went on for about a year and a half. This led to the formation of The Art Guys, when Jack and Michael found a can of paint on the side of the road, dipped their hands in, and shook hands with the paint covering them. Jack then commented, “I guess we’re The Art Guys now,” and the name stuck.<sup>1</sup>

The collaboration between The Art Guys started in 1983 and continued as they worked on projects together,





Photo courtesy of Jack Massing.

*The Art Guys envisioned The Statue of Four Lies as an embodiment of themselves, their works, and the University of Houston. The duo spent over thirty years working together in Houston and exhibiting their work throughout Texas.*

Photo © Morris Malakoff, courtesy of Public Art UHS.

even establishing a studio in Houston – The Art Guys’ World Headquarters – in 1989. The duo worked together for about thirty-five years (1983-2019), until the sudden passing of Michael Galbreth. Now, Jack Massing represents the art the two created together and the curiosity they shared. “The Art Guys was basically a project. The whole thing was one big, giant project,” Massing recalled, “one piece of art with a lot of parts.” The Art Guys held impactful events, exhibitions, and more to highlight their work and the cohesive ideas they had for projects, many of which were featured in art shows, magazines, and booklets.<sup>2</sup>

Using their 1998 project *SUITS: The Clothes Make the Man* as an example, Jack Massing explained how many works of art can start simply but evolve into complicated projects. For *SUITS*, The Art Guys planned to wear different company advertisements on suits designed by Todd Oldham and go about their lives, making appearances wearing these brands and logos. In the process of making this idea a reality, complications arose in determining how the suits would be made, which companies would sign on for ad space, how the artists would engage the media, and how often the suits would be worn. The Art Guys fulfilled the one-year contract to wear the suits, including debuting the art during an eight-hour fashion show.<sup>3</sup>

As one of the most notable pieces created during the duo’s career, *The Statue of Four Lies* has multiple elements that have led to it being recognized as a historical art piece. Unveiled at UH on September 22, 2010, the work features two statues that depict The Art Guys themselves, almost acting as a self-tribute, though Massing said this reflected an inside joke between Michael and him rather



*As part of their contract for SUITS: The Clothes Make the Man, The Art Guys took their suits on the road, including to the Texas state capitol building in Austin.*

Photo courtesy of Jack Massing.

than being ego-driven.

The Art Guys originally planned to create the statues anonymously, but once they claimed the piece as their own, they added little nods to their previous works. This includes the statues' suits, one of many references to the aforementioned *SUITS*. While the bronze suitcase referenced the duo's older work – their 1995 creation *Suitcase Wheel*, a 121-inch diameter circle of various suitcases – it is also an icon for travel. "University itself is made from the word 'universe.' When you go to a university, you can study anything you want," Massing explained. "So, the suitcase signifies travel, travel in your mind or travel in your body from one place to another. That's one of the reasons we chose the suitcase."<sup>4</sup>

Although *The Statue of Four Lies* referenced The Art Guys' earlier works, it also paid homage to the University of Houston. Jack and Michael intended the artwork to be an interactive experience – "performative sculptures," as the original draft calls them – for UH students. Students still take the time to paint over them, dress them, and vandalize them in different ways, all in the name of school spirit and pride. Massing pointed out that conceptual artists do performance art, and that was a big part of what he and Michael intended the statues to be. "There was a tongue-in-cheek springboard of the idea for *The Statue of Four Lies*," Massing joked, mentioning the history of the duo. "The way we laid it out was to give the students at UH a way to interact with our sculptures. We did a lot of performance art, we're predominantly conceptual artists, and we ended up loving the idea that students would perform with us forever – or as long as the sculptures were up."<sup>5</sup>

In the early 2000s, the University of Houston asked The Art Guys, along with four other artists, to propose projects for Public Art UHS, with the intent of displaying the completed works across the UH campuses. After consideration, Jack and Michael's proposal was selected for the spot in Lynn Eusan Park. "An artwork is a process by which you have an idea. Then the idea gets made, however that is, by your own hand or with help. Then it's finished and when that artwork is no longer in the process anymore, what you see on the wall is the last



*The partial mold for one of the Four Lies statues resided in The Art Guys' warehouse until the full figures were ready to be cast in bronze.*

Photo courtesy of Jack Massing.

piece of that artwork. It is an artwork, it is not art. It's part of art," Massing remarked. "That resides typically in collections or on walls and houses or attics. It has a different life once it is hanging on a wall and no longer in the artist's possession, that's when its second life begins. Whatever happens thereafter is no longer in the domain of the artist."<sup>6</sup>

The Art Guys had four goals in making the statues and their four lies. These goals include: 1) utilizing the campus site to create a comfortable environment where audiences are encouraged to pause and spend time; 2) creating a performance sculpture with which audiences may interact; 3) creating a work that is visually and conceptually legible to a broad range of visitors to appreciate; 4) creating a distinctive, quality work that will enhance the UH public art collection.<sup>7</sup>

A large part of what makes *The Statue of Four Lies* such a unique and interesting addition to UH's history is that it includes the codex, approximately 100 pages of riddles with clues, pictures, and quotes from poetry, that

students can use to try to solve the secrets behind the four lies for which the statue is named.<sup>8</sup> People take on the challenge, although Massing has made it clear that the codex was created in good fun, and the clues are actually unsolvable. The codex is housed in the M.D. Anderson Library Special Collections in a box The Art Guys made themselves. The top features mock-ups of both of their eyes — another instance of self-tribute — and a drawer



*A bronze suitcase and a bronze toothbrush (not shown) are located on the perimeter of the plaza surrounding The Statue of Four Lies.*

Photo courtesy of Public Art UHS.





More than a decade after its installation, UH students still interact with *The Statue of Four Lies*, just as *The Art Guys* intended.

Photo courtesy of Trevor Nolley, *The Cougar*.

The Art Guys' complex mission for creating the statues centered on accuracy, modeling the two statues as scale-accurate representations of themselves. The plaza where the statues stand, in a high-traffic area outside the Cougar Village 1 dormitory, has other bronze pieces, including the life-sized briefcase, and a plaque that Dr. Paul Kittelson believed illustrates how these statues alone could almost write history themselves. The plaque reads, "*Falsum in uno, Falsum in omnibus, Falsum in nihilo.*" Translated as "False in one thing, False in all things, False in nothing," the phrase is a play on a legal principle, that if a witness lies about one thing, they could lie about anything, thus making their whole testimony invalid. The added third clause contradicts the first two, perhaps making it another lie within the piece.<sup>13</sup>

The statues continue to be part of UH's history as well as its future. From creating a tradition of students manipulating the art to housing the university's time capsule, *The Statue of Four Lies* has sealed its place as a permanent part of the University of Houston. Massing continues the work of

The Art Guys and the legacy that being an Art Guy carries, whether that means attending the time capsule reveal when that day arrives or being there to push art along its course. What he wants students to keep in mind when looking at *The Statue of Four Lies* is that they should pay attention and that they can interact with the statues as they see fit. "Even if there's no more reception for The Art Guys in, say, five years, the work may just fade into a trash heap of history like most of the art that is made," Massing asserted. "However, *The Statue of Four Lies* will remain because of the materials it's made out of, the place that it is in, and the intention it has. So, basically, it's a big piece of furniture for the University of Houston, and as a piece of furniture the university is going to take care of it."<sup>14</sup> ■

**Sydney Rose** is a senior at the University of Houston majoring in journalism with a minor in history. She served as managing editor at the university newspaper, *The Cougar*, and as a CITE intern on the 100 Years of Stories: Documenting a Century at the University of Houston project and *Houston History* magazine. She hopes to continue editing work in the future.



IN THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE awaiting the signing of SB 2 are Representatives Garrison, Grover, Cole, Eckhardt, Shipley, Floyd, Whitfield and Miller. Senator Baker stands beside Governor Daniel.

June 17, 1961: Governor of the State of Texas Price Daniel signs SB 2, which brings the University of Houston into the state school system effective September, 1963.

For Their Successful Efforts in Bringing State Support to the University of Houston

**The 1961 HOUSTONIAN**  
Pays Tribute to —

Lt. Governor Ben Ramsey . . . Speaker of the House James A. Turman . . . the Administration . . . Faculty . . . Student Body . . . Alumni . . . Citizenry of Harris County . . . numerous Supporters throughout the state . . . and all News Media.

And

**Special Tribute to —**

**The Harris County Delegation:**

Senator Robert W. Baker, Representatives Criss Cole (chairman of the H/R delegation), Robert C. Eckhardt, Paul Floyd, Don Garrison, W. H. Miller, Henry C. Grover, Don Shipley and J. Charles Whitfield, Jr.

Texas Governor Price Daniel and legislators awaiting the signing of SB 2, as seen in the *Houstonian* yearbook, 1961.

All photos courtesy of the Digital Collections, Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries.

# University of Houston Integration Records: A Difficult Path to Desegregation

By Bethany Scott

Despite its current status as one of the country's most diverse universities, the University of Houston, like numerous institutions of higher education, was founded in an era of segregation. In the 1920s, the Houston Independent School District (HISD) board unanimously passed a resolution that authorized the founding of two junior colleges: Houston Junior College for white students and Houston Colored Junior College for Black students.<sup>1</sup> At the time, Texas's public facilities remained racially segregated, including the public high schools where the colleges met. Both colleges began operations in 1927, and enrollment quickly grew, leading them to become four-year institutions in 1934.

The University of Houston (UH) moved to its own campus in 1939, and after World War II the number of students

expanded by the thousands, which included many veterans on the GI Bill. By 1945, UH had grown too large for HISD to manage, and it passed control to a board of regents created by the state to administer UH and Houston College for Negroes as private institutions.<sup>2</sup>

The following year, an African American man named Heman Sweatt applied to The University of Texas at Austin School of Law (UT). UT denied his admission based on his race, but the state had no law school for Black students to comply with the "separate but equal" doctrine established by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) to address segregation. The State of Texas, hoping to avoid integrating its campuses, offered to establish the Texas State University for Negroes with a law school. In 1947, the state

## U. OF H. BIDS FOR STATE SUPPORT



AERIAL VIEW of the center portion of the main campus, featuring the Ezekiel W. Cullen Building and reflection pool.

*State Aid . . . state aid . . . STATE AID!*

took over the Houston College for Negroes and founded Texas State University for Negroes (TSU, now Texas Southern University) as Houston's first public state university. TSU offered educational opportunities in "pharmacy, dentistry, arts and sciences, journalism, education, literature, law, medicine and other professional courses" – and stipulated these courses must "be equivalent to those offered at other institutions of this type supported by the State of Texas."<sup>3</sup>

Eventually, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950) that the new TSU law school did not satisfy the separate but equal provisions. The court identified extensive quantitative differences between the white and Black schools, such as the number of facilities, full-time faculty, and library collections available to prospective students. Additionally, justices found experiential differences related to UT's location in the state capital, which provided white students easy access to the Texas Bar and opportunities in public and private practices that TSU law students lacked in Houston. Thus, the Court stipulated that Black students, including Sweatt, must be admitted to the UT School of Law. The case served as a precedent in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision four years later, overruling the separate but equal notion, declaring it inherently unequal and paving the way to desegregate educational institutions at all levels. Nevertheless, school integration moved unbearably slowly.<sup>4</sup>

As a private institution, the University of Houston struggled with financial issues caused by dips in enrollment

The *Houstonian* yearbook highlighted the need for financial aid as a major reason for the University's bid to become a state school.

*Houstonian* yearbook, 1961.

during the 1950s. To compensate, UH sought to become a public university, making it eligible for state funding, which occurred with passage of Texas House Bill 291 in 1963.<sup>5</sup> In the years leading up to that, university administrators realized that as a state school, UH would be held to the desegregation standards resulting from the *Sweatt* and *Brown* decisions.

The administration's rationalization for deciding when to admit or reject Black students is documented in the President's Office Records,

which contain correspondence, applications for admission, and inter-office memos between UH presidents A. D. Bruce (1954-56), Clanton W. Williams (1956-60), and Philip G. Hoffman (1961-77), as well as other university officials. Over 100 of these documents are digitized and freely available online through the UH Libraries' Digital Collections. Through the University of Houston Integration Records, several disappointing trends emerge in the administration's response to desegregation over time.<sup>6</sup>

UH admitted the first African American students in 1962, but prospective Black students had been applying for or



SENATE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE listens as University of Houston Vice-President McElhinney answers questions concerning the University's financial status.

The Texas State Senate held hearings on granting the University of Houston status as a state university.

*Houstonian* yearbook, 1961.

inquiring about admission for many years. Documents show Black students applying to UH but being referred to TSU, Prairie View A&M (another historically Black college about fifty miles away), or UT, which had already integrated. One of the earliest examples in the digital collection includes correspondence from 1955 to 1957, in which a student named Ulysses S. Dotson first requested admission to the freshman class of 1956, and later asked to transfer to UH from Ohio Wesleyan University.<sup>7</sup> The application was forwarded to the president's office, and Clanton W. Williams sent a canned response that was repeated to Black applicants at each admission cycle between 1957 and 1960, noting that "the matter of desegregation is currently a subject of serious study on the part of the University and its Board of Governors."<sup>8</sup>

Despite assurances that UH was seriously studying the matter, a March 13, 1956, memorandum from Williams to A. D. Bruce concerning a faculty committee report on integration paints a different picture. The report outlines the "problem" of integration, which UH officials had been studying for a year, including the assumptions that UH would be "subject to the laws and court decisions" – namely *Sweatt* and *Brown* – making it "inevitable" that Black students will have to be admitted eventually. The report also noted the "moral and ethical responsibilities" involved in the decision to admit Black students but used "sociological factors" as a rationale to delay the desegregation process.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, the report alludes to three cases of qualified Black applicants that "may not be so easily dismissed." These three cases include:

- Dr. Freda C. Gooden Richardson, who obtained her doctoral degree from the Chicago College of Optometry in 1953 and sought to attend refresher optometry courses at UH to pass the Texas State Board of Optometry examination;
- TSU communications instructor Clarence W. Mangham, who was pursuing his Ph.D. at Leland Stanford Junior University and wished to take highly specialized courses in radio and television at UH – a program no southern Black-serving institution offered;
- Rachael D. Gardner, a Houston special education teacher who held a master's degree from TSU and sought to continue graduate-level special education coursework, which only UH, UT Austin, and Southwest Texas State Teachers College (now Texas State University) in San Marcos provided.<sup>10</sup>

In outlining these cases of qualified Black applicants, Williams noted that he recommended to "keep stalling." He stated that one UH attorney "sees no escape – that we may have no hopes that a court ruling would be favorable to our refusal to admit academically qualified Negroes."<sup>11</sup> As a result, Williams and the committee members recommended that the Board authorize admission of the three graduate students listed above; if additional qualified candidates applied before the fall of 1956, that they also be admitted; that the UH administration be empowered to admit



*A. D. Bruce served as president of UH from 1954 to 1956 and as chancellor of the UH System from 1956 to 1961.*

UH Photographs Collection, ark:/84475/do94881n650.

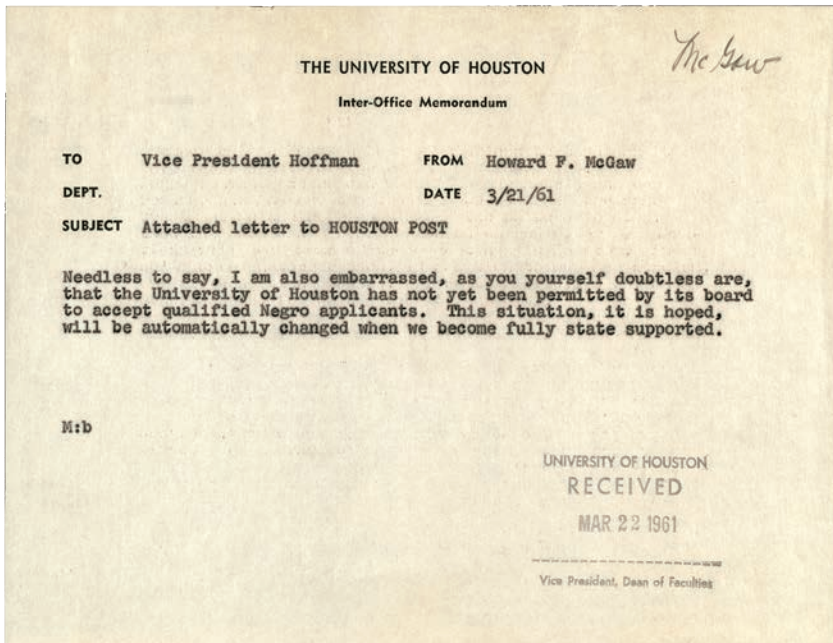
qualified candidates without board approval; and that press releases announcing UH's desegregation be prepared and released at a favorable time.

Despite all this, and against the recommendations of the faculty committee, in an excerpt from the minutes of the executive session of the Board of Regents dated June 12, 1956, then President A. D. Bruce made the following statement:

*In the light of current events, local and national, and in considering the problem from a long-range viewpoint, I do not feel now is the time for the University of Houston to integrate.*

*I do not feel that integration has progressed to the extent we first thought, and since this is a political year, making it difficult to get a clear picture of the real problem, I feel the University should not make a decision at this time.*

*From Dr. Williams' report which was mailed you a week ago, you learned we do not expect to have any suits on our hands. With the nation as a whole holding this matter in abeyance as it now appears to be doing, I do not feel the University of Houston should take the lead in integrating.*



A memo from Library Director Howard F. McGaw to Phillip Hoffman expresses his embarrassment that the university had not yet desegregated. President's Office Records, ark:/84475/d02252j772t.

For this reason, I recommend that the University of Houston continue its study on the subject, following the same policies we have observed in the past. If and when Houston becomes integrated, it is not my belief that the University should be the first to do so. [Emphasis in original.]

This recommendation is not for publication, and I do not care to announce it at this time.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the committee's recommendation to admit qualified Black applicants, Bruce's assessment resulted in the opposite outcome, giving the impression that the university's board and other leadership sought any excuse to indefinitely delay integration and justified it on the absence of lawsuits against UH. While continuing to tell applicants they were studying the matter, behind the scenes, UH administrators expressed dismay at the situation. In a March 1961 inter-office memo to then Vice President Philip G. Hoffman, Library Director Howard F. McGaw wrote, "[N]eedless to say, I am also embarrassed, as you yourself doubtless are, that the University of Houston has not yet been permitted by its board to accept qualified Negro applicants. This situation, it is hoped, will be automatically changed when we become fully state supported."<sup>13</sup>

Finally, by 1962, action on integration was set in motion. A memo dated January 15, 1962, from the registrar, Ramon A. Vitulli, to Hoffman, who by then had become the university's president, states that in 1961 the Office of Admissions had received approximately 175 inquiries from prospective African American students in person or by phone, and thirty-three rejection letters were mailed to both domestic and international applicants. Vitulli provided this assessment: "Based on the assumption that as a fully State supported

institution the University will be required to admit qualified Negroes in the fall of 1963 and thereafter, I recommend that we admit qualified Negroes in the fall of 1962 or before." He stated that integrating before any legal action forced it to occur would prevent harmful confusion and negative publicity to "the institution and the student body."<sup>14</sup>

The following week, Hoffman provided his remarks to the Board of Regents, echoing Vitulli's sentiment and stating that he hoped to "voluntarily and privately move towards" integration by admitting the first Black applicants in the summer of 1962 before it was legally required. A few new factors also encouraged the change. For four years, the National Science Foundation (NSF) had provided a grant to fund a summer institute in mathematics and electronics at UH aimed towards teachers in technical schools and junior colleges. In 1962,

one of the applicants was a Black TSU professor. Hoffman anticipated that the NSF's criteria for continuing to fund such programs would include "the absence of discriminatory policies," leading him to conclude that "this would be an opportunity on a very small scale to integrate both the institute and the University at a period when the reaction would be at a minimum."<sup>15</sup>



During Phillip G. Hoffman's tenure as president, UH admitted its first Black students who enrolled in classes in 1962.

*Houstonian* yearbook, 1962.





*A meeting between the executive committee of the UH Board of Governors and various UH administrators.*

*Houstonian yearbook, 1961.*

In response, a board member identified as Underwood provided the following anecdote: “I have had practical experience at Vanderbilt, and the way Dr. Hoffman has suggested worked like a charm there. Vanderbilt admitted two young [Black] students to the Law School some years ago. The Alumni just about died. However, the Ford Foundation was involved in a grant to Vanderbilt’s Law School, and on this basis, the President and Dean were able to select two extremely well-qualified Negro student[s] for admission to the Law School. One of these students was so outstanding that it is doubted anybody ever gave his color a thought.”<sup>16</sup>

Board member Fleming stated that in addition to admitting Black students, he would like to “establish a relationship with the TSU administration and faculty where we [UH] are known to be helpful to them in graduating [Black] teachers.” President Hoffman confirmed that UH had received “the fullest cooperation” from TSU president Dr. Samuel Nabrit and the TSU faculty. As an example, he explained that Dr. Freda Gooden Richardson, one of the three qualified Black applicants from 1956, had her application resolved when UH “got TSU to hire a teacher of ours to teach the subject she needed over there, and this was handled quietly and most satisfactorily.” In the end, several other board members expressed their approval of Hoffman’s approach, indicating that “he had their backing in any way needed.”<sup>17</sup>

With the board finally supporting desegregation, UH enrolled its first Black students in the summer sessions of 1962. Patrick J. Nicholson, at the time a director of development, provided a suggested integration policy statement for consideration by the governing board: “The University of Houston, as a final stage in its continuing study of integration, will now accept qualified colored students at all levels. This follows the successful completion of earlier stages in

which colored students were accepted first at the graduate level.” While the policy was apparently not discussed in the September 25, 1962 board meeting, at least twelve Black students were admitted and enrolled in the fall of 1962.<sup>18</sup>

As frustrating as it is now to witness the slow pace of change, the racially coded rationalizations, and the personal stories of qualified Black students who were rejected due to UH policies, it is impressive that this history has been preserved despite the negative light it sheds on the internal workings of the UH leadership at the time. The President’s Office Records provide a valuable, unfiltered perspective into the conversations taking place in the 1950s and 60s – but this is only one side of the story. While the administration asserted that “no racial discrimination was in effect” at UH in the years following the admission of Black students, the work of the Afro-Americans for Black Liberation (AABL) student group and their 1969 list of grievances demonstrate that Black students continued to experience segregation and discrimination at UH throughout the 1960s.<sup>19</sup> Archivists in UH Libraries’ Special Collections look forward to highlighting this side of the story by creating future digital collections that will document the AABL student group and its significant role in the civil rights movement at UH and in Houston. **HH**

**Bethany Scott** is the head of the Preservation and Reformatting Department at UH Libraries. She works closely with Special Collections to digitize and provide access to unique and historical materials from the archives.

The Digital Collections in the University of Houston Libraries can be accessed at <https://digitalcollections.lib.uh.edu/collections/6m311q71c>.



The Charity Guild of Catholic Women members gather in front of Charity Guild Shop at 1203 Lovett Boulevard in 2022.  
All photos courtesy of the Charity Guild of Catholic Women unless otherwise noted.

# Charity Guild of Catholic Women: *A Century of Caring*

A Classic Story of Can-do Determination,  
Texas Grit, and Houston Generosity

By Mary Frances Fabrizio

In the early 1920s, the economic engine of American enterprise stood poised to grow, bringing vast wealth and material goods to millions. As part of this growth, Houston was home to financiers, industrialists, and businessmen such as Jesse H. Jones and brothers Herman and George R. Brown who shaped the Houston economy. However, many residents did not enjoy the wealth and comfortable lifestyle of these prominent leaders. The effects of economic want were apparent in many areas, and some Houstonians grew determined to do something about it.

Among those who observed the community's pervasive poverty was Monsignor George Walsh, pastor of Church of the Annunciation in downtown Houston. The escalating infant death rate among his Mexican immigrant

parishioners shocked him, and he resolved to remedy it. Already well known for his love for the poor and particularly for this vulnerable population, he was aptly called "the social worker of his day."<sup>1</sup>

Msgr. Walsh decided that the Mexican community needed a free clinic and some concerned citizens who could and would financially support it. A group of his female parishioners formed an organization known today as Charity Guild of Catholic Women to provide this essential funding.

## **Fifty-nine Friends with a Heart for Children**

At Monsignor's request, Mrs. Lucian "Kate" Carroll, one of the most prominent women in the Catholic community, hosted a luncheon in her River Oaks home in October 1922. She asked her fifty-eight guests to donate \$1.00 each for a charity fund to benefit Msgr. Walsh's *Clinica*



Mrs. Lucian "Kate" Carroll, a founder of the Charity Guild of Catholic Women.

Photo courtesy of Kitty Bronec.

*Gratuita*, which was renamed San José Clinic in 1947.

The charity fund had humble beginnings for what would become a \$2-million-per-year charitable enterprise, Charity Guild Shop, owned and operated by Charity Guild of Catholic Women. These early women of compassion dedicated themselves to helping where needed but did not want to be burdened with the red tape of bylaws and scheduled meetings. Kate Carroll and the other charter members agreed, "We just got together, we were all friends, and saw where we were needed. So, we began to work."<sup>2</sup>

They invited others to join them as they conducted clothing drives, visited hospitals, and worked in the clinic. A mere two months after they began, they filled 300 Christmas stockings for children at Our Lady of Guadalupe School and gave \$70 for relief and another \$82 for Christmas baskets for needy people known to members.<sup>3</sup> This achievement in such a short time set the tone for Charity Guild's future.

Perhaps no call for help in those early days gripped the fifty-nine ladies' hearts more than realizing that many families had neither clothing nor blankets for their newborns. Sometimes parents lacked burial garments for their stillborn babies. Thus, the group began making layettes for the little ones – a selfless act so central to the original mission of Charity Guild that today members of the Sewing Committee still make layettes to distribute to agencies serving infants.



The Sewing Committee has been making layettes for newborns from the Guild's earliest days.

## Where Charity and Love Prevail

In the beginning, Msgr. Walsh's outreach focused on Houston's Mexican immigrants within the boundaries of Annunciation parish, but he soon realized that poverty was not confined to any one section of the city, and so this project grew. By 1926, Charity Guild had gained focus on its activities, defining its main objectives as assisting the clinic, sewing layettes, and providing volunteers and monetary



Members enjoy the St. Anthony Home Garden Party in June 1963.

aid. They appointed a liaison for the clinic and established committees for visiting hospitals, St. Anthony's Home, and the Social Services Lodge and Tuberculosis Camp.<sup>4</sup>

At first, the process for assisting the disadvantaged was simple and unstructured. An individual, a parish priest, or an organization with a need would reach out to a Guild member who brought the request to the membership for a vote. For example, Dr. Marshall Wallis, a volunteer pediatrician at San José Clinic, lacked enough milk for his young patients. His appeal to Msgr. Walsh found its way to a Charity Guild member who purchased the milk.<sup>5</sup>

Despite various worthy appeals, members never forgot their shared beginnings with San José Clinic. In October 1968, the membership voted to designate the clinic as their main project. They committed to making an annual donation to the clinic and set about raising the money each year. They hosted galas with auctions and luncheons featuring guest speakers. Proceeds from sales at Charity Guild Shop also helped the women reach their yearly goal. Over time, grants to the clinic evolved from \$2,500 to an award of \$50,000 today.<sup>6</sup>

Focus on the clinic did not limit the Charity Guild's outreach. Hurricanes, floods, and even a worldwide pandemic were no match for the members. They collected clothing for victims of catastrophic Gulf Coast hurricanes Camille in 1969 and Katrina in 2005. Hurricane Harvey devastated the city of Houston in 2017 and left the Charity Guild

building without power and surrounded by flooded streets. Despite that, members reopened the shop in three days and garnered the Mayor's Volunteer Houston Award.

What did deter them, although only for a brief time, was the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak, forcing the shop's closure for five months. Charity Guild Shop reopened in August 2020 with reduced hours of operation, precautions in place, and a renewed determination to make the Guild successful by serving customers, consignors, and, most importantly, the charities that depend on its grants.

## A Long Way from the Gas Station

Charity Guild has a 100-year history of helping the needy, young and old. Eventually, though, the mission began to solidify around meeting the needs of vulnerable children. The question then became, how could the Guild create a sustainable source of income to fulfill its mission. The group had a ready source of volunteers. The members had committed themselves to raising funds to help children. And they were bonded in their Catholic faith and belief in *Deus Caritas Est: God is Love*.

Ever inventive and energetic, the dedicated philanthropists decided to open a thrift shop in 1953 in an old gas station, the first location of Charity Guild Shop. A nostalgic Houstonian reminisced that the only problem was that "we didn't have any heat in the winter or any cool in the summer, and whenever it rained, the merchandise and the people were soaked."<sup>7</sup>



*Dr. George Quirk, husband of Charity Guild member Anne Quirk, distributes gifts at the annual Christmas party at San José Clinic in 2009.*



*In 1960, the Charity Guild purchased a house on Lovett Boulevard for the shop and expanded it in 1965, as shown here.*

Photo courtesy of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, RGD6N-1966.454.

The Guild soon leased another space at the corner of Richmond Avenue and Woodhead Street. A volunteer gratefully observed that after the move to Woodhead, the shop had "no more hulking gasoline pumps for decorations or open-air weather control." With space for more merchandise, the Guild increased its profits, and by March 1955, the bank account was \$3,024.55.<sup>8</sup>

Two more moves, both on W. Main Street, preceded the purchase in May 1960 of a 1920s era house at 1203 Lovett Boulevard. Finally, Charity Guild members realized their dream of holding title to real property. The group approved additions to the house in 1965 and again in 1978, with the highlight being the

addition of a second bathroom.<sup>9</sup>

Eventually, the beloved house began showing its age. To increase the shop's footprint and avoid expensive repairs on a deteriorating building, the only path forward was to demolish the house and rebuild. Charity Guild purchased a lot adjacent to the old house and developed a five-year plan to save for the future construction.

Guild members readily stepped up to donate toward a building fund and soon raised three-fourths of the funds necessary to break ground in 1994.<sup>10</sup> The following year, a bright new shop on Lovett Boulevard, completed under budget and one week early, replaced the original little house.

An addition in 2010 significantly increased both retail space and areas for shop administration and operation. Charity Guild Shop could now showcase quality furniture in charming vignettes and expand the boutique and jewelry departments. In the early days of running the shop, members loved to call it "the Neiman Marcus of the resale clothing shops in Texas."<sup>11</sup> The imposing building at 1203 Lovett Boulevard, which the Guild paid off two years early, could now live up to this designation. It was certainly a long way from the gas station.

## Every Business Day is a Busy Day

From Monday through Thursday, the volunteers in the Charity Guild Shop happily receive consignments of trendy apparel, practical housewares, unique knick-knacks, one-of-a-kind antiques, and quality furniture. A consignor since the nineties said, "The Charity Guild is a great place. Great people and a great way to spring clean and make money doing it. Highly recommend."<sup>12</sup>

Charity Guild volunteers decked out in their signature pink aprons can easily be spotted by shoppers who say they love finding bargains and appreciate the recycling feature of resale. Hoping to buy merchandise at the lowest cost, they especially like the scheduled reduction in price by 25 percent if an item has been in the shop more than thirty days and 50 percent if



*Invitation to the fundraising luncheon for new Charity Guild Shop, September 1993.*

it has remained there for forty-five days. It is not unusual to find that generations of families are loyal customers. As one customer put it, “I began coming to Charity Guild Shop with my mother and grandmother in 1968 when I was twelve years old. Now I come with my sister, daughter, granddaughter, and niece about twice a month.”<sup>13</sup>

Shoppers, consignors, and Guild members run across an array of the unexpected at Charity Guild Shop. The head of the shoe department once found a wad of one-hundred-dollar bills in the shoes she was pricing. Looking back, she said, “I called the consignor and she tearfully explained what she thought happened. Of course, I happily returned the money.”<sup>14</sup>

Another consignment included a valuable collector’s map of the United States, one of only 100 published around 1816 and valued at \$30,000. Again, the volunteer returned the item. The consignor expressed gratitude with a bequest to children’s charities and these words, “We are enclosing a donation check to the Charity Guild in the amount of \$1,800 in heartfelt appreciation for the integrity of your organization. ... We will be pleased to bless the children that the Charity Guild helps.”<sup>15</sup>

### **It Is All for the Children**

When their feet start to hurt after six hours standing at a cash register in Charity Guild Shop, members remind themselves that all their volunteer efforts benefit children. Ever-increasing revenue from shop sales has allowed the Guild to expand both the number of charities it benefits and the dollar amounts distributed. Faced with this success, the members soon realized that they needed a systematic and equitable method for choosing charities to receive grants.

In 1996 the Guild created a committee to accept and evaluate grant applications from charities that help children from conception to eighteen years. The newly formed Children’s Charities Committee was charged with vetting each applicant and then recommending the non-profits that should receive allocations from Charity Guild. Membership

approval completed this process. The committee originally received five to six requests for aid in any given year. Recently 100 or more agencies have applied for grants annually. In the past twenty-five years, Charity Guild of Catholic Women has awarded over \$7 million to 178 unique agencies that serve children in need.<sup>16</sup>

The services these grant recipients provide are as varied as the children who need a boost to thrive and become productive citizens. For example, Target Hunger delivers breakfast and lunch boxes to families. Cherish Our Children’s mission is counseling for middle schoolers with incarcerated parents. House of Tiny Treasures, another non-profit recipient, runs an early childhood program for homeless and low-income children. The needs are extensive, and these agencies, plus a multitude of others, fulfill the mission of charity towards children.

During the annual grant awards reception in February, each organization gratefully accepts the help they received from Charity Guild. Recipient testimonials confirm the many ways Charity Guild touches the lives of children. The founder of San Francisco Nativity Academy, which serves Houston’s Gulfton area, noted that third-grader Tiffany is thriving and “has been eager to learn from the very first day of school.” Mom of a cancer patient named Natalie expressed her gratitude to the Periwinkle Foundation, where her daughter “got to experience a fun week of day camp.” Second Servings picks up unused food from food businesses. Its president said, “We are glad the Guild agrees that redirecting perfectly edible surplus food to hungry children, instead of the landfill, is practical, efficient, and essential.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Celebrating Their Past, Innovating for Their Future**

Over the span of 100 years, the small group of women has grown to the 600-member Charity Guild of Catholic Women. The original \$59 they collected for charity has

increased to an annual commitment approaching \$500,000 for distribution to Greater Houston area children’s charities. In



*Working the customer service desk, member Frannie Gary proudly wears her apron showing the Charity Guild philosophy, “It’s all for the children.”*



Members Ruth Dougherty, left, and Helen Lewis, right, provide much-needed school supplies to children at the annual San José Clinic Back to School Party.

honor of a century of service, the members set a goal to distribute \$1,000,000 to children's charities between February 2022 and February 2023, and they are well on their way.

In 2021 and 2022, the Guild improved systems in Charity Guild Shop to make day-to-day operations more efficient and profitable. Even in the midst of these renovations, the women found time to honor their past and celebrate 100 years strong. To mark the beginning of a yearlong observance, Daniel Cardinal DiNardo celebrated a Mass at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in October 2021.

During his homily, the Cardinal recalled how the Guild and the San José Clinic, birthed around the same time, were like two diamonds woven into the thread of the Catholic faith in Houston "because they are brilliant, and they are important to the city. It's a beautiful indication of how superb the faith of women is and what they can do. Each member of the Guild plays a role."<sup>18</sup>

Throughout the centennial year, Guild members participated in 100 Acts of Kindness, a hands-on program providing supplies to some of the grant recipients. The generous ladies collected mountains of socks and undergarments for Clothed by Faith and stacked up pots of Play-Doh for Harrison's Heroes to use in art therapy at hospitals. The bins for diapers donated to the Blessed Beginnings Pregnancy and Parenting Life Center at Catholic Charities were overflowing. Band-Aids, alcohol pads, and other supplies piled up for Christus HealthCare to stock school clinics.

In April 2022, Charity Guild celebrated its 100th year at a joint birthday party with San José Clinic at the Houston Zoo. A ball in October of 2022, a joyful evening of dinner and dancing, was capped off by the presentation of the Founder's Award, gratefully accepted by Kate Carroll's granddaughter Kitty Bronec and grandson Joe Goeters.

The final event of the year-long observance was a closing Mass at Church of the Annunciation, the parish where it all started, followed by a reception at Charity Guild Shop. Father

James Murphy, CSB, president of St. Thomas High School and Guild Chaplain, celebrated the Mass and stopped by the shop afterwards to lift a toast to the Guild. In true southern tradition, the ladies were "at home" – in the shop – to end a year of festivity.

During a year of celebrating a century of caring, members welcomed forty-seven new volunteers from nineteen different Catholic parishes to the ranks of Charity Guild of Catholic Women. These provisional members have worked in Charity Guild Shop greeting customers and assisting consignors. They have toured San José Clinic and learned about the historical connection between the two charitable organizations. They have learned and lived the mission of assisting children in need and lifting each other up in prayer.

The new provisional class, one of the largest in recent history, points to the promise of many more years of compassionate volunteerism. Kate Carroll continues to inspire the women who have sewn layettes for infants, have held at-risk children in their laps, and have worked toward improving the lives of many little ones. The Charity Guild has celebrated the past and now looks to the future, the next 100 years of caring. **✚**



Cardinal DiNardo greets the family of founder Kate Carroll at the Centennial Opening Mass in October 2021.

**Mary Frances Fabrizio**, an Ohio native and graduate of Michigan State University, relocated to San Antonio, Texas in 1975. She moved to Houston and worked for thirty-two years at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Medical School. She joined Charity Guild of Catholic Women in 2003 and has served as recording secretary, membership chair, member and chair of the Children's Charities Committee, member of the Centennial Committee, and currently serves as chair of Archives.

**Charity Guild Shop**  
 1203 Lovett Boulevard, Houston, 77006  
 713.529.0995, [charityguildshop.org](http://charityguildshop.org)  
 Wednesday-Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.  
*Consignments by appointment only*

# Discovering Greens Bayou: Activism and Community in Harris County



*Greens Bayou watershed imposed on rendering of Harris County.*

Photo courtesy of Bayou Preservation Association.

*By Teresa Tomkins-Walsh*

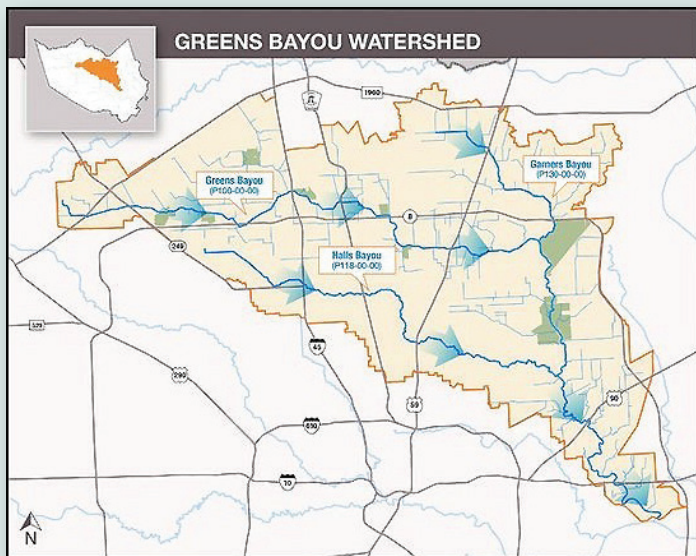
**B**efore human habitation, water flowed through bayous, earthen conduits designed by nature to drain, filter, and replenish watersheds. As nomadic humans populated Southeast Texas (beginning around 11,000-10,000 B.C.E.), cycles of weather and flooding governed human flows. Rains, floods, and droughts came to Southeast Texas and human inhabitants artfully navigated and accommodated their environment. European contact began in the early sixteenth century with the Narváez expedition, described and published in Cabeza de Vaca's anthropological notes. Early Anglo immigrants settled in Harris County during the 1820s, slowly at first and then more densely as opportunity attracted new arrivals and inhabitants multiplied.<sup>1</sup>

Greens Bayou watershed is contained wholly within Harris County, in contrast to some regional watersheds that tap into adjoining counties. Comprising 212 square miles of drainage and including 308 miles of open streams, Greens Bayou watershed sprawls like the lopped off, gnawed ear of an ogre felled in northern Harris County. Its headwaters rise north of Jersey Village close to the Jones and Mills roads intersection

(29°58' N, 95°35' W), then flow forty-three miles east and then south, and finally dip into the Houston Ship Channel.<sup>2</sup>

Houston is a city of flows. Geographer, Maria Kaika, posits that cities or built environment are social constructions designed to detach or insulate humans from nature. Water's crucial relationship to city and home, its fundamental importance to city building, and its fluid quality reveal that nature and city are not separate; they are hybrid. Modernization promotes the myth that nature can be tamed. Disaster reveals nature is an intruder and a threat to development. Water flows within channels and overflows through natural processes meant to cleanse, refresh, and sometimes redesign. People, goods, and capital flow, sometimes in concert with water and sometimes in contraflows that can enhance, overwhelm, or distort sustaining flows of water.<sup>3</sup>

Twenty-two watersheds thread through Harris and contiguous counties.<sup>4</sup> Greens Bayou watershed, including its Hall's Bayou tributary, is topographically the largest, yet the Greens Bayou is less entrenched in public imagination or civic priorities than Houston's iconic Buffalo Bayou. Buffalo Bayou is central to Houston's origin lore. In 1836, real estate developers established Houston on the banks of Buffalo



Green lines highlight Greens Bayou and tributaries within the watershed. Photo courtesy of Greens Bayou Coalition.

Bayou for all the reasons humans are drawn to water: convenience, strategic location, waste disposal, navigation, and, most vividly perhaps, dreams of a golden future of affluence.

Buffalo Bayou dominates Houston's collective memory of civic achievement, catastrophic flooding, and watershed enhancement. Houston presides as county seat of Harris County, with many county buildings supported on cement knees immersed in the urban segment of the bayou. Flowing from west to east along Harris County's horizontal axis, Buffalo Bayou extends fifty-five miles from its rural headwaters in Ft. Bend County through the core of the city, dissects Houston's central business district, and meets terminally with the Houston Ship Channel. Overall, Buffalo watershed drains 102 square miles along 106 miles of open streams.<sup>5</sup>

Houston's 1935 flood intensified civic boosterism directed at reducing flood damages on Buffalo Bayou, largely because downtown Houston and the Ship Channel suffered catastrophic flood damages. As a result of such activism, the 1936 Flood Control Act addressed Buffalo Bayou, leading to the formation of the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) in 1937. Working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), HCFCD developed a flood control plan for Buffalo, White Oak, and Brays Bayous, a plan interrupted by the Second World War and then worked and reworked into the mid-twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> By the 1960s, affluent citizens disrupted HCFCD work and appealed for appropriate flood management coupled with preservation of urban wilds along Buffalo Bayou west of Shepherd Drive.<sup>7</sup>

Harris County's initial flood plan concentrated on bayous that crossed the city central, but none of Harris County's waterways were immune from flooding. As human activity and built environment expanded in Southeast Texas, the natural flows of flooding engaged humans and habitat. Harris County Flood Control District reports that "Harris County suffered through 16 major floods from 1836 to 1936, some of which crested at more

than 40 feet." Since 1900, Harris County has had 33 major flood events.<sup>8</sup>

While Buffalo Bayou's course is a quarter longer in miles than Greens Bayou, the Greens Bayou watershed covers twice the breadth and features a third more miles of open streams. Well into the twentieth century, attention to Greens Bayou was more sporadic and less dynamic while flooding recurred. Between July 1953 and February 1969, ten floods along Greens Bayou reached discharge rates ranging from 3,000 to 7,000 cubic feet per second.<sup>9</sup> Viewed historically as less significant, perhaps, to Houston/Harris County fortunes with its centralized interests, the Greens Bayou watershed nonetheless represented identifiable potential for natural stewardship and community development.

Critics of mid-twentieth century growth and development patterns decry Houston's sprawling, chaotic outward expansion, citing the loss of a sense of community as one of the casualties. Urban historian, Martin Melosi, suggests that there are different ways of viewing "community" and the competing forces of community cohesion and diffusion more accurately describe the tensions of urban/suburban expansion. In global terms, centrifugal forces divide communities when suburbs acquire distinct identities and compete for resources. Countering centripetal forces unify and strengthen newer communities. Melosi employs the Houston example to describe how new forms of community arise around "business activity centers" that grow neighborhoods connected with freeways.<sup>10</sup> In this instance, freeway flows are centrifugal by supporting suburban expansion but are also centripetal by galvanizing the life of a suburb.

Building what became the Greater Greenspoint Area exemplifies the complexity of centrifugal and centripetal forces. Splintered in two by Greens Bayou, Greenspoint expanded dramatically in the 1970s and 1980s. A strategically located transportation nexus, Greenspoint sits with Hardy Toll Road to the east and is split east-west by I-45 and north-south by Beltway 8. Located in the westerly stretch of the Greens Bayou watershed and bordered along a northern



Navigation along lower Greens Bayou, 1925.

Photo courtesy of Harris County Flood Control District.



segment of the Halls Bayou watershed, Greenspoint became an active business center in Houston after completion of the Intercontinental Airport in 1969 and construction of the eponymous Greenspoint Mall in 1976.<sup>11</sup>

Greenspoint Mall became Houston's largest enclosed mall. Hotels, business complexes, and multi-family dwellings flourished in the area. In 1978 Exxon subsidiary, Friendswood Development Company, purchased hundreds of acres of greenfield land, planning 5,000 apartments and eight office complexes. Greenspoint flourished while Houston lived on oil, as the oil industry blazed in a "golden era." At the beginning of a national recession, workers flocked to a seemingly immune Texas. Then oil prices floundered, banks collapsed, and real estate cratered.<sup>12</sup>

Starting in the 1980s and through the 1990s, Greenspoint stumbled downhill from the shining metropolitan node its planners had envisioned. Prioritizing business and buildings over amenities, Greenspoint designers kneaded development codes, tax breaks, and floodplain maps. In 1995, Exxon divested its residential properties and targeted its fundamental energy business.<sup>13</sup> Narrow economic priorities, compacted built environment, and dwindling economic capacity coalesced to disrupt and defer the suburban vision that had impelled the creation of the Greenspoint area during the 1970s. Related to these conditions was the concomitant demographic transition that transformed the Greenspoint area over three decades.<sup>14</sup>

Houston's Greenspoint's story is a cautionary tale and parable of potential. In 1981, as visions for Greenspoint's prospects mushroomed, centripetal/centrifugal forces mingled when Woodlands Development Corporation and Friendswood Development Company began exploring options for a north Harris-south Montgomery County improvement association. North Houston Association (NHA) formed in 1982 with twenty-two initial members backing a mission to "advancing issues associated with transportation, the environment, and monitoring development trends to improve and enhance the business climate and quality of life within the region."<sup>15</sup>

Bayou flows from upper to lower reaches link consequences. Historically, Upper Greens Bayou in particular suffered the stresses of extensive urbanization and exclusion from central city/county priorities: "In Harris County one bayou [Greens Bayou] stands out as an area that has not received much attention or flood mitigation analysis over the years." Yet, flooding along Greens and its major tributary, Halls Bayou, continues into the twenty-first century. According to National Weather Service data collected from the flood gauge on



*Greens Bayou, as seen here in 1994, from the home of Dee Owens, coordinator of the Greens Bayou Project.*

Photo courtesy of Dee Owens Maner.

I-45 (just north of West Greens Road and Greenspoint Mall), Greens Bayou reached or exceeded major flood stage (87.7 feet) four times between 1969 and 2017. The same gauge measured moderate flood stage (86.6 feet) three times and flood stage (84.8 feet) four times during the same period, for a total of thirteen flood stage crests within a listing of twenty-five historic crests.<sup>16</sup>

Further downstream, on Greens Bayou (just past Green River Drive, slightly southeast from the Halls Bayou's swing around Brock Park and the Halls Bayou intersection with Greens Bayou), another gauge measured nineteen major flood stage crests (33 feet and above) between 1973 and 2019 within a total of forty-two historic crests. Tropical Storm Allison in 2001 and Hurricane Harvey in 2017 brought devastating flood levels throughout the watershed. Hurricane Harvey flooded more homes in the Greens Bayou watershed than any other watershed except Brays Bayou.<sup>17</sup>

As powerful commercial forces urbanized upper Greens Bayou watershed, private citizens demonstrated the clout of personal action during the 1990s with activism directed toward not only flood mitigation but also toward water quality and refuse accumulation along the lower reaches of Greens Bayou. David High, a retired Union Carbide manager, lived along Greens Bayou, where he enjoyed the bayou view, nature walks, forest ambience, and wildlife sightings. After flooding in 1989 invaded residential structures along the lower reaches of Greens Bayou, High became an outspoken advocate for watershed management with the Bayou Preservation Association (BPA). By High's time, BPA was a pillar in Houston's environmental community.<sup>18</sup>



*Jack Drake Park is the trailhead for the Greens Bayou Trail, a Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program (STEP) that links other parks in the North Houston District. A collaboration between Greens Bayou Coalition and North Houston District, the park opened in 2018.*

Photo courtesy of Greens Bayou Coalition.

High implored city, county, and state officials to work toward flood management and water quality on Greens Bayou. High wrote in 1990, “There are two crucial elements to a bayou, pollution and flooding. This must employ policing and enforcement of pollution control and design and implementation of responsible flood control measures. Both of these elements affect the quality of life on the bayou.”<sup>19</sup>

High, a visible and vocal advocate for ecologically sensitive improvements to reduce property damages in the Greens Bayou watershed, campaigned and coordinated the acquisition of property to create the Coolgreen Corridor. Backed by BPA, High encouraged residents to sell or donate property and promoted conservation easements.<sup>20</sup> David High’s efforts benefitted the lower reaches of Greens Bayou by removing built environment from flood pathways, and his Coolgreen Corridor is now part of a park managed by the Houston Parks Board.

Equally visible and ceaselessly energetic, Dee Owens had managed swimming pools and taught gymnastics. Her family grew around Greens Bayou for four generations, but she and her family purchased residential property right on Greens Bayou in April 1994, so she could view the bayou from her home. After a heavy rainfall, floating and grounded debris blemished Owens’s view. Futile efforts to identify a responsible agency for cleanup led her to a responsive Jim Fonteno, Precinct 2’s Harris County Commissioner, who requested a written proposal. Owens proposed a cooperative team that included fifteen entities, including Harris County Supervision and Corrections, the Harris County Attorneys Office, City of Houston, American Red Cross, U.S. Coast Guard, Houston Zoo, University of Houston, and San Jacinto College.<sup>21</sup>

Owens’s plan tapped into the labor of Harris County probationers who needed to work off community service hours. Probationers learned CPR, first aid, water safety, boatmanship, wildlife management, as well as vegetation control and resilience. Owens anticipated that training experience would benefit probationers upon their release.<sup>22</sup>

Citing the success of her efforts, Owens unveiled her



*David High from BPA, far right, Dee Owens, and representatives of Precinct 3 look on as the “Bayou Posse” demonstrates water testing, CPR, and canoeing maneuvers, circa 1995.*

Photo courtesy of Dee Owens Maner.

Greens Bayou Project prototype as a systemic solution to monitor, clean, and maintain all Houston waterways.<sup>23</sup> During 1995, the Greens Bayou Project, renamed the Bayou Posse by the probationers themselves, cleaned miles of bayou and tackled debris in the Houston Ship Channel.<sup>24</sup> At startup, Owens’s project received funding from county, state, and non-profit sources, but funding needed to maintain and expand the project evaporated with administrative and legal complications. Herculean fundraising efforts proved unsuccessful, and the Bayou Posse retired sometime during 1996.<sup>25</sup>

Both David High and Dee Owens Maner began as “not in my back yard” (NIMBY) activists, but like so many NIMBYists, including Houston’s renowned Terry Hershey, their concerns expanded as they studied the breadth of the problem. Citizen activists bring personal zeal to community improvement, but they struggle to succeed alone. Histories of environmental champions are often the histories of nascent organizations. David High and Dee Owens Maner achieved measured success as liaising forces within Harris County.

While David High addressed residential property losses, influential property owners in North Houston appealed to the State Legislature for a special purpose district to complement government services in the Greenspoint area. The North Houston District née Greater Greenspoint Management District emerged from this effort in 1991. The District’s mission “advocates for projects and services that attract the best in commercial and residential life to our appealing, safe, accessible and green activity center.” Jack Davis headed up the initial District management team. Damages in the Greenspoint area of \$50 million from Tropical Storm Allison prompted his team’s interest in an initiative to address damages and improvements. As the team brainstormed ideas, they realized that collaborating with the well-established NHA (1982) would reap optimum results.<sup>26</sup>

Together NHA and the District created Greens Bayou Coalition (GBC) née Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition (GBCC) in late 2005. Participants in GBCC included school districts,



*Under the watchful eye of Dr. Bloom at the University of Houston, Bayou Crew #6 learns to survive in the water fully clothed, circa 1995.*

Photo courtesy of Dee Owens Maner.

City of Houston departments, chambers of commerce, Harris County Flood Control District and other Harris County entities, Harris County Toll Road Authority, Houston-Galveston Area Council, state agencies, Texas legislators, and U.S. Congress members representing districts with the Greens

Bayou Corridor. Joe Turner, Houston Parks and Recreation Department's director, urged that the entire length of bayou receive planning and project attention.<sup>27</sup> GBCC's "corridor" concept was an innovation directed initially toward developing the Greens Bayou Corridor as an essential, attractive, and well-planned multi-use waterway, linear park and trail system, utility corridor, and high capacity cross-county transit/highway link to foster economic development, minimize flooding, and preserve desirable greenspace.

Through NHA's executive director, Paula Lenz, leadership and administrative support sustained GBCC's vision concepts, stakeholder participation, and Master Plan. By March 2009, NHA had relinquished its facilitator role and worked with the district to hire GBCC's own executive director.<sup>28</sup>

GBCC's Master Plan became a significant vision concept. GBCC set up committees according to four reaches within the Greens Bayou corridor.<sup>29</sup> Working with the National Park Service's Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program, GBCC conducted a community-based study to determine constituent priorities. Participants included government agencies and officials, community-based organizations, and area businesses. Master Plan goals included conservation of natural resources, parks and recreation venues, interconnected trail systems, landscaping to enhance aesthetics and wildlife habitat, and project sustainability within each of the four reaches.<sup>30</sup>

Corridor-wide projects included clean-up and restoration, a trail system on both sides of the bayou, and "trail wayfinding," signage, including warnings of terrain change and maps for directions and points of interest. Corridor-wide priorities selected as most popular were connectivity, followed by construction of parks and recreation facilities. Third was the addition of natural areas along the Greens

Bayou corridor. Neither sustainability/cleanup nor landscaping/habitat restoration evoked much excitement.<sup>31</sup>

Discarding "Corridor" in the organization name, GBC proceeded with aspects of the Master Plan. GBC's volunteer projects include tree planting, trash cleanup, trail building, and invasive

plant removal. Kayaking for Kids began in 2014 to take inner city youth on kayaking trips.<sup>32</sup> An annual gala and regatta promote the organization and raise funds. A significant GBC accomplishment is the renovation and creation of parks along the bayou.

After a six-year advocacy campaign involving multiple trips to Washington, DC, GBC's former executive director Jill Bouillon announced in 2015 a \$55 million federal award for the Antoine Basin.<sup>33</sup> Although GBC's initial mission included flood mitigation efforts, HCFCD now assumes the local role in identifying and managing flood projects, as always with cooperation from GBC, whose mission "promotes resilience, economic development and quality of life in the Greens Bayou watershed."<sup>34</sup> Hurricane Harvey intensified national and federal attention on Houston flooding. As funded projects progress, local entities look toward flood resilience as an approach to co-habitation with floodways.

Instances of activism over time and across the breadth of the Greens Bayou watershed illustrate centrifugal and centripetal forces inherent in community building. Coalitions develop a distinctive character to address problems or opportunities, in the process attracting cooperative elements. Individuals, like David High and Dee Owens Maner, not only stand up and apart to address a problem but also develop strength and reinforcement by inspiring others and forming coalitions.

Greens Bayou is a sweeping, diverse watershed. Over time, those who tackle the challenges along the bayou pull apart and flow together in a reciprocal flow of energy that is the foundation of community. **H**

**Teresa (Terry) Tomkins-Walsh, Ph.D.**, historian and archivist, retired from University of Houston Center for Public History, where she managed the Houston History Archives for thirteen years. Now she writes freelance on diverse topics, including Houston's environmental history.



*Twenty-six drums of hazardous waste located by the "Bayou Posse" work crews were retrieved and disposed of by the Environmental Protection Agency and TxDOT, circa 1995.*  
Photo courtesy of Dee Owens Maner.

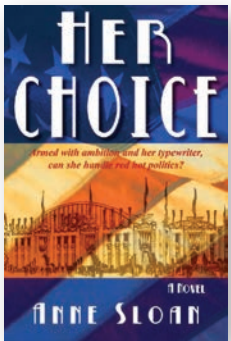


*Coca-Cola volunteers joining Greens Bayou Coalition on a clean-up Saturday, circa 2021.*  
Courtesy of Greens Bayou Coalition.

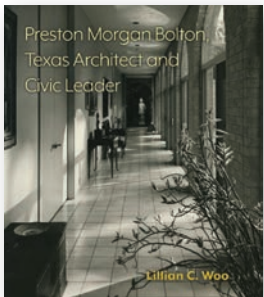
## BOOKS



***Making Space for Women: Stories from Trailblazing Women of NASA's Johnson Space Center*** by Jennifer M. Ross-Nazzal, Ph.D. (TAMU Press, 2022) draws on more than twenty oral histories to talk about the changing roles of women involved in NASA's Johnson Space Center (JSC). JSC historian Ross-Nazzal highlights women from varied backgrounds and job responsibilities, including mission specialist Joan E. Higginbotham, and Kathryn Sullivan, the first US woman to walk in space.

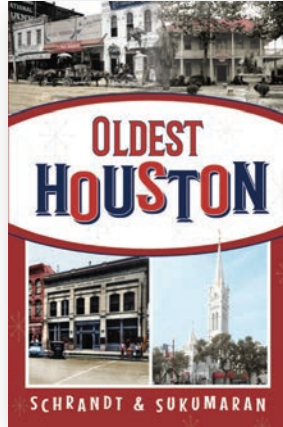


***Her Choice*** (Stephen F. Austin University Press, 2022), a new novel by Houston author and historian Anne Sloan, follows the story of journalist Phillis Flanagan who arrives in Houston in anticipation of the 1928 National Democratic Convention. However, a lynching occurs less than a week before the big event, leaving city officials scrambling to cover it up before the expected throng of visitors arrive, presenting harsh realities for the journalist.



***Preston Morgan Bolton, Texas Architect and Civic Leader*** (TAMU Press, 2022), by economist and author Lillian C. Woo, discusses the life of award-winning architect Preston Morgan Bolton, a man particularly known for his aesthetic designs of residential homes in Houston for over sixty-plus years.

Woo has included some of Bolton's award-winning designs in this work.



***Oldest Houston*** (Reedy Press, 2022) by Lydia Schrandt and Biju Sukumaran features ninety of the Houston area's oldest establishments, from churches to businesses, restaurants, and landmarks. Reading the stories will be a walk down Memory Lane for long-time Houstonians, but some may find themselves saying, "I never heard of that!" As travel writers, Biju and Lydia journeyed from

Austin to Asia, South America, and Europe for ten years before settling in Biju's hometown of Houston prior to the COVID pandemic.

Intrigued by Houston's neighborhoods, food scene, and multiculturalism, they began exploring the city to create a book for Reddy Press's "oldest" series. Identifying the oldest instead of the first in a category enabled them to create a living history that chronicled places people could visit. To begin the process, Lydia recalled, "We made a list of all the things that felt quintessentially Houston ... [and] researched what the oldest versions of those might be."

Biju explained they did "a lot of pandemic exploration" looking for interesting places when access to travel was limited. He said, "You'd see a hardware store or a donut shop and go, 'huh, wonder what the oldest one is?'" Some of Lydia and Biju's favorites include the Original Kolache Shop (1956), which is still family-owned and run; Glenwood Cemetery (1871), for its park-like setting; The Original Ninfa's (1973), which Biju recalls was the only place his family found spicy food when they moved to Houston; and the historic Sixth Ward (1874) for its eclectic mix of different things.

For you Houston aficionados, before thumbing through the book, scan the table of contents and see how many you can identify before diving in to read these fascinating bits of Houston history.

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## Announcements



*Pictured from left to right: Dr. Debbie Harwell, editor of Houston History; Grace Conroy, recent 100 Years of Stories intern; Samantha de León, Carey C. Shuart 100 Years of Stories Graduate Assistant; Carey C. Shuart; Mary Manning, associate librarian at UH Libraries; Fujio Watanabe, manager of Media Production at Houston Public Media; and Dr. Monica Perales, director of the UH Center for Public History.*

*Photo courtesy of Houston Public Media*

Lighting the path to the UH centennial celebration in 2027, the Center for Public History (CPH), *Houston History* magazine, Houston Public Media, and the University of Houston Libraries worked to create video and radio spots to share and preserve the stories of the university's people and institutions that have defined the city and region. The 100 Years of Houston celebration event in June featured a unique "behind-the-scenes" look at how the videos and radio spots were created – from archivists who curate and provide access to UH and Houston-focused research materials, to student researchers crafting the historical narrative, to Houston Public Media videographers and producers distilling the content into a three-minute (or less) spotlight. To watch the "behind-the-scenes" video, visit <https://uh.edu/class/ctr-public-history/> and click on Programs, then 100 Years of Stories.



Photos courtesy of the UH Center for Mexican American and Latino/a Studies and Latino cARTographies.



Latino cARTographies will be on display at the Alley Theatre December 2-30, 2022, two hours prior to performances of *What-a-Christmas!*

## Thank you!

*Houston History* wishes to thank panelists Dr. Pamela Quiroz, Juana Guzmán, Mikaela Selley, Laura Lopez Cano, and Jesse Sifuentes for the insightful discussion of Latino cARTographies and what this digital art form means to our understanding of Latino art, its history, and the importance of making that art accessible. Created by the UH Center for Mexican American and Latino/a Studies (CMALS) under the direction of Dr. Quiroz, Latino cARTographies features art from over 170 local artists and made a spectacular impression on everyone who had the chance to touch and experience this technological marvel.

The event was held at The Heritage Society where attendees could also see one of the artworks in person, the mural *Mexican-American History & Culture in 20th Century Houston*, created by panelists Laura Lopez Cano and Jesse Sifuentes. The magazine launch event was sponsored by the UH Center for Public History Lecture Series in collaboration with CMALS and The Heritage Society.

Thank you all for a night to remember!

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## The Legacy of Marguerite Ross Barnett: A Modern Vanguard in Education

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### Discovering Greens Bayou: Activism and Community in Harris County

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