

HOUSTON history

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Agents of Change



Center for Public History
College of Liberal Arts
and Social Sciences

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR – Becoming Agents of Change



Debbie Z. Harwell, editor.

When I think about change, my thoughts turn to Michael Jackson's song "Man in the Mirror." If you are not familiar with the lyrics, Jackson talks about wanting to make a difference, to make things right, battling issues like hunger, racism, and war. Ultimately, he issues a challenge to himself and to us to be the change we want to see in the world:

*I'm starting with the man in the mirror
I'm asking him to change his ways
And no message could've been any clearer
If you wanna make the world a better place
Take a look at yourself and then make a change*

As Center for Public History students selected items for an exhibit featuring the 100 Years of Stories: Documenting a Century at the University of Houston project, one theme emerged throughout the stories: students, alumni, faculty, staff, and administrators historically took it upon themselves to make the innovative changes they wanted to see – they became the agents of change.

Almost 100 years ago, a group of students graduating from high school told Houston Independent School District (HISD) superintendent E. E. Oberholtzer that they needed to go to college and asked for his help. Houston was on its way to doubling in size and adding four new high schools (two black and two white) between 1920 and 1930, but the city's only higher education option was the exclusive Rice Institute, which did not fit most students' work schedules or their academic credentials. Oberholtzer agreed with the students, and HISD quickly established two junior colleges that became the forerunners of the University of Houston (UH) and Texas Southern University. As Houston grew, students and community members continued to demand more of the university, and it delivered.

This issue highlights several individuals and programs that led the way in making the world a better place. For example, Burdette Keeland, a UH College of Architecture graduate and professor, taught for over forty years training young architects. He modernized home and building designs still seen in Houston and served on the City of Houston Planning Commission for over thirty years. Although Houstonians continued to resist zoning and a comprehensive design plan, Keeland's ideas for things like an ordinance requiring developers to plant trees and build sidewalks made Houston more livable.

In the 1960s, public art was an emerging trend to make art more accessible, and UH led the way in Texas. The UH Board of Regents designated a percentage of new construction funds to acquire and commission public art. When the program celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, UH President Renu Khator emphasized the importance of the arts and art education "for their inherent power to find a community's passion and sustain its cultural identity."

Three Cougars passed the torch to create opportunities for women in the military. It began with alumnus and then Brigadier General Barrye Price who served as the Army's point person to Congress in 2011 in overturning the Direct Ground Combat Exclusion Rule. This led to opening all military occupational specialties for women in all branches of military service. LTC Melissa Comiskey helped implement the change in 2016 as part of the first group to integrate female infantry and armor officers, followed by working to change the culture to one of acceptance. Recently, 2LT Katelyn Kubosh became the first female graduate from UH Army ROTC to enter infantry training as a second lieutenant.

Administrators also played key roles in making innovative changes that moved UH up the ladder academically. This has culminated with the efforts of current UH System Chancellor and UH President Renu Khator who joined the university in 2008. Her vision for change was ambitious, and under her leadership, UH rapidly reached Tier One status as a research university in 2011, garnered a Phi Beta Kappa chapter in 2016, reached its goal of raising a billion dollars eighteen months ahead of schedule in 2019, and joined the Big 12 athletic conference this year. President Khator also set a goal to establish a medical school at UH, and that dream became a reality when the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine accepted its inaugural class in 2020. The college is dedicated to alleviating the shortage of primary care physicians and the lack of diverse medical professionals who can provide culturally competent care.

An institution that resulted from a small group of high school kids asking for a chance to go to college is now a highly rated research university with students, faculty, staff, administrators, and hundreds of thousands of alumni who have become agents of change as leaders in the arts, science, business, education, and the professions. Several of these stories have appeared in *Houston History* magazine for 100 Years of Stories, a three-year collaborative project funded by Carey C. Shuart. Ten stories were featured in Houston Public Media's *100 Years of Houston* video, television, and radio spots. And, coming this fall, images, documents, and items celebrating those stories will be part of an exhibit in the MD Anderson Library at the University of Houston as we celebrate those who have answered the call in history to – as Jackson's song implores us to do – "make that change." ■■

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Houston History is published twice a year by the Welcome Wilson Houston History Collaborative in the Center for Public History at the University of Houston. We welcome manuscripts, interviews, photographic essays, and ideas for topical issues on the history and culture of the Houston region, broadly defined.

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Cover photo: Committed to UH athletic as well as academic excellence, President Renu Khator cuts the net following Houston's 90-79 win over SMU on March 7, 2019, securing a share of the American Athletic Conference championship. Houston won the title three days later against Cincinnati, clinching the Cougars' first regular season title since the 1991-92 season, when UH played in the Southwest Conference.

Photo courtesy of University of Houston Athletics.

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UH President Renu Khator delivers her eleventh Fall Address in October 2019, highlighting the many achievements of staff, students, and faculty and sharing her excitement about the new College of Medicine. All photos courtesy of the University of Houston unless otherwise noted.

Not If, but When: *Renu Khator and the Evolution of the University of Houston*

By Samantha de León

As the University of Houston (UH) inches closer to its centennial in 2027, the anniversary offers the perfect opportunity to reflect on the school's past and its growth. UH has blossomed from its early days as a junior college to a research institution with record-breaking enrollment, national rankings for multiple academic programs, over a billion dollars donated to its recent fundraising campaign, and admission to the Big 12 Conference. These recent milestones are owed largely to Dr. Renu Khator, who became president of the University of Houston and chancellor of the University of Houston System in 2008, making her the first female chancellor in Texas and the first Indian immigrant to lead a comprehensive U.S. research university. She has elevated UH onto the national stage, making it one of the top schools in Texas and the nation. Her ambitions and vision for the campus remain evident with the creation of the new Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine and impressive improvements to campus infrastructure. Achieving this level of success did not come easy, however, and the journey began on the other side of the world.

Humble Beginnings

As a young girl, Renu was keen on education. Growing up in Uttar Pradesh, India, she had few female role models to follow, however. "I grew up in a family, in a town, where



Renu's mother, Suman Maheshwari, and father, Satish Chandra Maheshwari, greatly influenced Renu's upbringing and education.

I just did not see any woman, after being married, have any kind of career or even going to school,” Khator said candidly. “But one thing for sure ... I had passion for education. ... I wanted to get the highest degree possible.” The government did not guarantee women an education during her youth in the sixties and seventies; by 1991, less than 40 percent of India’s 330 million girls and women aged seven and older were literate.¹



Suresh and Renu Khator shortly after getting married in 1973.

Driven by her passion, Renu earned her bachelor’s degree at Kanpur University and then, in 1973, persuaded her parents to allow her to pursue her master’s in education at Allahabad University, all by the age of eighteen. “I loved being in school ... that was my dream,” she recalled. Renu held on to that dream, even after her father arranged for her to marry Dr. Suresh Khator that same year and ended her master’s degree pursuits at Allahabad University. Suresh was a Purdue University student who lived in the United States at the time. Recalling her wedding day, she said, “I was crying a lot ... [saying] ‘My life is over.’ [Suresh] asked me why, and I said, ‘Because now I cannot study and that was my only dream.’ So, he promised me that he will make sure I do get my dream.”²

True to his word, Suresh secured a meeting with Purdue University’s graduate office. Although initially skeptical, Purdue officials allowed Renu to sit in on two classes as an unenrolled student to prove herself. Not yet fluent in English, she watched eight hours of television a day to solidify her grammar. After Purdue admitted her, Renu received her master’s in political science just a year and a half later, in 1975. By 1985, she had earned her Ph.D. in political science and public administration.³

Renu Khator’s education opened the door to teaching at the University of South Florida (USF), where Suresh also worked. She held a variety of different positions over twenty-two years at USF, where she eventually worked her way up to provost and senior vice president. In 2007, a UH search committee selected her as the sole finalist for the dual position of UH President and University of Houston System Chancellor. Her decision to leave USF was not one she made lightly. “I always believed that great universities are built by great communities. So, I had to make sure that I was going to a place where I would be a good fit,” Khator admitted. “Houston, it was amazing—not just the absolutely fabulous diversity of the city but the can-do attitude where I felt like, ‘Okay, maybe new things are possible.’”⁴

The March to Excellence

Khator arrived at the University of Houston in January 2008, optimistic and excited about the future. She believed the school was ripe for becoming a nationally competitive research university, promising in her job interviews that UH would achieve Tier One status. At the time, it seemed like an overly optimistic, almost impossible promise, given UH’s reputation as a second-choice school. But by 2011, the Carnegie Classification of Institutes of Higher Education had recognized UH as a R1 institution, a recognition reserved for universities with high research activity.⁵

For years, locals referred to the university as “Cougar High.” This stemmed from the school’s founding in 1927 as a junior college under the Houston Independent School District. Also, UH initially held classes in a high school building and played football in a former high school stadium. Although UH had become a four-year institution in 1934 and a public institution in 1963, it struggled to shed its image as a substandard college. Despite these derogatory sentiments, Khator saw promise in UH thanks to its location. In considering UH and the city, she thought, “All the industries that are around—energy, arts, and NASA, and Texas Medical Center—and I just could not figure it out. Why is it that the University of Houston, which is ... such a large [public university] is not already a Tier One institution?” She was eager to find out. “A city like Houston needed a top-tier institution. So, this was sort of like a challenge, and I love a good challenge. That’s what brought me here – the hope, the dreams, the possibilities.”⁶

In November 2008, less than a year into her tenure as president, Renu Khator laid out her vision: “We pledge that, as a system of higher education, we will provide access to students from all backgrounds, living in any part of the region and the state, and having any level of educational



Renu Khator, posing in western attire in 2009, celebrated her move to Texas and the ever-popular Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo after joining the University of Houston.



An engaging speaker, President Khator regularly visits classrooms to encourage students to strive for excellence, so they become the leaders and innovators of tomorrow.

aspirations.” She affirmed, “We pledge that their educational experience will be top-tier, and their training will be globally competitive.” She also promised to “raise \$100 million toward the goal of student success.” Khator was hopeful UH would achieve Tier One status within five to seven years, and the rest would follow.⁷

By 2011, in half the predicted time, the University of Houston achieved Tier One status. In 2015, Phi Beta Kappa, the nation’s oldest and most prestigious honor society, initiated a chapter at UH, and in 2020, the UH College of Medicine opened as the city’s first new medical school in nearly half a century. Amid these achievements, in 2013, UH launched its first capital campaign in nearly three decades.

The “Here, We Go” campaign saw donors responding in droves, reaching its \$1 billion goal eighteen months ahead of schedule in February 2019.⁸

UH’s successes under President Khator’s leadership go beyond fundraising and prestige to include athletics. Between 2017 and 2023, the UH Men’s Basketball team reached the Final Four, Elite Eight, and Sweet Sixteen in the men’s NCAA tournament, became two-time conference tournament and four-time conference season champs, had six consecutive twenty-win seasons,



President Khator and UH mascot Sasha enjoy the pregame festivities outside TDECU Stadium. The Cougars’ stadium opened in 2014 and anchors the campus Athletics District.

Photo courtesy of University of Houston Athletics.

and ranked as the second-winningest team in the nation in 2021. The UH’s Men’s Basketball team ranked No. 1 in the nation in the AP Top 25 for two consecutive weeks in November and December 2022, and at the close of the season. Men’s Basketball had not been ranked No. 1 in nearly forty years, since Phi Slamma Jamma in 1983. Coach Kelvin Sampson ranked among the top four coaches all season in the Coaches Poll.⁹

In 2023, the University of Houston will achieve its goal of joining a Power Five Conference when it becomes part of the Big 12. The decision to invest in sports was a no-brainer for Khator. “To me, every element within the university should aspire to be at the national level. ... So for athletics not to be a winning program, [an] irrelevant program, just wasn’t acceptable,” she stated. “Athletics brings alumni together. ... It’s important for our students ... [Athletics] gives everyone a common platform.”¹⁰

Methodology and Beliefs: Pushing UH to the Top

UH’s elevation and transformation into a respected, recognized school has required extensive effort, and Khator’s recipe for success required multiple steps. The first required garnering confidence in UH among community members, students, and faculty on and off-campus. “When I came here, I thought it would take me quite a bit of time to convince [Houstonians]... to believe in what the University of Houston could become,” Khator confessed. “But when I started doing so, I realized that the community was ready. What was lacking was our own self-confidence of the university, our own belief that we could be different.”¹¹

Equally important to Khator’s methodology was her own attitude. Khator owes her strong sense of optimism to her personal life, from her journey to the United States to her family’s support. “Coming here and seeing the fruits of

educational success, what education can make you, what kind of dreams are possible—all of those things have given me this very, very strong sense of optimism, even when things are really adverse. I always try to see opportunities there.”¹²

In addition to confidence and attitude, Khator highlighted the importance of community and community support. “It’s not about a university—it’s about the region, [and] it’s about the community. I believe that if you are true to your core mission in being an important part of



Shown left to right, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, who is a UH graduate, President Khator, and Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis break ground on the Cullen Boulevard construction project to improve safety and drainage on campus and in the area.

the future of the city and your region and your state, I think then many opportunities open.” To Khator, the University of Houston is “not just ... an organization. We are part of a community, a neighborhood.”¹³

Above all, Khator’s striking love of learning and education continues to be a fundamental cornerstone in her academic philosophy. “Education is such an important pathway. People sometimes don’t realize the power of it. But I can tell you, from my experience and so many I see, it opens so many doors that we didn’t think possible,” Khator explained. “When your path becomes clear I think people come to help you because you are in sync with your community, with the mission, with the relevance.”¹⁴ With learning, confidence, a positive attitude, and a relationship with the community, goals become achievable.

No Perfect Journeys

Khator’s impact on the university is undeniable, and recognized by faculty, board members, and beyond. Former chairwoman and Board of Regents member Nelda Blair called Khator “a rock star,” adding, “I don’t say that lightly – because people are just amazed at what she’s been able to accomplish in such a short period of time.” Doug Horn, former managing director of Houstonian Estates and a UH graduate, commends Khator on her tenure: “[She] has done an outstanding job for a university that was listless before she got there,” he said. “[UH] was looking for greatness and she made it great.”¹⁵

As with any successful leader, their policies are rarely immune to criticism. For example, in 2014, UH came under fire when construction of its football stadium exceeded its budget by \$23 million. Students and UH’s student senate called for the removal of the vice president of administration and finance, Dr. Carl Carlucci, following multiple audits investigating stadium funding and hiring of unqualified

individuals. Carlucci stepped down in April 2014 and returned to teaching. In an email announcing his resignation, Khator noted that, “Under his leadership, the physical landscape of the University of Houston has been completely transformed,” referring to the eighteen buildings (including the stadium) constructed during his tenure.¹⁶

Just three months later, Khator announced a ten-year, \$15 million naming rights deal with TDECU, the Houston area’s biggest credit union. At the time this represented the “largest ever naming rights deal for a college football stadium.” In September 2022, the agreement was extended through 2034, and includes an additional \$20 million investment to be used for football operation as the university moves to the Big 12.¹⁷

Khator also received criticism for waiting too long after her arrival to connect in earnest with the predominantly Black Third Ward community that surrounds the campus, even though UH departments had worked in the community for decades. Khator countered the naysayers, explaining, “You have to be internally strong in order to stand up and say, ‘What do I do next?’” Her administration had to first focus on meeting the university benchmarks that would enable it to engage effectively in community outreach. In 2016, the University of Houston started the Third Ward Initiative, a partnership dedicated to giving back to the neighborhood by focusing on four pillars: health, arts, economic empowerment, and education. The program has already proven to be successful. For example, five out of the six neighborhood schools that UH partnered with at the program’s inception showed considerable improvements in the Texas Education Agency ratings, growing from failing ratings to a passing C rating or higher.¹⁸



President Khator reacts to being inducted into the UH Athletics Hall of Honor in 2018. Leading up to this recognition, UH had reached the American Athletic Conference Championships in football and basketball, the Elite Eight and Final Four in the NCAA men’s basketball tournament, and consistently ranked in Top-25 polls in both sports.



President Khator addresses graduates at a 2009 commencement ceremony. Today, with 47,000 students enrolled, UH is the state's third largest university and has dramatically improved in numerous metrics from student retention and graduation rates to research expenditures, awards and recognitions, and student satisfaction. As a result, the university received 38,000 freshman applications in 2022 – double the number it received in 2010.

Looking Towards the Future

When considering the past century of UH accomplishments, Khator shies away from taking sole credit, indicating, “I don’t know if I have made any contributions because I really do believe it takes a village, and I am one piece in that village effort. Everybody – the city, the donors, the students, the faculty, staff, alumni – we all have pulled together behind the vision,” she said. As UH inches closer to its centennial,

the campus radiates an optimistic aura for the next hundred years in the wake of Khator’s unwavering positivity. Her next goal is to have UH listed among the nation’s top fifty public universities. She explained, “The way I look at it is people need a destination because that keeps everybody focused, and that destination has to be completely meaningful.”¹⁹ Top fifty meets that goal.

Even after fifteen years at UH’s helm, Khator is still excited to be at the University of Houston, if not more excited than she was upon arrival. Her enthusiasm, as well as her time at UH, have demonstrated the power of belief from the top down. From the Tier One recognition to financial promise and athletic prominence, UH has transformed from a second-choice destination to a powerhouse, continuously growing and elevating itself. “I believe Houston, University of Houston is a prototype of what others are going to be in twenty or twenty-five years. We have an opportunity to be successful, to show the model, the winning model. To me that’s exciting.”²⁰ If Khator’s track record and testament are any indication, it’s not if that will happen, it’s when. **HH**



President Renu Khator helps students move in on Friday, August 22, 2014.

Samantha de León completed her master’s in public history at the University of Houston in the spring of 2023. She served as the Center for Public History’s Carey C. Shuart graduate assistant for the 100 Years of Stories: Documenting a Century at the University of Houston project and *Houston History* magazine. She is a former intern for the 11 Most Endangered Sites at the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the City of Houston’s Office of Historic Preservation.

Burdette Keeland, Jr.:

“The Bird” Who Built a Better Houston

By Robert Perla Ventura

Burdette Keeland, Jr. was a man as busy as they come. As an architect, professor, and chairperson of the Houston Planning Commission, Keeland was always working to better our city. A graduate of the University of Houston (UH) and a professor in the UH College of Architecture and Design (CoAD) for over forty years, he was widely respected by students and colleagues alike and left a lasting mark on the Houston architectural landscape.

Keeland was born in Mart, Texas, on February 22, 1926, and his family moved to Houston six months later. He graduated from Lamar High School in 1943 and enrolled in the mechanical engineering program at Texas A&M University. Keeland, however, soon found out that engineering was not the right path for him. After leaving Texas A&M with seven Fs in 1944, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Service and was stationed with the Japan Occupational Forces until 1946.¹ Keeland briefly returned to Texas A&M before coming home to Houston. Joining the ranks of veterans taking advantage of the new GI Bill, he enrolled at the University of Houston in the architecture program.

In 1950, Keeland graduated with a bachelor of science in architecture. He joined the UH faculty in 1954 as an associate professor, beginning his long tenure with the university. He soon befriended Howard Barnstone, a famous Houston architect and his former professor.² Barnstone had a significant impact on Keeland and mentored him throughout his early career. They collaborated on many projects and forged



Known by his friends as “Bird,” Keeland became one of Houston’s premier architects.

All photos courtesy of Burdette Keeland Architectural Papers, and Digital Collections, University of Houston Libraries unless otherwise noted.
ark:/84475/do5187pq66f.

connections with other architects and clients. Barnstone also convinced Keeland to apply for graduate school at Barnstone’s alma mater, Yale University. Keeland attended Yale from 1959 to 1960, where he was exposed to architectural styles and ideas in the modernist movement from the likes of respected architectural figures Louis Kahn and Philip Johnson. After graduating, Keeland returned to UH in the fall of 1960 as a professor of fifth-year design studios – the final studio design course required for undergraduate architectural students – a position he held throughout his tenure at the college.

Keeland taught architecture at UH for forty-six years and earned the admiration of his students and colleagues. Among the architecture students, he had a reputation for being a blunt and vicious professor. For example, one of his former students, and future dean of the CoAD, Joe Mashburn, recalled, “[He] seemed merciless: anything could be said, and anything could be criticized. It was common for students to be told to leave architecture and find something else to study. It was leave or fight, and the battles would be fought through the work on the walls.”³



Keeland valued honesty over flattery, and if a student could not handle the rigors of architecture, he let them know.

Box 13, Folder 24.

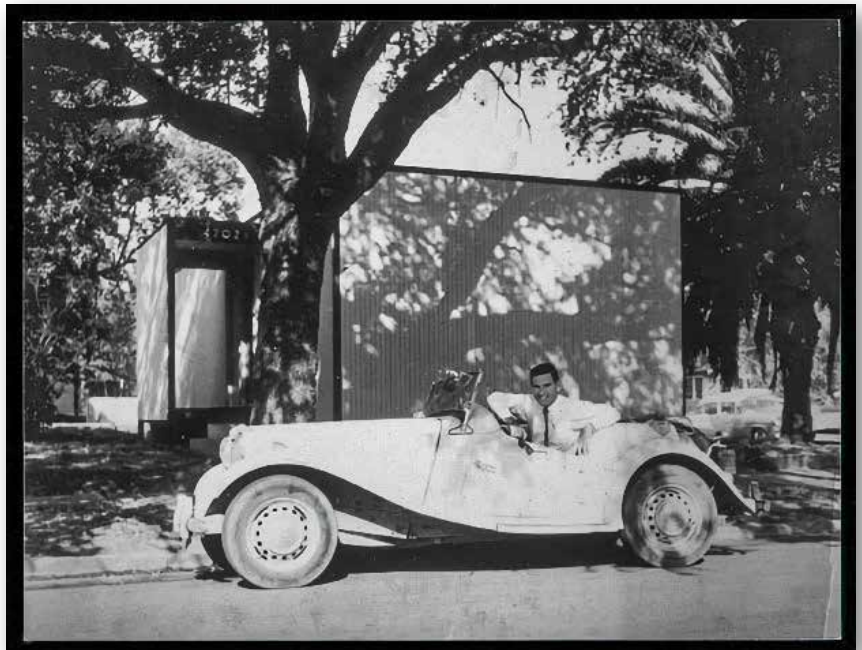
It would be easy to write off Keeland as a mere stereotype of the harsh and critical professor, but his ruthlessness came from a place of benevolence. Despite his apparent coldness, he always advocated for his students. As a fifth-year design studio professor, he determined which students would make the cut as architects, and which students would be better suited to different career paths. Keeland explained, "If [a student] cannot do it, [I] suggest that he find something that he *can* do. It sounds awful to talk about it, but it is really a kindness. ... It is uncomfortable to sit with some young guy with tears in his eyes ... [but] this whole silly five-year period is to train you to make it to eighty years old doing something ... that means something to people in the world." Many of his former students later agreed with him and were thankful for Keeland's criticism.⁴

For students who remained in the architecture program, they held Keeland in high regard. Joe Mashburn recounted, "I remember Burdette Keeland Jr. emerging from his gray MGA roadster and walking across the asphalt with his suit jacket over his shoulder and smoking a thin cigar. As students, we thought that was the way it should be for an architect. ... We wanted to be like him." At the recommendation of many of his students, Keeland received prestigious awards from such groups as the American Institute

of Architects (AIA) and the Texas Society of Architects. In 1992, when the UH College of Architecture searched for a new dean, many recommended Keeland, including the college's alumni association president and former students and colleagues from the 1950s through the 1980s. He was chosen as a finalist but not offered the position. However, the college was thrown into turmoil when it faced accreditation issues, and the dean stepped down in 1995, prompting the search for a new dean. At this time, over 131 students signed a petition to nominate Keeland as the "student's choice" for interim dean, which showed just how much the professor meant to his students.⁵ The position, however, ended up going to Keeland's former student, Joe Mashburn.

Keeland's efforts for the UH CoAD extended beyond teaching. Following its founding in 1945, the college was housed in a grossly outdated one-story building, with steel roof decking used as wall cladding and reclaimed windows from jobsites around the city.⁶ While this building was meant to be a temporary site for the college, it remained in use thirty years later. But by the 1980s, the building was plagued by mechanical issues and was severely undersized for the number of architecture students. In 1981, the state allotted grants to the university dedicated to fund the construction of a new CoAD building. The administration intended to hold a design competition among local Houston architects and members of the school's faculty. Burdette Keeland had a different idea for the building's design, however.

Keeland had a close friend in renowned architect Philip Johnson. They first met in the 1950s, when they worked together designing the University of St. Thomas campus in Houston. Keeland worked to convince Johnson and UH that Johnson should design the new building.⁷ He believed



Keeland shows off his sleek roadster in front of one of the houses he designed.

ark:/84475/d021504z636.

that the college deserved a design by a respected and famous architect, and Philip Johnson was the right man for the job. By 1982, the administration approved Johnson's design, and the building was completed in 1985. The architecture building, now considered a landmark on the UH campus, once prompted Keeland to remark that bringing Johnson in to create the design was the proudest achievement of his life.

During his long tenure with UH's architecture program, Keeland also maintained a successful architectural practice, particularly from the 1950s until the 1990s. His designs were regularly shown in influential architecture publications such as *Cite*, *Architectural Forum*, and *Architectural Record*. Keeland's work varied in style throughout his career, initially inspired by the modernist designs of architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. His breakthrough design was his display house entry, located at 5146 Jackwood Street, for the 1955 Parade of Homes exhibition in the Meyerland neighborhood. The exhibition, hosted by W. K. "Buck" King and the Houston Home Builders Association, included thirty homes designed by acclaimed Houston architects and showcased the best Houston had to offer. Keeland borrowed heavily from modernist influences, incorporating exposed steel frame elements, a flat roof design, and an intimate scale.⁸

When he studied at Yale, Keeland became intrigued by the designs of architects Paul Rudolph and Louis Kahn. Their influence is evident in Keeland's 1962 design of the Essex Houck Office Building, once located at 3917 Essex Lane but now demolished. The owner, H. R. Houck, wanted a rental office building that had its own character.⁹ Keeland's design fused elements of modernist and early brutalist architecture with an imposing concrete façade entrance. Inspired by the works of Louis Kahn, the design included two concrete towers, which housed the building's mechanical spaces and what Kahn called "master and servant spaces." The building was well received by the architectural community and featured in magazines such as *Cite*, the 1962 edition of *Architectural Arts + Architecture*, and Stephen Fox's *Houston Architectural Guide*.

Keeland also excelled at designing and constructing townhomes and apartments. His projects include the Virginia Street Townhomes on Kirby Drive, built in 1974. These townhomes were a departure from his previous modernist forms, instead using a triangular form and serving as an example of his transition into postmodern architecture, following the route of his friend Philip Johnson. Their ski slope roofs create a gentle effect and a recognizable view from the street, inviting the resident into their home.

Keeland's work furthered CoAD's reputation in other areas as well. Keeland contributed to the design of the master plan of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and served as a consultant for famed architect Denise Scott Brown, advising her on compliance with the city's code



Philip Johnson, right, and John Burgee, left, present their building design to the University of Houston.

Photo courtesy of Architecture Building-Plans, Digital Collections, University of Houston Libraries. ark:/84475/d01296wx39b.

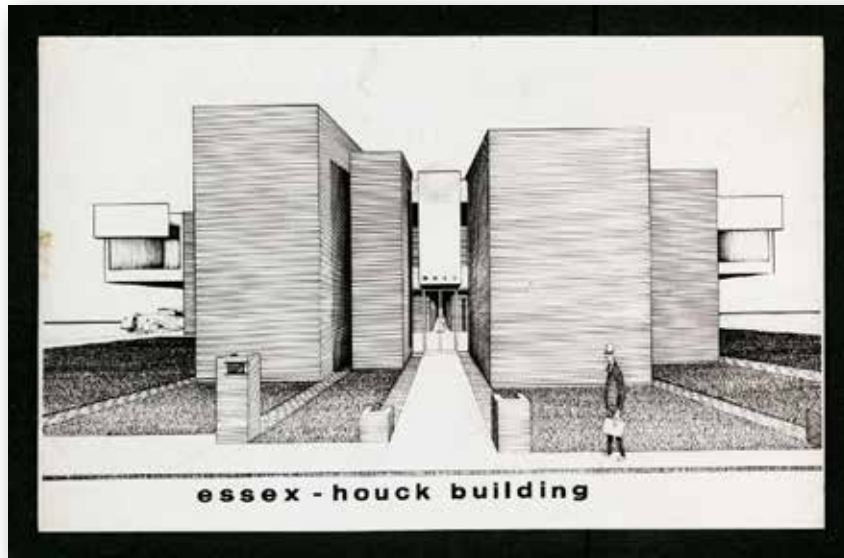
regulations. As an alumnus, Keeland's professional success garnered acclaim from UH CoAD as well. In 1995 he was selected for the college's "50 From 50 Exhibition," an event for which fifty alumni were chosen to have their work displayed and honored at the college's fiftieth anniversary gala.¹⁰

In addition to altering the architectural landscape of Houston, Keeland heavily influenced the city's urban planning. Throughout his life, Keeland was a massive proponent of Houston's urban design. Early in his career, he did not believe zoning or planning was necessary for the city because he saw Houston as too small and too young to need it. However, he changed his mind after returning from Yale in 1960, when he founded and served as president of Urban Research, Inc. He and his colleagues aimed to improve the city's urban landscape by using their research to implement policy changes regarding public transportation and land use ordinances. He sent these proposals to local planning authorities as well as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in an attempt to improve Houston's planning.¹¹

In 1964, Mayor Louie Welch appointed Keeland to the City of Houston Planning Commission, where he served for over thirty years. In 1965, he proposed the idea of the Grand Parkway, a new loop that had a radius of twenty-five miles out of Houston's city center.¹² He envisioned it as an easy route for Houstonians to drive

around and enjoy large greenspaces surrounding the city. City planners initially embraced the plan, but soon abandoned it in the 1970s, when Houston's rapid development prompted them to focus on the more prescient construction of the Beltway closer into town. However, in 1984 the new chairperson of the Texas Highway Department, and future mayor of Houston, Bob Lanier, rediscovered Keeland's plan and set it in motion.

In 1981, Keeland became the chairperson of the planning commission and was instrumental in altering Houston's urban landscape. One of his early victories as chairperson was passing the city's first tree ordinance in 1984. Due to overdevelopment and failure to replace trees cut down in the process, pathways had little to no shade, making Houston extremely uncomfortable for pedestrians. Keeland's tree ordinance required developers working on projects within the city limits to plant trees and build sidewalks. In his initial plan, Keeland wanted each



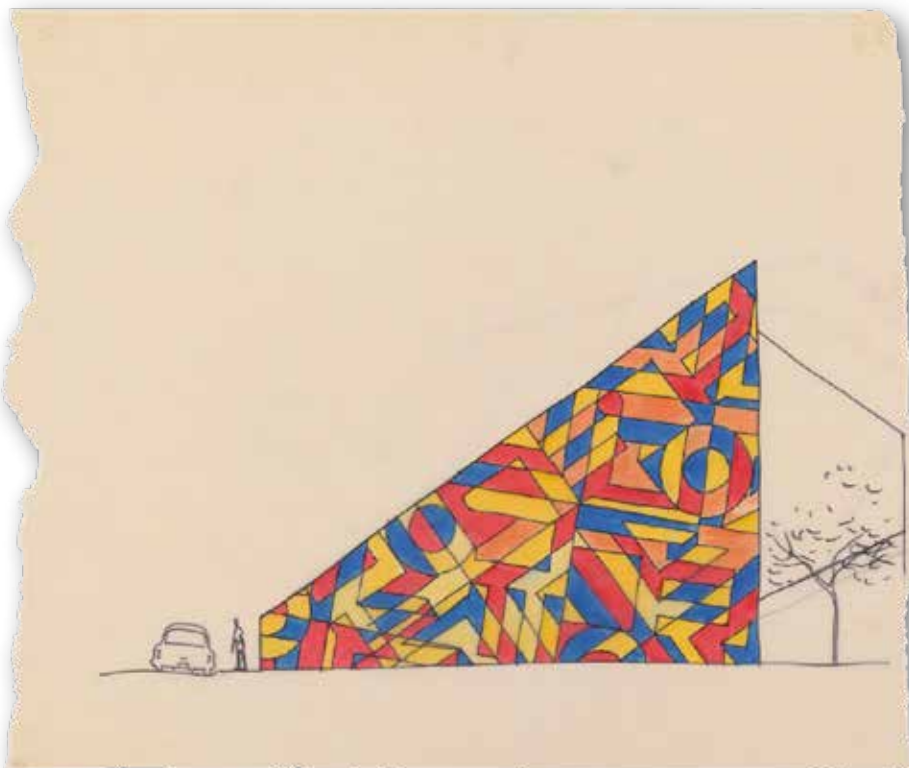
Sketch of the Essex-Houck Building that once sat at 3917 Essex Lane.

ark:/84475/do7815pb87x.

through from color to color by vehicular movement or the human foot."¹³

One of Keeland's greatest challenges was implementing a formal land use plan for the city of Houston. For most of his career, he advocated for smarter planning practices for the city through zoning or ordinances. In the past, Houston voters had already rejected zoning three times in the 1920s to 1940s before doing so again in 1962. But with the city's tremendous growth and fluctuations brought on by the oil industry's boom and bust in the 1980s, city planners reconsidered the feasibility of zoning.¹⁴ Commercial businesses

bought foreclosed homes and moved into neighborhoods, sometimes to the dismay of the residents. While Keeland had his reservations about zoning restrictions, he believed in the importance of having a concrete plan for the city. He recognized that "there is an undergrowing desire of the public and the leaders of the city that we should have a plan, we should have a piece of paper that is a target for where we are going. It



Drawing of a Virginia Street Townhome, ca. 1972.

ark:/84475/do0921g1558.



In addition to buildings, Keeland had an affinity for the architectural design of cemeteries and tombs.

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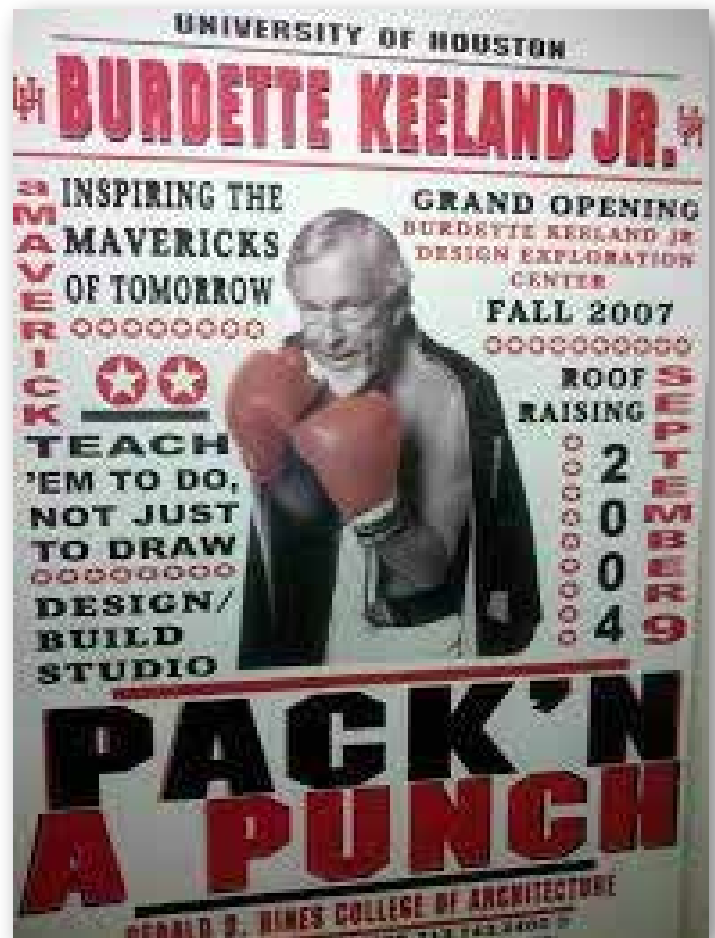
scholarship fund established in his name. Today, the college's Burdette Keeland, Jr. Design Exploration Center houses the school's wood and metal shops along with its design fabrication technology in a building that shares his name. The mark he left behind is best summed up by Joe Mashburn, "Keeland had cut through it all – an essential, eternal need in academia. I and many others will miss him deeply. Burdette Keeland Jr. cared, and he fought for what he cared about. To him, anything was possible."¹⁷ **HH**

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should be a wish list, a dream plan, it should be everything the human spirit can come up with about what an urban city should be... So, the time is absolutely perfect."¹⁵

In 1991, the Houston City Council passed a resolution for a zoning plan and a vote that would occur two years later. Keeland set up numerous workshops and launched committees to research the matter and advise the City Council. The most significant of these was the Planning and Zoning Commission Workshop held at The Woodlands Conference Center in 1992. The workshop's goal, Keeland stated, was for the council members to take a step back and think past basic regulations and codes and instead focus on a plan with a vision they all shared.¹⁶ In this conference, Keeland brought speakers from across the nation to talk on the effects of planning, both good and bad. He wanted to present a holistic view, hoping it would help the city in deciding its future. Although the final zoning ordinance narrowly failed in a citywide referendum in 1993, many of its ideas were implemented in smaller ordinances in the future that helped improve the city through developer incentives instead of restrictions, as well as building height restrictions and historic preservation districts that protect the architectural integrity of historic neighborhoods.

Keeland retired from the planning commission in 1991 and was honored by Mayor Kathy Whitmire on January 31, 1991, which she proclaimed, "Burdette Keeland, Jr. Day," as thanks for his many years of service. He continued his architecture practice and teaching career at UH until his death on May 26, 2000, at the age of seventy-four. UH recognized his devotion to the school by holding his memorial service in the atrium of the College of Architecture building and having a



The poster for the grand opening of the Keeland Design Exploration Center humorously honors Keeland's legacy of excellence with the University of Houston.

Photo courtesy of the UH College of Architecture and Design.

Public Art of the University of Houston System

By Mercedes Del Riego



“Only Open to the Public”

Benches by Scott Burton, pink granite (1985). Best known for blurring the boundary between utilitarian objects and art, Burton was a minimalist sculptor inspired by the Bauhaus and abstract movements. This set of two benches sit nondescriptly in front of the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design.

All photos courtesy of Public Art UHS unless otherwise noted.

Every day, University of Houston (UH) students sit on the two granite benches in front of the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design building completely unaware they are resting on a sculpture created by Scott Burton in 1985. This artwork is one of the nearly 700 pieces in the Public Art of the University of Houston System’s (Public Art UHS) collection that are found at the University of Houston, its satellite campus in Sugar Land, as well as throughout the remaining UH System universities: the University of Houston-Downtown, the University of Houston-Clear Lake, and the University of Houston-Victoria.

UH became a public institution in 1963, a period when the city was experiencing tremendous growth. At the same time, a group composed of Aaron Joseph Farfel, who was an investor and philanthropist on the Board of Regents, UH President Philip G. Hoffman, and art history professor Dr. Peter Guenther made the case for bringing the best contemporary art to the university for the public’s enjoyment. In 1966, the UH Board of Regents agreed with this group and voted to dedicate one percent of new construction budgets to acquiring art for the university.¹ Guenther, seen as a passionate visionary who could provide the historical

perspective for the public art that the campus sorely needed, became director of the Public Art Acquisition Committee in 1969.²

Peter Wolfgang Guenther

Peter Guenther's father, Alfred Otto Hugo Günther, was born in Dresden, Germany, in 1885.³ He was an expressionist poet and a prolific journalist in Germany from 1913 until the Nazis categorized him as "jüdisch versippt," indicating he was married to a Jewish woman.⁴ In 1936 the Gestapo banned Alfred Günther from writing and publishing. Well known within the worlds of German expressionism and the Bauhaus, Günther was a close friend of famous Bauhaus sculptor Gerhard Marcks.

Alfred had "very good anti-Nazi credentials, and both [father and son] were very literate and highly attuned to the principles of democracy," according to historian Irene Guenther, Peter's daughter and history professor in the UH Honors College. These credentials helped Alfred become an approved publisher and writer in the American occupation zone of post-war Germany, while Peter eventually gained American citizenship through a State Department program that assimilated educated Germans into the United States to enhance American-German relations following World War II.⁵

Peter Guenther moved his family of six from Stuttgart, Germany, to San Antonio, Texas, where he worked at a lumber company because the records proving he had earned his doctorate in Germany had been destroyed. After receiving an M.A. and while completing his Ph.D. at The University of Texas, he taught art history at the Witte Museum and, then, in a full-time position at St. Mary's University in San Antonio. President Philip Hoffman appointed Guenther as assistant professor of art history at the University of Houston in 1962 at the age of forty-two.⁶

In his role as head of the UH Public Art Acquisition Committee, Guenther recommended and the university



The University of Houston appointed Peter Guenther director of the Public Art Acquisition Committee in 1969.

Photo courtesy of Special Collections, UH Photographs Collection, ark:/84475/do0648ff97h.

Orbit 1 (1969) by Masaru Takiguchi was the first artwork purchased for the Public Art UHS collection over fifty years ago. Takiguchi, a Japanese artist and educator, was a visiting lecturer at UH in 1968, 1970, and 1973, and eventually relocated to Houston permanently.



acquired the sculptures *Orbit I* and *Orbit II* by Masaru Takiguchi in 1969, as the first public art pieces for indoor display. Inspired by modernist art, the smooth and shiny sculptures, carved out of camphorwood, flow without a beginning or an end. Despite being crafted from a warm, inviting wood, both have a cold temperament typical of modernism. In 1971, UH bought the first piece intended for strictly outdoor display, Gerhard Marcks's *Albertus Magnus*, which stands in front of the John M. O'Quinn Law Building. *Albertus* reads Aristotle, presumably, with a pensive smile while sitting on a stool.

Fond of legendary figures, Marcks also sculpted *Orpheus* in 1959. Gerhard Marcks's gallery in Bremen loaned the bronze to the university with the idea that it would travel America, but Guenther had his eyes set on making it a permanent addition at UH. He placed the statue in the Ezekiel Cullen Building where it could subconsciously influence the Board of Regents until they finally bought the statue in 1971, causing Guenther to exclaim in his journal, "It worked!"⁷ The university installed *Orpheus* in the Fine Arts Building courtyard, where it remained for many years until it was placed in storage during the building's renovations in 2014. The statue unfortunately has not reappeared; however, plans are underway to redesign the area between the Fine Art and Architecture buildings and to position *Orpheus* in that space.

Peter invested in art that caught his eye, and he spent his personal time and money to ensure it found its way to UH. For example, he visited Francisco Zúñiga in Mexico in 1971 and handpicked a bronze sculpture fresh as "it was coming out of the foundry, and it was still warm," Irene recalled her father writing in the notes he kept.⁸ Titled *Orante/Mujer Con Las Manos Cruzadas (Woman Praying/Woman with Her Hands Crossed)*, it was acquired in 1972. The woman sat on a pedestal in the entrance to Charles F. McElhinney Hall until



Peter Guenther acquired the bronze Orante/Mujer con las Manos Cruzadas (Woman Praying/Woman with her Hands Crossed) by Francisco Zúñiga for UH in 1972. Zúñiga portrayed indigenous women in calm everyday moments of life usually wearing a rebozo, a shawl typical of femininity in Mexico.

it was removed for safekeeping in 2021 to begin building renovations. Plans are underway to re-site *Orante* outdoors at the new Student Life Plaza adjacent to the E. Cullen Building. Like many of Zúñiga's other sculptures, *Orante* displays the essential being of a Mexican woman with dignity and realism.

By the time Peter Guenther retired in 1990 as professor emeritus, he had served as chair of the Art Department for thirteen years and had curated two pivotal exhibitions for the Blaffer Gallery, one on the Norwegian expressionist Edvard Munch and the other on German Expressionist prints and drawings. Additionally, he left a beautiful legacy on the campus that included not only the public art he helped acquire but also thousands of enlightened students and a scholarship fund for art history graduate students. Former Houston mayor Kathy Whitmire gave him the keys to the city and proclaimed November 19th as Peter Guenther Day. A grove of six oak trees was planted near the Fine Arts Building, one for each of the Guenther family members. According to the dedication that was read during the tree planting, oaks were chosen for their long life and symbolism

of wisdom. With no plaque marking the trees, however, their history likely goes unnoticed by students, just as they fail to recognize that the benches in front of the College of Architecture are works of art.

In 1977, the Texas Legislature created the University of Houston System, which offered new opportunities to expand the public art collection across all of its universities.⁹ Throughout the seventies and eighties, artists from all over the world carved out a space throughout the University of Houston System making the Public Art UHS collection international and aligning it with the System's current values of inclusion, diversity, and freedom of expression.

The Vision of Public Art Today

When Public Art UHS celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2019, UH President and System Chancellor, Renu Khator, identified it as one of the System's strategic initiatives. Under the leadership of Dr. Maria C. Gaztambide, the institution transitioned from "collection development, commissioning, object conservation and long-term exhibitions to an all-encompassing arts organization with all core museum functions, including temporary exhibitions, robust public programming, research, education, and broad community outreach."¹⁰ This new focus is reflected in its vision statement: "Public Art UHS is committed to creating a collaborative ecosystem where publicly accessible art, higher education, and diverse communities converge."¹¹

As executive director and chief curator of Public Art UHS, Gaztambide is the link between the artist and the public, understanding the artist's intentions and the public's perception, and the gaps displaying an artwork can fill in the public's knowledge of art, people, and history. "[Art] makes history and culture very personal, and that is something

that cannot be conveyed in books," she explained.¹²

Joining UH in 2018, she served as associate director of the International Center for the Arts of the Americas at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston for twelve years, in addition to previously holding positions at Tulane University, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico. Her vision is to go beyond the static



Orpheus (1959) by Gerhard Marcks won the hearts of the UH Board of Regents.

art collection by “bringing in the community, doing research, offering educational programs for a variety of different audiences ... transforming Public Art [UHS] into a literal museum without any limitations.”¹³

Today, its expansive collection is a treasure not only for the UH System universities, but also for community members and visitors who can enjoy the artists’ creativity in one of the region’s most diverse and publicly accessible art collections. UH is interested in working with internationally renowned artists as well as emerging local artists, indicated curator Michael Guidry, who earned his master’s in fine arts at UH in 1996 before becoming a curator at the New Orleans Museum of Art and later joining Public Art UHS in 2005.¹⁴

Guidry’s responsibilities at Public Art UHS include administration, acquisition of new art works, and maintenance and conservation of the existing art collection. A former graduate student of Guenther’s, Guidry recalled, “Peter Guenther started the whole thing,” adding that he never imagined he would help to redefine the collection his professor once handpicked.

Compared to a museum, Guidry says administrating the art collection of a public university requires patience to navigate through “significant red tape” to get approvals. Things take time, require extensive planning and sometimes you have to change course. One of the easiest installations Guidry experienced to date was *The Statue of Four Lies* by The Art Guys, Jack Massing and Michael Galbreth. Installed in 2010 by the Cougar Village 1 dormitory, the statue is a tongue-in-cheek joke on the popular *John Harvard* statue nicknamed the “Statue of Three Lies” at Harvard University and was created with



Artist Luis Jiménez crafted *Fiesta Jarabe* (Fiesta Dancers) (1991-1993) of colored fiberglass. It features a couple dancing to a traditional Mexican hat dance called “*Jarabe Tapatío*.” Dressed in traditional folklore attire, the couple speaks to sensuality, oppression, and fate.



Located at the University of Houston-Downtown, *Cloud Deck* (2010), by Jacob Hashimoto is crafted of bamboo, rice paper, aircraft cables, and lead weights.

Photo courtesy of © Morris Malakoff.

the intention that students would decorate the figures and take pictures with them.¹⁵

Conservation is another part of the work undertaken by Public Art UHS, and two large-scale outdoor pieces were recently painstakingly restored. First, Venezuelan artist Carlos Cruz-Diez’s *Double Physichromie* was taken apart, repainted, and relocated at a new location within the Arts District, adjacent to the Graduate College of Social Work, the Fine Arts Building, and College of Technology. The long serpentine artwork draws in all passersby with its masterful use of color. Like a magical accordion, it changes colors as the viewer moves around it. In 2019, Public Art UHS also restored Pablo Serrano’s *Spiritus Mundi*, a piece that UHCL has owned since 1977.¹⁷

The sculpture stands about ten feet tall, with polished bronze on one side and rough, matte black patina on the other side. It deals with humanistic ideals of man as a being of possibilities who only needs to connect with others to awaken his potential. When all the buildup was removed from the sculpture, Pablo Serrano’s handprints could be seen purposefully cast all over the bronze showcasing man’s ability to create and transform. Like other Public Art UHS pieces, it is truly worthy of inclusion in any highly regarded museum.

In April 2022, Public Art UHS launched its Object Laboratory, in collaboration with the UH School of Art. It is a space where art historians, curators, and other art professionals learn about digitization and object handling, and other tools museums use. Monthly workshops and events connect students and the public to the creation of art. Public Art UHS’s temporary public art program has two recurring exhibitions by



Spiritus Mundi by Pablo Serrano, bronze (1977), University of Houston-Clear Lake, Bayou Building. Although the sculpture appears to exhibit the duality in life between dark and light, the Latin title translates to “spirit of the world,” signifying the collective consciousness of the world that is driven by creativity. On the black patina are castings of hands, twigs, and Serrano’s asthma medication, contrasting the idyllic shiny smooth interior of the sculpture.

way of commissions. The Grove Commission gives artists a year of exposure in Wilhelmina’s Grove at UH and commits them to working with students and the community through hands-on learning experiences. The second program, Yardworks, gives emerging Texas artists the opportunity to install a temporary public art exhibition at UH through a \$20,000 grant.¹⁸

Public Art at UH today goes beyond the outdoor sculptures found in the courtyards and across campus. It includes any type of art that is publicly displayed outside of museums and galleries, according to Guidry and Gaztambide. Significant collections include works by Edward Hill and Suzanne Bloom, who go by the moniker MANUAL, and Polaroids and prints by Andy Warhol, which were the subject of a recent temporary exhibition curated by Gaztambide that was on view at UHD and UHCL. Together with its exceptional collection, initiatives such as this enable Public Art UHS to claim its place as a uniquely twenty-first-century museum that serves a diverse public across Southeast Texas and is “only open to the public.”¹⁹ ++

Mercedes Del Riego earned her bachelor’s degree in history from the University of Houston. Born in a lush tropical valley of Cuba, she lived in the Houston area for over twenty years before moving to Austin. A true antiquarian, when she is not flipping through old newspaper clippings, she is filling her sketchbook or caring for cats and dogs at the animal hospital where she works.



Oliver Twist, archival pigment print (2010). Artists Ed Hill and Suzanne Bloom, who collaborate under the moniker MANUAL, have created numerous works of digital art and photography throughout the years.

Photo courtesy of MANUAL.

The Public Art UHS collection is open to visitors free of charge. If you are interested in a self-guided tour or a staff-led tour, visit <https://publicartuhs.org/tours/>.

25 March 1916 “Wounded Men at the Collection Point.” Soldiers’ letters were strictly censored during World War I to maintain morale at home and prevent espionage. Illustrations became a popular way to circumvent the censors, thus many of Otto Schubert’s trench postcards depict the tragedies of war like this one of injured soldiers. However, Schubert also illustrated scenic landscapes of northern France and soldiers reading the newspaper, despite the war’s bitter realities.

All photos courtesy of Irene Guenther.



A Surprise Discovery: Making Art History Public Art

By Mercedes Del Riego

Founder of the University of Houston’s Art History Department and Public Art program, Peter Guenther, and his wife, Andrea, died a few short months apart. “I should not have been surprised given the deep love they still felt for one another after fifty-eight years of marriage,” their daughter Irene Guenther wrote in the preface to her book, *Postcards from the Trenches: A German Soldier’s Testimony of the Great War*. Irene, who is a history professor in the UH Honors College, recalled searching bookcases in their home one last time at two in the morning for any sentimental things she might have overlooked before



25 November 1915 “The Village Beauty.” Beginning on the postcard’s back and continuing to the front, Schubert wrote to his beloved Irma, lamenting his lack of mail from her for two days, while also wishing her well. He reflected on his second winter at the front and his fond memories of classes at the art academy prior to being drafted, before closing with, “... take from my heart a thousand greetings, from your Otto.”

the house was sold that morning at nine. Sure enough, she had missed two large envelopes that had fallen flat on the top of the floor-to-ceiling bookshelves. What she uncovered in one of the envelopes were eighty postcards dating from November 1915 to May 1916, hand-painted with accompanying text, by a German soldier named Otto Schubert.

Irene spent eight years researching and writing a book about this young soldier/artist and how her father had come to possess the postcards. With just a month before her manuscript deadline, she found a letter in her father’s files between the artist’s second wife and Peter, who planned to mount an exhibit of the postcards. Irene rushed to send a letter to the artist’s wife and family and received by email permission to publish the book from Schubert’s daughter and his wife, who died the following day. If that was not serendipitous enough, with only three days remaining to turn in the manuscript, Guenther was double-checking Schubert’s art oeuvre, which spanned almost sixty years, when, she recalled, “I discovered that he illustrated my grandfather’s poetry book in 1920. And I just ... I had goosebumps all over me because I can’t think of [a better example] of overlap between professional and personal [life].”



Schubert titled this woodcut he did in the 1920s Irena, which may have been a reference to the goddess of peace, Eirene.

Marking the centennial of the end of World War I, the book was released in 2018. Soon after, the BBC broadcast an interview with Guenther across Europe. “About a day after that interview,” she recalled, “I received an email from the grandson of Otto Schubert ... telling me that he didn’t know anything about his grandfather, that all of those records had been destroyed with the bombing of Dresden in World War II, and that he was forever grateful to learn more about him.” Schubert survived both world wars, but his first wife, Irma, the recipient of his trench postcards, was killed in the 1945 Dresden bombing. Additionally, Schubert lost his son on the Russian Front, while his two daughters fled. Irene explained, “When he climbed out of the rubble, he was in the Soviet Zone. So from that time on [until he died in 1970], he was in East Germany, on the [Soviet] side of the wall, and that’s why it seems nobody in the art world knows anything about him.”

Another moment of synchronicity happened when a friend called Guenther from Berlin to let her know that one of Schubert’s rare surviving woodcuts from the 1920s was being auctioned. Her friend excitedly told her, “It’s a woodcut of a young woman holding a big bunch of flowers, and he titled it ‘Irena,’” which is Irene’s name in German,

but “Eirene” is also the goddess of peace. The peace that was desperately hoped for after the devastating war.

In addition to publishing her book, Guenther collaborated with Dr. Marion Deshmukh to mount exhibitions of the postcards, artwork, and trench art of both American and German World War I soldiers in Houston, Washington, D.C., Berlin, and Salzwedel. Just as her father had done before her, Irene Guenther made the important connections between art and history and humanity, spreading the same joy and love for art to UH students, readers, and anyone who appreciates creative expression. **HH**

Mercedes Del Riego earned her bachelor’s degree in history from the University of Houston. Born in a lush tropical valley of Cuba, she lived in the Houston area for over twenty years before moving to Austin. A true antiquarian, when she is not flipping through old newspaper clippings, she is filling her sketchbook or caring for cats and dogs at the animal hospital where she works.



15 December 1915 “Small Village in France.” *Schubert wrote, “Dear Irma! Many thousand greetings. Your Otto Just write me a lot. No letter from you for so long. Yesterday I received the field postcards. I also send a card to your brother. I’m really fed up with life!!!”*



24 January 1916 “Evening Mood at the Front”



16 February 1916 “Peaceful Village in the Ardennes.”

In 2022, Irene Guenther and her husband visited the French countryside Schubert had painted. They were moved that the landscape had not changed until, she said, “you looked very closely and saw small crosses here and there across farmers’ fields (all marked with World War I dates), craters overgrown with trees and shrub, and so on. The colors, too, were eerily similar. We felt like we were following in his unit’s footsteps.”

Cougars Making History by Breaking Barriers and Fostering Inclusion in the U.S Military

By Christine Le with Jacob Loew



General Barrye Price, LTC Melissa Comiskey, and 2LT Katelyn Kubosh have each played a role in opening doors to women in the U.S. military.

Photos courtesy of the U.S. Army.

Serving in the military requires a noble spirit along with a strong passion for service and our nation. Enlistment, training, service, and earning promotions are long and arduous tasks, but General Barrye Price and Second Lieutenant Katelyn Kubosh managed to succeed with flying colors. The two University of Houston alumni credit UH with giving them the tools, support, and formative experiences needed to achieve their current ranks. Moreover, the policy changes spearheaded by Price empowered officers such as Lieutenant Colonel Melissa Comiskey, who served in the first women-integrated infantry/armor brigade in the Army and is the current director of the Army ROTC program in the UH College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.

General Barrye Price: A Passion to Open Doors in the U.S. Military

Departing from his small midwestern hometown of Gary, Indiana, in 1981, a young Barrye Price found himself beaming with anticipation as he thought about his next four years at the University of Houston. He enrolled in the College of Business Administration and joined the ranks of other academically driven pupils.¹ The blistering, sun-drenched campus exceeded his expectations. Price loved how the serene fountain waters gurgled and splashed, capturing the attention of every student that walked by on the way to class. Seeing young undergraduates bunch together on the vibrant

green grass while studying, eating, chatting, and laughing gave him a sense of joyful liveliness and belonging.

What Price did not expect when he arrived at UH was joining the ranks of military men, a prospect which had not crossed his mind as an inexperienced nineteen-year-old. Price recalled that he had brushed off his mother's insistence to apply for the Army's Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship during his early undergraduate years. Life in the Army seemed unthinkable. Nevertheless, a succession of serious talks with his mother about the failing economy, lack of job guarantees after graduation, and ROTC's full tuition benefits convinced Price to reconsider joining ROTC. The leadership training and military discipline he learned throughout his time in the program proved invaluable and equipped him with the tools for future success. Sure enough, he earned the honor of Distinguished Military Graduate from UH's C.T. Bauer College of Business and was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Army the day before he graduated in 1985.²

The intellectual fervor and self-determination that drove Price at UH and in ROTC inspired him to pursue a graduate degree. The Army awarded him full funding not only for his undergraduate years, but also for his entire academic career while pursuing master's and doctorate degrees. Price completed his master of arts in history at Texas A&M University in 1994 and broke racial boundaries when he became the



Barrye Price is a University of Houston alum who went on to make history in the U.S. Army. Here he discusses his book, Life on the Other Side of You.

Photo courtesy of CADCA Institute.

the classroom and in mainstream society. Price called for a reform of the U.S. educational system that emphasizes diversity and our myriad of unique cultural experiences.⁴

Fully aware of the socioeconomic hardships that disproportionately impacted marginalized communities, Price saw his breakthroughs in higher education as rebellions against society's imbalanced racial power structures. He recalled that in the early eighties "there were tremendous racial overtones where my Blackness wasn't celebrated." But attending UH gave Price the foundational skills for survival in an environment where Blackness was gratuitously brutalized and undermined. During one Texas history class Price criticized the professor's characterization of notable Black figures like Marcus Garvey and Nat Turner as troublemakers. Price's challenge caused his professor to consider a new perspective that held radical potential. From that day forward, Price understood that his voice mattered and that speaking up does not have to be a negative experience. Two months

university's first African American student to earn a Ph.D. in history in 1997. Additionally, he completed a masters of science in National Security Strategy in 2004 from the National Defense University.³

Despite his pioneering achievements at Texas A&M, Price admitted that he was disappointed in the status quo. "It's a shame that I'm the only African American to earn a Ph.D. in history at such a major institution, especially in the last twenty-six years since I graduated," Price observed. He nonetheless vocalized his sentiments as a call to action for greater access and representation for people of color at all levels of the academic system. In fact, he helped break that barrier when he taught as an assistant professor at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York. "Education continues to be the great equalizer in our nation," Price proclaimed during a speech at UH's C.T. Bauer College of Business. Black figures in history, he pointed out, remain underrepresented in



General Barrye Price at the 2013 Freedom Foundation Awards Luncheon with Army cadets.

Photo courtesy of General Barrye Price.



General Price, his wife Tracy, their son William, and retired astronaut Dr. Bonnie Dunbar at the 2013 Freedom Foundation Awards Luncheon.

Photo courtesy of General Barrye Price.

later at his graduation ceremony, amongst a crowd of fellow lieutenants, Price replicated that moment in class and spoke against an unfair statement made by the course director from the stage.⁵

In 2000, Price was involved with President Bill Clinton and the First Lady's Task Force for "Raising Responsible and Resourceful Teenagers" that produced new research about the impacts of teenage anxiety. Price also participated in President Clinton's Mississippi Delta Task Force that focused on building tactical strategies for groundwater sustainability, wildlife management, and ecological vitality in the Mississippi Delta.

Most notably, in 2011, Price served as the Army's point person to Congress in overturning the Direct Ground Combat Exclusion Rule that prevented women from being assigned to units engaged in direct combat with an enemy of the United States during war. Price was a brigadier general at the time and worked with the support staff of Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh, and Army Chief of Staff Raymond Odierno.

Two women in particular, Colonel Linda Shiemo and Major, now Colonel, Trina Rice, produced the research necessary to prepare Price for his testimony to Congress. Overturning the Direct Ground Combat Exclusion Rule was the lynchpin in opening all military occupational specialties for women in all branches of military service. The Army spent the next four years pursuing efforts to accomplish that goal. “I treasure the military experience because I look through that prism, and it makes me a better husband, father, son, friend, Cougar, and a greater ambassador for the stockholders who have invested in me,” Price declared.⁷

Today, General Price serves as the president and chief executive officer of Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA), an organization founded on principles of care and the prevention of drug addiction among youth. His publications include the 2001 book, *Against All Enemies Foreign and Domestic: A Study of Urban Unrest and Federal Intervention Within the United States*; the 2016 book, *Life, On the Other Side of You: A Study of Life, Death, and Renewal*; and the 2020 book, *Homeland Defense: Civil Unrest and Federal Intervention within the United States of America*. Barrye Price’s accomplishments as an academic, serviceman, and officer in the U.S. Army have allowed many people from all walks of life, most notably women, to succeed and break barriers in the U.S. Army.

Lieutenant Colonel Comiskey: Facilitating Price’s Change

Lieutenant Colonel Melissa Comiskey joined the University of Houston in 2022 as the department chair of Military Science and director of Army ROTC, but her career had crossed paths with General Price’s work years before that. Comiskey graduated from Texas A&M University and joined the Army as a second lieutenant. Similar to Price, Comiskey was drawn towards Army ROTC by the wide range of benefits provided. Upon graduation and completion of the leadership program, Comiskey decided to further her career in the U.S. Army. “I



LTC Comiskey hopes that through her work as the department chair of UH Military Science, she can foster change in the U.S. Army by promoting a culture of inclusion. Photo courtesy of LTC Melissa Comiskey.

fell in love with the Army – most importantly, the people,” she explained. “We say, this is my squad, this is my team of teams, my family. It’s like that everywhere. There’s just that camaraderie that’s irreplaceable.”⁸

Comiskey completed the Adjutant General Officer Basic Course and took a post in Germany as a platoon leader. She then served as a battalion human resources officer, after which she deployed to Iraq for fifteen months. Upon her return, Comiskey earned her master’s in military arts and science from the Air Command and Staff College. She worked in the Pentagon as chief of command policy and chief of distribution branch for enlisted personnel policy.⁹ Comiskey has extensive experience with personnel management and human resources within the U.S. Army, which made her the perfect person to execute Price’s policy changes.

On top of her service in Germany, Iraq, and South Korea, Comiskey also has a passion for military education and inclusion in the U.S. Army and military as a whole. She was on the frontlines of the facilitation of General Price’s efforts to expand inclusion in the U.S. military. “I was at [the armored brigade combat team] in 2016 executing the second part of what he started. We were the first unit to integrate female infantry and armor officers and soldiers under a policy called ‘Soldier 2020’ which opened all positions to all people, regardless of gender. After that, I went to the Pentagon where we expanded that policy to all units across the Army.”¹⁰

Bringing inclusion and change into the U.S. Army is not accomplished through simply creating policies. Breaking barriers comes in two parts – the implementation of inclusion into policy and the change in culture. Speaking on the



LTC Comiskey with Colonel Stephen Ruth, the Director of the Houston Strategic Officer Recruiting Detachment. Both Comiskey and Ruth are involved in recruiting and mentoring future leaders in the U.S. Army.

Photo courtesy of LTC Melissa Comiskey.



2LT Katelyn Kubosh graduated from UH in the top ten percent of all ROTC graduates nationwide.

Photo courtesy of 2LT Katelyn Kubosh.

importance of culture in the U.S. Army and how changing it can show lasting change, Comiskey asserts “that leaders [must] understand and embrace diversity, and not just diversity, but inclusion.” This includes “challenging culture, ideas, thoughts, and perspectives.”¹¹ As senior officers in the U.S. Army, Price and Comiskey helped make the Army more inclusive and opened doors for the next generation of leaders in the officer corps.

Lieutenant Kubosh: Achieving What Once Was Impossible

A beneficiary of Price and Comiskey’s efforts to open doors to women, Katelyn Kubosh was born and raised in Spring, Texas, a suburb north of Houston. She attended her first year of undergraduate studies at The University of Texas in Austin as a business major. Unlike General Price, however, being immersed in a new city surrounded by complete strangers made her terribly homesick. Almost all of her family members attended the University of Houston, including her grandfather, her parents, her older brother, and younger sister. “My parents ended up getting married on campus. That’s so cheesy and so funny,” she reflected. Given these strong ties to Houston, living in Austin miles away from her entire family did not feel right. “I didn’t want to be a Longhorn anymore. I missed my family, and I missed Houston,” she lamented.¹²

After months of deliberation, Kubosh came to a critical decision and, by January 2018, found herself cheerfully roaming the halls of UH. During the next three years she spent as an undergraduate, Cougar pride became an indistinguishable part of her identity.

Kubosh enrolled as a hotel and restaurant management major in the Conrad N. Hilton College. Before joining the Army, she thought about going into the restaurant business or joining the family law firm.¹³ Kubosh’s little sister was enrolled at UH at the time as a hotel and restaurant major,

and following the same academic path made sense. Kubosh’s studies brought to life numbers, management, and accounting. Needless to say, she loved every part of it.

While at UH, Kubosh decided to join the ROTC program. “My decision to join ROTC was very much spiritual. When I was at The University of Texas, I joined ROTC, but I was at a different place in my life, so it didn’t work out.” Learning military tactics during times of war was something that threw Kubosh out of her comfort zone. She recalls telling people before she joined the UH program that she would never join the Army because it was just not the right fit for her. At UH, however, her experience flipped 180 degrees. “I had a calling. I saw myself as a little warrior,” she smiled. “My spiritual decision was made as a Christian. I joined with the desire to serve God and to bring Him glory. That is the central part of who I am.”¹⁴

Similar to General Price, Kubosh was guaranteed two years of fully funded tuition while she attended UH. She was willing to put herself up on the chopping block for ROTC, which she explained “is what you make it out to be. How involved you get is how much the program can give back to you as a person.”¹⁵ Plus, the tactical and leadership knowledge she acquired during her time in ROTC proved useful for her future aspirations. Kubosh eventually earned the title of Cadet Battalion Commander, an esteemed position within the ROTC program.

Kubosh finished at UH in May 2021, graduating in the top ten percent of all Army ROTC cadets across the United States. Additionally, she was the only student among her Hilton College cohort to graduate with a 4.0 GPA. Kubosh soon applied to infantry school and was accepted, leaving behind



2LT Kubosh was not just training to be a leader in the ROTC; she was also training to enter the infantry force as a woman.

Photo courtesy of 2LT Katelyn Kubosh.



Due to Gen. Price and LTC Comiskey's efforts in the U.S. Army, 2LT Kubosh was able to succeed and do what was impossible in the Army a few years ago.

Photo courtesy of 2LT Katelyn Kubosh.

a groundbreaking legacy by becoming the first female cadet from UH to join the infantry at the rank of second lieutenant.¹⁶

General Price's long and arduous efforts to lift gender-based restrictions in the military were the legal actions that allowed Kubosh to apply to infantry school in the first place. The second that Price heard about Kubosh's acceptance into infantry school, he was moved to tears. As a UH alumnus, Price confirmed that his struggles were not in vain. He immediately contacted Kubosh to congratulate her for the historic feat on which she would soon embark. "This was without question the most rewarding achievement during my thirty-one years of Armed Service to our nation. Katelyn Kubosh was the cherry on the sundae," Price affirmed.¹⁷

Although the infantry school training proved much more difficult than Kubosh expected, her efforts were worth the struggle. "The infantry is a very gruff, tough, and strict place. I struggled the most adjusting to the environment," she said. Infantry school taught Kubosh how to carry her own and how to get the job done, especially in an environment in which people do not give affirmation and praise easily. What made training especially difficult was being one in an extremely small minority of women within the school. In a class of 160 people, only six were women. "In my platoon of forty people," she continued, "there was only me and one other woman. Having so few women had its natural consequences and struggles. The guys would only talk with the guys. I felt isolated."¹⁸

Despite her struggles, Kubosh persevered. The last thing she wanted to do was pretend to act like a man, but she realized that women could do traditionally masculine jobs. "Women have strengths that men do not have and vice versa. That's something to be celebrated," she concluded. Kubosh continues to learn through trial and error how to lead as a woman and how to break the "impossible" barriers. After years of hard work and training, she has no doubt that the military was her calling. "I have to admit, I can't imagine wearing anything but the Infantry insignia."¹⁹

After infantry training, Kubosh was assigned to Fort Hood where she became a staff officer tasked with the planning of logistics such as supply maintenance and training soldiers.

Everything she learned in ROTC and infantry school prepared her for this post, especially how to lead people in combat and applying chains of command. She continued to gain new skills throughout the many practice operations she ran at Fort Hood, with every effort assuming some future deployment. "Even though I'm an officer, I'm really new to the Army. There's a lot of stuff I still don't understand, but we all teach each other every day," she said in 2022. Today, Kubosh is a Platoon Leader in a Mechanized Infantry Company.²⁰

The work that these individuals have done in the U.S. Army mark major milestones ever since the 1948 desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces by President Harry Truman. General Price, Lieutenant Colonel Comiskey, and Lieutenant Kubosh represent the impossible made possible. Being benefactors and facilitators of change, they know what it means to struggle against racial and gender inequality to achieve greater access in the U.S. military. Their hardships remain with them today and continue to animate their lives. For Price and Kubosh, the University of Houston was a stepping-stone for them to pursue greater life goals. Price and Kubosh always keep in mind how much the city of Houston has provided them and, thus, continue to give back through military service and educational speeches that advocate for racial and gender equality in all sectors of society. For Comiskey, being the second female director of the Army ROTC at UH is a respectable feat; she hopes to train and help cadets foster inclusion and maximize the potential of every service-member in the Army, regardless of identity. All three individuals hope that future UH students will maintain the tradition to create a better, more sustainable future for us all. **HH**

Christine Le is a senior at the University of Houston studying history and political science. A member of the Honors College, she serves as secretary of the university's debate team. After graduation, she plans to teach English in either Vietnam or Korea for at least a year before realizing her dream of becoming a public school social studies teacher.

Jacob Loew is a senior in the Honors College at the University of Houston majoring in history with a minor in political science. He has served as a consultant at the Writing Center and an intern for the Center for Public History's 100 Years of Stories: Documenting a Century at the University of Houston project.



The UH Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine: *For the City*

The Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine stands out as a beacon for the city it serves.

All photos courtesy of the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine unless otherwise noted.

*By Max Hosaka
with Grace Conroy*

Nestled just beyond downtown Houston sits “the largest medical city in the world” – the Texas Medical Center (TMC).¹ Yet, despite Texans and Houstonians’ proximity to the world’s leading site for innovation in medical technology and practice, Texas ranks forty-seventh out of the fifty states in primary care physicians per capita and has the highest rate of uninsured residents.² Seeing this disparity, University of Houston (UH) president, Renu Khator, announced in 2014 that the university sought to establish a new College of Medicine – the region’s first in fifty years – to serve the local community and address the state’s shortage of primary care physicians.³ The College of Medicine would tackle Texas’s health disparities by educating its medical students about the importance of primary care physicians in underserved urban and rural communities.

From that moment on, the college’s development progressed quickly. In November 2017, the UH Board of Regents voted unanimously to create the College of Medicine. Two years later, in May 2019, Governor Greg Abbott signed HB 826 into law, approving funding for the college. The following February, the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, which grants medical schools the authority to issue doctor of medicine (M.D.) degrees, conferred preliminary accreditation.⁴ These efforts culminated in two seminal events: the welcoming of the college’s inaugural class

in July of 2020 and its renaming as the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine in May of 2022.

The Texas Medical Center Welcomes a New Member

The University of Houston’s College of Medicine became a member institution of the Texas Medical Center in 2021, joining the renowned medical community as its sixty-third member.⁵ Founding and current dean, Dr. Stephen Spann, who serves as the liaison between the college and TMC, indicated that the UH College of Medicine was “elated to join the Texas Medical Center as a member institution and look[ed] forward to engaging with colleagues at other institutions to advance clinical issues and best practices and further joint research endeavors.”⁶

The Texas Medical Center has a storied history. The first facility, Hermann Hospital, opened in 1925 to fulfill the final wishes of oil and real estate investor George Hermann, but he had no plans for the larger complex to come. In 1936, Monroe Dunaway “M.D.” Anderson, who made his fortune in the cotton mercantile business, created the M.D. Anderson Foundation to leave a positive impact on Houston into the future. The foundation sought to establish and support hospitals in Houston and to promote “health, science, education and advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding

among people.”⁷ Although Anderson passed away in 1939, the foundation embarked on plans to create what local doctor Ernst Bertner envisioned as a “City of Medicine.” The foundation’s trustees acquired the land between Hermann Hospital and Holcombe Boulevard and funded the creation of the M.D. Anderson Hospital for Cancer Research with Bertner at the helm, marking the beginning of the Texas Medical Center in 1941. Soon after, Baylor University Medical School (now Baylor College of Medicine) and other educational institutions and hospitals joined TMC.⁸

UH became involved with medical education in the post-World War II era when it created professional schools in response to the demand of returning veterans enrolling in classes under the G.I. Bill, which provided tuition, housing, and other benefits. The university’s first connection to TMC was the School of Practical Nursing (1948), and later the College of Nursing (1949), which collaborated with Hermann and Methodist Hospitals through the early 1950s. The university also established the College of Pharmacy in 1946 and the College of Optometry in 1952.⁹ While the College of Pharmacy became a member of TMC in 1980, the University of Houston itself did not officially join until 2009. The integration of UH into TMC occurred so that policy development, planning, education, and research could be congruent between UH and other TMC institutions to improve Houston’s health education infrastructure. This affiliation came full circle when TMC welcomed the Fertitta Family College of Medicine into the fold.

Community Outreach at Work

With new specialty fields, diagnostic technologies, and insurance protocols that did not exist when the medical center was founded, the delivery of medical care operates differently today than it did in the past. Patients rely



Governor Greg Abbott (seated), Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, Board of Regents Chair Tilman Fertitta, UH President Renu Khator, and Speaker of the House Dennis Bonnen celebrate the signing of HB826, acknowledging the creation of the UH College of Medicine in 2019.

Dean Stephen Spann, left, visits the UH College of Medicine construction site.



on primary care physicians (PCPs) to be the overseers of their care, but the number of PCPs is decreasing with more medical students seeking careers in cardiology, neurology, radiology, and other specialties. The Fertitta Family College of Medicine hopes to entice at least half of each graduating class to serve as primary care physicians.¹⁰ When the college received its preliminary accreditation, President Khator promised that the college’s faculty and students would “work tirelessly in clinics across the city, to advance health care delivery.” She noted that “by training the next generation of compassionate physicians who understand how to provide quality health care at a reasonable cost, [UH is expanding their] capabilities to serve the people and neighborhoods too often left behind.”¹¹

Improved healthcare in underserved communities is a chief concern of the Fertitta Family College of Medicine. It does not simply talk about community outreach, it acts on its convictions and hosts many programs and events in the name of community health, often collaborating with other UH departments or outside institutions. One such program is the Household-Centered Care Program that is a joint effort between the UH College of Medicine, College of Nursing, Graduate School of Social Work, and community health workers. Members of the program work directly with residents of the Third Ward, the predominately African American neighborhood that surrounds UH, and the East End, a Hispanic-majority area adjacent to the school.¹²

The Household-Centered Care Program seeks to improve health outcomes by collaborating directly with the community and establishing trust between community members and the medical providers. “Our hope is that as the community accepts us as people who can help them address their social needs, that what we do with the community creates a trustful relationship between us, and that the UH College of Medicine and our affiliated schools become resources for the



UH began its first nursing program in 1948 in cooperation with hospitals at the Texas Medical Center before creating the College of Nursing a year later.

The UH College of Pharmacy began offering classes in 1948 and, in 1980, became the first UH entity admitted as a member institution of the Texas Medical Center.

Photos courtesy of *The Houstonian*, 1948, Digital Collections, University of Houston Libraries.



communities to address what they need, not what [we] decide they need,” explained Dr. Claudine Johnson, the Household-Centered Care Program’s academic director.¹³ Cases such as the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male (1932-1972), during which 400 African American men were left untreated even after a treatment became available, and the unauthorized harvesting of cancer cells (later named HeLa cells) for research and profit, from an African American woman, Henrietta Lacks, have left a stain of mistrust of the medical establishment among African Americans and other people of color.¹⁴

This mistrust has sewn itself into the fabric of many underserved communities, which plays a role in inferior health outcomes found in neighborhoods such as the Third Ward and East End, for example. The Household-Centered Care program aims to mend the damage by having interprofessional teams from UH connect with community members to provide health and social services. The diversity of the College of Medicine student body is especially important in this regard. Community health worker Joshua Lopez-Barrios

pointed out, “We have a lot of families that have a lot of barriers, they don’t have information because they don’t speak English, and it’s hard.”¹⁵ Something as simple as a provider who speaks Spanish can make a Spanish-speaking patient more at ease and help alleviate obstacles.

Many of the choices made by educational and medical institutions offer insight into their goals and priorities. For example, faculty member Dr. Marino Bruce was drawn to the burgeoning UH College of Medicine due, in part, to the rallying cry, “for the city!” After being at other universities, he found that the University of Houston lived up to the slogan, and its efforts truly were “for the city.” This reflected his own beliefs about delivering medical care to community members who struggle to access quality care.¹⁶ At the same time, Bruce stressed how important it is for students to have excellent research and statistical skills, which are vital in the medical field. A physician must be able to scrutinize medical research and recognize patterns in ailments to best diagnose and treat patients.

As the associate dean of research, Dr. Bruce addresses those priorities and helps shape the college going forward. Having served in many interdisciplinary positions, he has experience in social justice, and his current research focuses on the disproportionate prevalence of chronic kidney disease in younger African American men who experience onset on average at age thirty-five, about twenty years younger than white men. Dr. Bruce identified correlations between hypertension and diabetes with low socioeconomic status as a possible cause. This type of research reflects the College of Medicine’s commitment to eliminating health disparities.¹⁷

The Fertitta Family College of Medicine also conducts Community Working Groups for the Third Ward and East End that offer monthly panels comprised of community-based organizations, healthcare and social service providers, churches, and other community members. The meetings aim to identify obstacles to healthy living, formulate solutions, and, if possible, act on them. For example, the Third

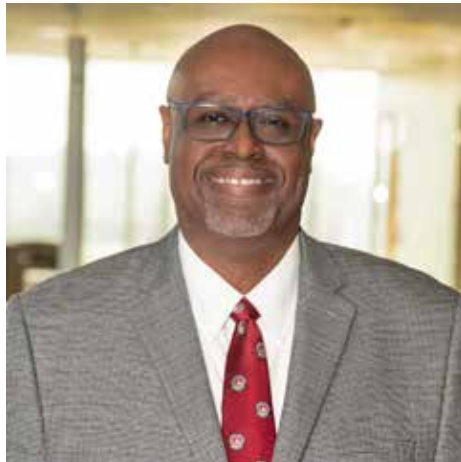


The Household-Centered Care Program strives to create trust and communication between the medical students and the community members they serve to improve their overall health.

Ward group identified food insecurity as a major health issue. To address this, the group collaborated with Riverside United Methodist Church in the creation and upkeep of a community garden open to Third Ward residents. Both the Third Ward and East End Working Groups have spread the word about food drives, community enrichment events, and COVID-19 vaccine drives along with encouraging residents to take part in health research.¹⁸

Both neighborhood working groups identified COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy as one of the major concerns facing residents. The East End group saw that “misinformation [was] rampant” and that a “recommendation from a loved one is a strong influencer.” Thus, it was suggested that they work with *abuelas*, or grandmothers, in the Latino community. By educating the family matriarch, whose opinion is valued, they hope the women will be able to persuade their family members to get vaccinated. Direct collaboration and discourse between the College of Medicine and the community allow for creative, culturally driven solutions to improve community health outcomes.¹⁹

Dr. Marino Bruce, Ph.D., M.S.R.C., M.Div. is the associate dean for research at the Fertitta Family College of Medicine who seeks to provide innovative medical care to underserved communities.



The Fertitta Family College of Medicine intends to establish and keep a tradition of homegrown physicians. Situated in the block between UH and Texas Southern University, a historically Black university, is Third Ward’s Jack Yates High School. Over the summer of 2022, the College of Medicine and other UH departments invited Yates students to participate in the STEM Research Inquiry Summer Enrichment program, or STEM RISE. This program gives students insight into UH and the College of Medicine as well as support, including mentorship from the medical students who offer hands-on assistance to the high schoolers conducting lab work and research. Hopefully, STEM RISE will recruit the Yates students to UH and eventually the College of Medicine, yielding more physicians suited to serve Greater Houston. STEM RISE exemplifies the college’s commitment to its community by inspiring the next generation of medical students and creating a cycle of community improvement.²⁰

The College of Medicine also supports future generations of medical providers by ensuring the student body welcomes



Members of the inaugural class of UH College of Medicine recite their vows, written by the class itself, to honor the practice of medicine and their journey forward at the college.

those of various backgrounds, ethnicities, and identities.

A member of the 2021 incoming class, Heavenly Webb described her peers, saying, “Our class is the epitome of what I feel diversity is supposed to look like.” She added, the experience is like “walking into a room where a whole bunch of people who look differently, speak differently, and eat different foods are working together.”²¹ The relationship between these individuals fosters “respect, cultural competence, and awareness” that is necessary in a city as diverse as Houston.²² Heavenly touched on why it is important to have doctors of all races when she recalled a patient saying, “My doctor looks like me.” Heavenly pointed out that when patients feel that connection, it “fosters community trust and builds new leaders,” in part because the patients can see themselves in those doctors.²³

Heavenly further stressed the importance of patients having primary care physicians who come from the patients’ communities so that the doctors understand and relate to their patients’ backgrounds. Dr. Portia Davis, disease state management and clinical pharmacist at the San José Clinic which services primarily low-income patients and collaborates with the college, explained, “You can prescribe the best medicines and order the fanciest tests, but if [a patient’s] home situation doesn’t support the things that you need them to do, they’re food insecure, they don’t have access to the healthy foods that you need them to eat to bring down their blood pressure or to lose weight or control their blood sugar ... that really sets them up poorly.”²⁴ The diversity and presence of students who understand food insecurity, as well as the financial struggles of low-income patients improves the care provided by the overall cohort of doctors at the College of Medicine while they are in the program and in their future careers.

A common experience for students at some universities are classes designed to weed out “unworthy” students. Medical student Maya Fontenot, a member of the inaugural class, recalled that “it felt like all of the faculty was personally invested in our success and that is such a nice feeling.”



Heavenly Webb, shown performing a head exam, is a member of the 2025 class. She pointed out that a plus at UH College of Medicine is that the student cohorts include people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds whose compassion shines through.

Establishing a positive connection between faculty and students leads to happier and more capable learners. Maya also appreciated the College of Medicine’s Longitudinal Primary Care (LPC), or clinicals, which begin in the students’ first year and continue for the duration of their time at the college. The UH LPCs integrate students into the clinical setting immediately. Throughout the four-year curriculum, a specified doctor at one of the clinics collaborating with the College of Medicine supervises each student. This fosters a deep connection with the clinic’s patients and their communities while providing the students with a long-term mentoring experience that will prove useful in their practice after graduation.²⁵

The Fertitta Family College of Medicine is unique in its practice of LPCs, as most medical schools begin clinical experience in the students’ third year of medical school.²⁶ Maya explained why this is important, saying, “None of us are good at seeing patients at first.” By starting clinicals earlier, “We’ve got those beginning jitters out [of the way,] and we can sit down and have a normal conversation with a patient.”²⁷ Exposing students to provider-patient interactions as early as possible better prepares new doctors to interact directly with the patients and, by extension, to the communities the physicians serve.

As with the rest of the world in 2020, the inaugural class members saw their medical school experience disrupted when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged. The College of Medicine stood unflinching during this challenge, learned from it, and remained true to its mission—a promising sign for the future. The college operated out of Health 2, a building shared with the College of Pharmacy in the Bio-Medical District at the University of Houston main campus, until the summer of 2022, when the new College of Medicine building was dedicated. Located just south of the previous location

and separated from the main campus by Brays Bayou, the college is next to the communities it serves.

In 2022, the college became the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine when the family generously donated \$50 million toward its mission and growth.²⁸ Tilman Fertitta acknowledged the passion and dreams his family has for the college, by declaring his hope that it will “be a game-changer for the health and well-being of Texans by improving access to quality health care, advancing medical knowledge, and improving patient care through health and health care research.”²⁹ By the turn of the next decade, the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine hopes to be nationally recognized for graduating physicians who choose to continue as primary care providers for the underserved, educating physicians who are underrepresented minorities, and contributing to measurable improvements in underserved health communities.³⁰ **HH**



A member of the inaugural class, Maya Fontenot meets with Dr. Steven Starks. Fontenot comes from a Native American background and found the College of Medicine was willing to do the “hard work ... it takes to practice diversity, cultural competency, and socially responsible medicine,” enabling her to honor Western medicine and her cultural upbringing.

Max Hosaka is a student at the University of Houston majoring in history on the Science, Medicine, and Technology track.

Grace Conroy is pursuing a master’s degree in public history at American University. She earned her bachelor’s in history from the University of Houston, where she interned with *Houston History*, as well as the Resilient Houston and 100 Years of Stories projects in the Center for Public History.



Graduate students in Dr. Monica Perales's *Research in Public History* class search University of Houston archival records for exhibit items. These boxes represent a mere fraction of the physical and digital materials students considered over two semesters. Shown left to right, Stephon Boykin, Rahil Asgari, and Alec Story. Photo courtesy of Monica Perales.

Agents of Change: Celebrating Innovation at UH's Centennial, *A Collaborative Exhibit Bringing the 100 Years of Stories Project Full Circle*

By Mary Manning

In the fall of 2020, the Center for Public History (CPH), Houston Public Media (HPM), and UH Libraries embarked upon an exciting three-year project, *100 Years of Stories: Documenting a Century at the University of Houston (UH)*,



UH began as Houston Junior College in June 1927 with evening classes at the San Jacinto High School building.

Photo courtesy of UH Libraries Digital Collections, ark:/84475/do71676w142.

leading up to the university's centennial. Funded by UH friend and patron Carey C. Shuart, the project features a collaborative approach to storytelling in which the UH Libraries played a vital research support role in the project's goal of collecting, sharing, and preserving the



The Roy G. Cullen Memorial Building was the first building completed at UH's permanent campus site in 1939. Designed by architects Alfred C. Finn and Lamar Cato, the building is believed to be the first constructed with air conditioning on a U.S. higher education campus. It is pictured here with the Reflection Pool in the foreground.

Photo courtesy of UH Libraries Digital Collections, ark:/84475/do2252j7646.

stories of the university's people and institutions that have defined our city and the region.

Work on the project began in 2020 just as the country entered the pandemic lockdown. During this phase, the UH Libraries supported CPH's *Houston History* magazine staff and students as they researched and outlined stories about UH students, alumni, faculty, administrators, and institutions for ten video, television, and radio spots produced by HPM, under the program title *100 Years of Houston*. UH Libraries Special Collections provided virtual research assistance and trained CPH researchers to use the archival finding aid databases, Digital Collections, and Audio Video Repository. With the reading room closed to in-person visits, UH



Originally occupied in 1946, Veterans Village provided temporary trailer housing to World War II veterans, who came to UH under the G.I. Bill, and their families.

Photo courtesy of UH Libraries Digital Collections, ark:/84475/do0989r273z.

Special Collections staff provided the students with digitized research materials for their outlines and assisted HPM's manager for Media Production, Fujio Watanabe, in finding additional visual content for the videos.

During the project's second phase, the student researchers switched their focus to creating 100 Years of Stories content that would appear in the *Houston History* magazine over the next two years. Classes resumed on campus, and Dr. Debbie Harwell, the magazine's editor, taught undergraduate courses, in which students learned to conduct oral histories and write public-focused, academically researched articles. Special Collections staff supported the effort by providing instruction on conducting research in the archives and welcomed students back into the reading room. The Special Collections staff also provided digitized images that students selected to illustrate their published works.

In 2023, 100 Years of Stories entered its third year and its final phase, culminating with a student-created exhibition in the UH MD Anderson Library.

So far, this article has focused primarily on the role UH Libraries Special Collections played in the project's first two years. However, I would be remiss in not mentioning the critical role of the newly created Libraries' Preservation and Reformatting Department (PARD), which in 2023 took over the digitization of images, moving and still, along with other vital preservation functions. Moreover, PARD played a mammoth role in the exhibit creation: digitizing content, fabricating and installing, as well as guiding and constructing a corresponding online display that will launch in 2024. Dean Athena Jackson and the Libraries Administration, Development, and Communications Departments have also provided crucial support for the 100 Years of Stories project.

Texas Southern University (TSU) dancers perform on the KUHT television program *People are Taught to be Different*. Proposed by Dr. Henry Allen Bullock, the program was developed through a collaboration between TSU and KUHT. The twelve episodes first aired in 1958 and explored experiences common to all humanity.

Photo courtesy of UH Libraries Digital Collections, ark:/84475/do87032448d.



The Exhibit

The exhibit *Agents of Change: Celebrating Innovation at UH's Centennial* is a student-created exhibit done in collaboration with UH Libraries and CPH. It focuses on people associated with UH who led the way in creating positive change at the university and in the community, and how the university itself became more accessible and diverse across time.

Public history graduate students in two of Dr. Monica Perales's classes curated the exhibit as part of their coursework—giving them real-world experience to add to their resumes and prepare them for careers as public historians. Perales, Harwell, and University Archivist Mary Manning

form the curatorial leadership team, planning the exhibit, working with partners across campus, and supporting the students' work.

This exhibit builds upon the scholarship of students who worked on *Houston History* articles and the Houston Public Media video, television, and radio spots in earlier phases of the project. Through their coursework, Perales's students learned to conduct research using UH Special Collections and materials from other archives. The students developed an exhibit focus, generated an exhibit title and narrative, selected objects for the exhibit, developed a layout, and drafted item labels.

The exhibit explores three themes, UH's founding, expansion of buildings and programs, and the university's impact on the community. The exhibit's story starts in 1927 when working Houstonians sought access to higher education that fit their needs. They advocated for themselves, took their concerns to Houston Independent School District superintendent E. E. Oberholtzer, and the forerunner to UH, Houston Junior College, was born.

The exhibit narrative continues with the New Deal and the G.I. Bill, which propelled growth on campus through physical expansion and increased enrollment. With this expansion came greater diversity in the 1960s, when the student group Afro-Americans for Black Liberation (AABL) demanded equal rights and forever changed UH. UH met their demand for an African American studies program, making it one of the nation's first.



Lynn Eusan and Gene Locke, leaders of the student organization AABL, whose "10 Demands," presented to UH on February 7, 1969, called for the creation of an African American Studies program, which university administrators began planning that same year.

Photo courtesy of UH Libraries Digital Collections, ark:/84475/do48128b61d.



UH President Marguerite Ross Barnett displays her Cougar spirit with the UH mascot, Shasta. The first woman and first African American to serve as UH president, she is noted for establishing dynamic programs, community networks, and successful fundraising campaigns.

Photo courtesy of UH Libraries Digital Collections, ark:/84475/d063827C390.

Students, alumni, faculty, and administrators have led the way as agents of change by increasing opportunities for UH and Houston's diverse population. Alumni such as Graciela "Gracie" Saenz, Maria Jimenez, Yolanda Black Navarro, and Phyllis Frye became tireless activists on campus and in their communities beyond campus. With the arrival of UH System Chancellor and UH President Renu Khator in 2008 came another period of accelerated growth on campus, including the new Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine, educating a diverse body of medical professionals to serve our diverse city.

CPH students illuminate these contributions and much more in their exhibit *Agents of Change: Celebrating Innovation at UH's Centennial*.



Gracie Saenz and U.S. Representative Ken Bentsen, Jr. meet with President Bill Clinton during his visit to Houston after enacting NAFTA.

Photo courtesy of Gracie Saenz.



A member of the UH College of Medicine's inaugural class, Maya Fontenot observes Dr. Steven Starks. The curriculum integrates students into clinical rotations during their first year, which is unique.

Photo courtesy of the Tilman J. Fertitta College of Medicine.

A *Houston History* magazine launch and exhibit opening is slated for September 27, 2023, in the Elizabeth D. Rockwell Pavilion at UH. The exhibit will remain on display on the second floor of the MD Anderson Library until May 31, 2024.

The Libraries will continue to support the 100 Years of Stories project by launching an online exhibit and by preserving and providing access to the oral histories created as part of the historical research. As 100 Years of Stories lights the path to the UH centennial celebration in 2027, UH Libraries looks forward to future collaboration with the Center for Public History and Houston Public Media. **HH**

Mary Manning is the University Archivist and curator of Performing Arts Research Collections at UH Libraries Special Collections. She is a past president of the Society of Southwest Archivists and researches and publishes on Houston and regional music.



Planning the exhibit spanned two semesters and involved making tough choices on what to include. Graduate students Samantha de León, Cady Hammer, and Olabode Shadare, seated left to right, work with Dr. Monica Perales to determine which categories and stories to feature.

Photo courtesy of Devin Darden.



Miller Outdoor Theatre's July 4th celebration includes fireworks and a symphony performance that draw thousands to the theatre. After a three-year hiatus due to the COVID pandemic, the tradition will resume in 2023.

All photos courtesy of Miller Outdoor Theatre unless otherwise noted.

Making Memories at Miller Outdoor Theatre: A CENTENNIAL OF ARTS

By Samantha de León

In February 1969, forty-six years after Miller Outdoor Theatre opened and a year after moving into its new facility, *Houston Chronicle* fine arts editor Ann Holmes questioned what was next for the outdoor amphitheater. Nestled in the heart of the museum district in Hermann Park, Miller Outdoor Theatre's future was in question due to limited funding and big ambitions to expand its programming. "What will happen when summer comes? Will Miller Theatre go dark many nights – the stage curtain down like some great slumberous eye, unresponsive of light and entertainment?" Holmes wondered.¹

Over fifty years later, as the theatre celebrates its centennial birthday, Miller has surpassed expectations, and certainly Holmes's questioning. It has cemented itself as an arts powerhouse, operating eight months out of the year with a variety of shows: Shakespeare, jazz, ballet, symphonies,

plays, musicals, and cultural performances. While Miller has endured tough times and changed throughout the years, with different names and new construction, what has not changed is the theatre's distinctiveness, programming, variety, and production quality, all provided to audiences free of charge. The experiences and memories made by guests of all ages demonstrate the magic Miller Outdoor Theatre has created across generations, making it a favorite of Houstonians and visitors from near and far. The hard work and dedication to Miller's mission of making theatre accessible and available to everyone has made it a Houston treasure and a pillar of excellence in performance.

Originally known as Miller Memorial Theatre, the facility began as an amphitheater featuring twenty Corinthian-style, Bedford limestone columns, designed by William Ward Watkin in 1922, and constructed by Tom Tellepsen, a



Big Bird performs with the Houston Symphony Orchestra in front of a capacity crowd at Miller Outdoor Theatre on July 21, 1979. Big Bird served as guest conductor, sang, and danced to music from Sesame Street.⁵

founder of Houston's Tellepsen Builders. Reminiscing about this theatre he knew as a boy, Jim Bernhard, a former Miller advisory board member, Rice University professor, and producer, actor, and writer for Theatre Under The Stars (TUTS), recalled, "It was really more of a bandshell. It was not a fully equipped theatre."²

Miller Outdoor Theatre was dedicated on May 12, 1923, with a plaque that read, "To the Arts of Music, Poetry, Drama, and Oratory, by which the striving spirit of man seeks to interpret the words of God. This theatre of the City of Houston is permanently dedicated." The ceremonies included a pageant, *The Springtime of Our Nation*, described as Houston's most "elaborate and pretentious festival ever presented" at the time, which featured approximately 2,500 performers and focused on the United States and Manifest Destiny.³ The theatre officially opened six days later, on May 18, 1923, to *The Rose Maiden*, a cantata by English composer Frederic Cowen. W. R. Waghorne, musical director of the Recreation and Community Service Association, directed the performance by the Houston Festival Chorus.⁴

In the 1920s, sports like boxing and baseball reigned supreme across the country. Miller hosted broadcasting events, such as the 1925 World Series match between the Washington Senators (now the Minnesota Twins) and the Pittsburgh Pirates who went head-to-head in a thrilling seven games. On September 22, 1927, thousands gathered again at Miller to hear the World Heavyweight Boxing Championship between Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney to experience the momentous match as it happened. Similar



Houston Police Department motorcycle officers line up in front of the original Miller Memorial Theatre in November 1931.

broadcasts occurred in New York City, Boston, Washington, D.C., and other U.S. cities.⁶

In addition to radio broadcasts, the theatre was used for parades, celebrations, rallies, plays, memorials, concerts, and graduations. For example, The University of Houston held its first commencement as a university there in 1935.⁷ Perhaps surprisingly, Miller also hosted many politicians and famous figures from around the world. The first world figure to visit Miller was General Henri Joseph Eugene Gouraud, a one-handed Frenchman, known as the "Lion of the Argonne" who fought in French Sudan in World War I. He led the French Fourth Army and the Rainbow Division (the only American unit in the Fourth Army), along with the First, Second, and Thirty-Sixth U.S. divisions, against the Germans in the 1918 Meuse-Argonne offensive, the last major battle of the war. As part of his U.S. tour, veterans from the Rainbow, Second, and Thirty-Sixth divisions organized a parade for Gouraud in Houston on August 2, 1923, ending the celebrations at Miller with addresses from the general and other military officials.⁸

Numerous political office holders and seekers discovered Miller as well. In 1924, Lt. Governor Lynch Davidson visited Miller, followed by Attorney General Dan Moody in 1926 and Senator Tom Connally in 1928. By 1932, Miller officially began hosting political rallies, charging \$50 per night (\$1,083 today), with the theatre bringing in \$250 in revenue (\$5,416 in 2023) by July of that year.⁹ By 1968, well over twenty politicians had held rallies and spoken at Miller Memorial Theatre, including eight Texas governors, Vice President Richard Nixon, Senator Lyndon B. Johnson,



and Congressman George H. W. Bush who represented Houston's 7th District.¹⁰

Miller Outdoor Theatre continued to evolve, and the venue introduced the first official symphony concert on August 21, 1940. Ernst Hoffmann, a conductor and musical director of the Houston Symphony Society (now Houston Symphony), and forty-five musicians performed a variety of pieces by Strauss, Wagner, and Tchaikovsky, as well as the "Star Spangled Banner," for thousands of spectators. Underwritten with a \$1,000 (\$21,199 in 2023) donation by cotton and real estate broker N. D. Naman under the condition he remain anonymous, attendees were asked to donate "at-will" for more free shows. The concert raised \$800 (\$16,959 in 2023), and the Houston Symphony Society was so moved that its president pledged to support the rest of the symphony's season himself. Before the night ended, it was announced that enough money had been raised to continue shows for the rest of the season and the next. Thus, a tradition was born.¹¹ Jim Bernhard's first experience at Miller stems from these concerts. Having moved from Beaumont to Houston as a child in 1947, he recalled, "My first impression [of Miller Outdoor Theatre] was, 'what a nice place to have a concert.'" Thus, he whiled away many summer evenings listening to symphonies there.¹² The outdoor symphony shows were a hit, especially because they were free.

For others, their first memorable experience at Miller was not the concerts, but the hill. The large hill that sits on Miller's doorstep and serves as a tiered viewing area was built in 1948 using dirt and red clay from the excavation widening Fannin Street to accommodate traffic for the growing Texas Medical Center.¹³ It was sodded and opened a year later.¹⁴ Since its installation seventy-five years ago, the hill has grown taller and has become an iconic part of Miller and a generational right-of-passage for Houston children.

Lauren Anderson, associate director of education and community engagement at the Houston Ballet and a Houston native, recalled her first visit to Miller when she was six or seven years old. "I remember rolling down the hill and running [back up] ... turning around, and seeing the stage," she recalled, adding, "we'd get up there ... and pretend we were

performers." Anderson attended performances by Houston Ballet Academy and other organizations because "... they were free and ... always fun. There was always something fun going on there." In 1983, she performed in her first production as a company member with the Houston Ballet, playing a horse in *Cinderella*.¹⁵ Anderson excelled as a dancer and became Houston Ballet's, as well as the country's, first Black principal ballerina in 1990.¹⁶

In 1968, the city constructed a new full proscenium theatre funded with city bonds, marking a dramatic change in Miller's direction.¹⁷ "It was an awesome building," Bernhard said, of the venue now fully equipped with backstage areas, lights, and wings. "I go, 'this is something very different.' And so, of course, did Frank Young."¹⁸

A musical theatre advocate, Frank Young convinced Houston's mayor Louie Welch that Miller needed more than symphony performances. Thus, Young produced and directed the musical *Bells Are Ringing* at Miller in 1968, which became TUTS's first production.¹⁹ Choreographed by Patsy Swayze, mother of late actor Patrick Swayze, the show was a huge success and inspired other organizations, such as the Houston Grand Opera, Houston Ballet, Society for the Performing Arts, and others to produce and perform shows at Miller.²⁰ Young went on to produce more smash hits with TUTS, including the 1972 production of *South Pacific* that



Five dancers pose outside of Miller Outdoor Theatre in 1945.



The set of Theatre Under the Stars's production of South Pacific by Rogers and Hammerstein in 1972 featured a twenty-seven-foot lagoon in part of the orchestra pit, with rock scenery to the far right. Over 25,000 people turned out for the show directed by Frank Young.

included a candlelit processional, an eighteen-foot waterfall, an impressive twenty-seven-foot lagoon in the orchestra pit, and high divers.²¹ Young's production of *Bells Are Ringing* started a tradition of offering free musicals, along with other types of performances.

For some, a free show is not tempting. "Usually when you hear something's free, your initial thought is 'well, it must not be very good.' That is not the case [at Miller]," declared Cissy Segall Davis, managing director of the Miller Theatre Advisory Board, who is dedicated to changing this perception through high quality programming. Her proudest achievement during her forty plus years at Miller is "the quality of the programming that has improved over the years." She affirms, "If it's out here, it's good. It's the same quality you're going to find at the downtown [Theatre District] ... it's really critical that people understand that ... you come to Miller because it is good and because you know you're going to see [a] good [show], and that you're going to enjoy it."²²



The Golden Dragon Acrobats, traditional Chinese acrobats, defy gravity while simultaneously riding a unicycle in a 2009 performance. Miller Outdoor Theatre offers diverse cultural programming that entertains and enlightens its audiences.

Free performances expand public access to the performing arts by removing the barrier of ticket costs and enables Miller to stand out as the only free open-air theatre of its kind in the United States.²³ Bernhard pointed out, "There have been some people on city council who thought '...people ought to pay an admission fee.' But this, I think, would defeat the whole purpose that makes Miller Theatre such a great institution—that it's there for everyone whether they can afford it or not."²⁴

The City of Houston and Friends of Hermann Park, now the Hermann Park Conservancy, funded a \$6-million expansion and renovation in 1996, replacing the roof and adding restrooms, office space, and a small stage.²⁵ In January 2023, Miller Outdoor Theatre launched a \$12.5 million fundraising campaign focused primarily on improving the audience experience. The proposal includes improving the fixed seating and lawn experience and creating an entry gateway.²⁶ "The entry way [will give] a sense of arrival at a really, really special place," Davis said of the construction projects, adding. "And that's what Miller is."²⁷

In considering the next hundred years at Miller, building on what they have done right in the past seems to be a common thread. Bernhard hopes Miller will maintain what it is doing now to stay successful. Anderson hopes that programming continues to be free of charge and that people will continue to patronize the theatre. Davis, responsible for getting the shows on stage, hopes the next century focuses on improvement inside the theatre such as bigger storage and expanded dressing room and backstage space to make the artists more comfortable, to name a few. "Most importantly," Davis hopes it "[will] still be a place for all Houstonians to be proud of."²⁸

When looking back through Miller's history, the memories come flooding in. In reflecting on her favorite show, Davis takes little time to answer: *Tommy Tune Tonight* in 2016, a one-man-show by dancer, singer, and actor Tommy Tune about his life. "To be able to bring him—a performer of that stature, a ten-time Tony winner, a former Houstonian ... it was just a really special, special, special performance," she said. Bernhard's favorite Miller memories involved performing in two shows he had written with Frank Young—*Sir Jack*, a musical version of Shakespeare's plays about fictional character Sir John Falstaff, and *Ninfa!*, a musical about matriarch Ninfa Lorenzo who started Houston's famous Ninfa's restaurants specializing in Tex-Mex food.²⁹

Looking at the 2023 season, Davis teases that it is a jam-packed season that focuses on milestone celebration. The season opened with a joyous performance of Irish dancing and music by the Trinity Irish Dance Company on March 17, St. Patrick's Day. The centennial festivities kicked off the next day with a 1920s-esque performance by the legendary Hot Sardines.³⁰ Miller will celebrate turning 100 on May 12, with a performance by the Houston Ballet, and TUTS will give a special tribute performance on July 14. The season will end with an immersive, technologically advanced collaboration between *Bella Gaia* and the William Close & The Earth Harp Collective



An entry way is one of the proposed construction projects from the \$12.5 million fundraising campaign for the Miller centennial celebration. The project aims to modernize and improve visitors' arrival experience and provide some added shade, as Miller enters a new century.

on November 11.³¹ “The idea is to go from the twenties through the year—different performances through the years that kind of get us to the future,” Davis explained. “We’ll have birthday cake, fun things for the kids, and . . . different things that help us celebrate.” The 2023 season includes cultural performances, workshops, ballet, and even interactive murals.³²

The celebratory feeling of this season is welcomed, especially after a rough two years. The pandemic proved particularly devastating for Miller’s budget since 85 percent of the theatre’s funds come from the hotel occupancy tax. In 2020 and 2021 with travel cutbacks, the occupancy tax funding dropped by 65 percent. Davis revealed, “That is a huge hit for an organization that re-grants that money to performing arts groups to put on programming here at Miller Outdoor Theatre and offer it free of charge to the public.” Davis had cancelled

all performances until theatre manager Shawn Hauptmann suggested turning the stage into a studio and live-streaming performances—a first for the theatre. “We weren’t quite sure how it was going to work; we weren’t sure if anybody would care and log-on



Tommy Tune tap dances in his one-man show, *Tommy Tune Tonight*, in 2016.

and want to be part of it,” Davis admitted. Miller worked with twelve organizations to put on shows in the 2020 season that reported 93,000 views on live streams. Miller plans to continue this new tradition of streaming, making live performances accessible digitally to audience members near and far.

Miller Outdoor Theatre has certainly impacted those who have worked to make it a special place. For example, Davis’s love of music and musical theatre and her passion for the performing arts motivated her to move from for-profit entertainment work into non-profit work to advance Miller’s mission. Benhard, whose fascination with the theatre began as a child in 1947, was inspired by his love of the arts and performing to work with TUTS at Miller for decades. Similarly, Anderson’s passion for dance and the shows she saw at Miller opened the door to performing there, as she embarked on a prestigious ballet career.

More importantly, though, Miller Outdoor Theatre has made a difference in the lives of those who visited there over the past hundred years. It has done this by evolving with entertainment trends, appealing to the city’s diverse citizenry, and offering quality, engaging programming that represents many genres of the arts. While the outdoor building and the location in a gorgeous park space make the theatre special, what makes it truly remarkable is that it makes the performing arts accessible to everyone, and they, in turn, make memories there that last a lifetime. **HH**

Samantha de León completed her master’s in public history at the University of Houston in the spring of 2023. She served as the Center for Public History’s Carey C. Shuart graduate assistant for the 100 Years of Stories: Documenting a Century at the University of Houston project and *Houston History* magazine. She is a former intern for the 11 Most Endangered Sites at the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the City of Houston’s Office of Historic Preservation.



A Place of Re-invention

By Marie-Theresa Hernández



It has been said that Houston would never have become a major city without air-conditioning. Yet it was bustling by the early twentieth century even when temperatures reached a drenching 100 degrees. Businessman Jesse H. Jones commissioned the thirty-seven-story Gulf Oil Corporation Building in 1927. Its construction was a testament to the future promise of Houston. The plans did not include air conditioning, but that did not detract from the building's success. The only thing that slowed the progress of Houston was the Depression, which came months after the building's completion.

In 2022, when University of Houston photography students from my World Cultures and Anthropology class excitedly entered downtown Houston to begin their photographic journey, they did not think so much of the past. At first, they were fascinated by the ultramodern construction of Houston's first post-modern buildings, Pennzoil Place, built in 1975, and the TC Energy Center, built in 1983 as the Republic Bank Center. Yet, eventually, they found themselves at Market Square in the oldest commercial building still in use, La Carafe. Then they moved on to the Julia Ideson Building of the Houston Public Library and marveled at the reproduction *Venus de Milo* statue on the second floor. The following week they spent one long afternoon in Sam Houston Park, which was established in 1900 as the city's second park, after Emancipation Park in Third Ward founded in 1872.

Continued on page 42.

← **The House That Would Have Been.**

In a short tunnel on Bagby Street under Houston's Bayou Place hangs an art installation by Stephen Korns, Houston Oracle in Two Parts, this being one of them. It looks like the front of a small, early house; inside the window, a video shows an archivist flipping through images of 100 Houston families from 1870 to 1970, and audio poses questions about life in Houston.

Photo by Merari Portillo.

→ **Old Clock.**

The design of the TC Energy Center, formerly the Bank of America Building, completed in 1983 is awe-inspiring. At the center of the grand lobby stands an eighteen-foot-tall clock, which was one of 300 clocks like it produced by the Seth Thomas Company in 1914.

Photo by Omar Alvarez Chavez.

← **Two Buildings.**

Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, constructed between 1875 and 1879, sits nestled on Clay and Shaw between the 1400 Smith building and Three Allen Center. The founders probably never imagined it would exist alongside these oversized creations of glass and steel.

Photo by Merari Portillo.

*The image for this article that appears on the table of contents, **Pierced Heart**, is by Daniel Galvez-Zuniga. The stained glass at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church carries intense symbolism with a heart pierced by a sword, bringing to mind church members and visitors who lived through enslavement, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow.*





← **Chase Bank.**

The Gulf Building, now the JP Morgan Chase & Co. Building, was commissioned in 1927 and completed in 1929 by Jesse H. Jones, who named it for its largest tenant, the Gulf Oil Company. At thirty-seven stories high, it remained the tallest building in Houston until 1963.

Photo by Husnaa Muhibullah.

↑ **Amtrak in Colors.**

The current Amtrak station was erected in 1960 to replace the 1934 Houston Grand Central Station, which was demolished to make room for the central post office (now POST Houston). Students from the class were drawn to the colorful graffiti of the train cars.

Photo by Lauren Morton.

→ **Faded Memory.**

Originally opened in 1927 as The Petroleum Building, the Cambria Hotel is seen here from the Catalyst. The foggy night gave an ominous glow to the adjacent Federal Detention Center and Houston's skyline with its mixture of old and new buildings.

Photo by Beatriz Bautista.

← **The Pastor.**

Reverend Lou McElroy, pastor of the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, stands in front of a stained-glass window with portraits of previous church leaders, urging viewers to look into the past. Community leader Jack Yates, right, established Antioch in Freedman's Town as Houston's first African American Baptist church in 1866.

Photo by Tareen Kazi.







← **La Carafe.**

La Carafe occupies Houston's oldest operating commercial building in its original location, built in 1860, and is one of the city's oldest bars. Located in Old Market Square, it is now a relic that has survived the modernization of downtown that eliminated many other landmarks and buildings.

Photo by Danny Olivares.

↓ **Venus de Milo Statue.**

Women in the Public School Art League, as part of its art education program, purchased this reproduction of the Venus de Milo statue for Houston schools 119 years ago. Victorian values of that era made the statue too controversial, and the all-male school board rejected the gift. The league then presented it to the Houston Public Library, where it eventually came to reside in the Julia Ideson Building.

Photo by Candida Letitia Okomo Esono.

Marie-Theresa Hernández, Ph.D., is professor of World Cultures and Literature in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages at the University of Houston.



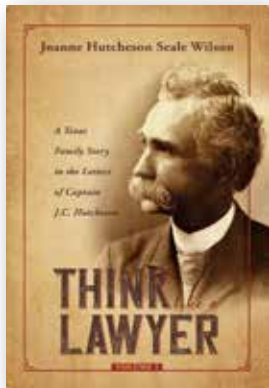
In our conversations, the students often talked of downtown's corporate life, which differed significantly from theirs as students. While they took many abstract photographs of the newer buildings, they became almost obsessed with photographing the few traces of the past that they could find. They wondered why Houston did not save more of its old buildings. Why is there such a need to destroy the past and construct skyscrapers with so much glass?

The answer probably lies in Houston's drive for survival and success. It was a dangerous place in its early years, known for its often-violent frontier culture and frequent yellow fever epidemics. Nevertheless, people held on and built a stable economy based on cotton. Once oil was discovered at Spindletop, near Beaumont, in 1901, Houston took the lead. The money flowed to Houston like water. Civic leaders worked to clean up downtown, and many working families moved closer to the industrial centers. Throughout the twentieth century, developers constructed new buildings, but downtown only had so much room, which often meant the old buildings had to go to make space for the shiny new ones. Oil and natural gas kept Houston's economy vibrant, and this wealth produced tall glass skyscrapers surging past economic downturns.

It has only been a century since Houston realized its possibilities as a place of wealth and power. Walking the downtown thoroughfares, my students wondered if the city would rather forget its past and only think about its future. ■■

HOUSTON HAPPENINGS

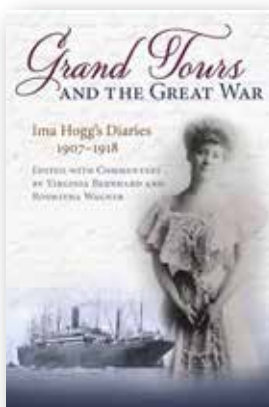
BOOKS



Think Like a Lawyer: A Texas Family Story in the Letters of Captain J.C. Hutcheson, by Joanne Hutcheson Seale Wilson (independently published in two volumes). Finding primary source documents is like finding treasure to historians. But imagine how the author felt finding forty boxes and trunks of family letters, photographs, documents, and memorabilia when cleaning

out her grandparents' home in Montrose. After moving the materials cross-country twice over thirty years, the author enlisted the help of the Woodson Center at Rice University to archive the materials and began assembling these two volumes that chronicle the Hutcheson family history and inform the history of our region and nation. The father of eleven children, Hutcheson faithfully wrote to his children when traveling for his law practice or serving in the Texas Legislature and U.S. Congress, offering parental guidance, inspiration, and commentary on the times. Entries discuss such key events as development of the deep-water ship channel, which Hutcheson pushed in Congress. Other segments detail the careers of his descendants who include politicians, judges, a medical examiner, a newspaperwoman, a medical missionary, soldiers, a historian, physicians, businesspeople, and lawyers.

Hutcheson's great granddaughter, Joanne Hutcheson Seale Wilson, edited the volumes. Having earned a master's in architectural history and historical landscape preservation, she coauthored *Houston's Silent Garden: Glenwood Cemetery 1871-2009* with Suzanne Turner and artwork by Paul Hester. Wilson also wrote an article for *Houston History* 4 no. 1, "Willie's Story," about J.C. Hutcheson's niece, who was a teacher, writer, music critic, and cultural leader in Houston.



Grand Tours and the Great War: Ima Hogg's Diaries 1907-1918, edited by Virginia Bernhard, translated by Roswitha Wagner (Texas A&M University Press). Ima Hogg is known in Houston and Texas as a philanthropist, preservationist, and advocate for the arts. Perhaps not as well known is that she was a dedicated diarist. Bernhard and Wagner transcribed, edited, and contextualized five of Hogg's diaries from 1907, 1908, 1910, 1914,

and 1918. The diaries record her tours of Europe, time spent studying piano in Berlin, summer in London prior to World War I, and travel to New York as the war drew to an end. Focusing on Hogg's time in Germany, Bernhard and Wagner explore the possibility that Hogg may have met a man with whom she had a romantic interest but who died in 1918, offering "tantalizing hints and unanswered questions" about a young Ima Hogg.

Virginia Bernhard is professor emerita of history at the University of St. Thomas in Houston and the author of *The Smell of War: Three Americans in the Trenches of World War I*, *The Hoggs of Texas: Letters and Memoirs of an Extraordinary Family, 1877-1906*, and *Ima Hogg: The Governor's Daughter*. Roswitha Wagner is a professional translator.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



The San Jacinto Museum is excited to announce the 2023 History Under the Star lecture series. Each quarter, experts on the Texas Revolution and Texas history give an hour-long talk about their area of expertise. Upcoming lectures include Dr. Stephen Hardin on Saturday, June 17

talking about soldiers' experience during the Battle of San Jacinto, and Lora-Marie Bernard on Saturday, September 30 discussing the fact and fiction of the Yellow Rose of Texas story. More information about upcoming lectures can be found at their website: www.sanjacinto-museum.org/.

IN MEMORIAM



Louis Aulbach, noted historian and archeologist, passed away on December 22, 2022. After a career in records management, Louis became active in the Texas and Houston Archeological Societies and the Texas Historical Commission. He joined digs at San

Felipe de Austin, Frost Town, San Jacinto Battlefield, and Kellum-Noble House and authored sixteen books, including books on Buffalo Bayou and Camp Logan.



Janet Wagner, a beacon in Houston's history community, passed away on January 3, 2023. A historian, scholar, preservationist, and consultant, Janet served as chair of the Harris County Historical Commission, took part in archeological digs, and worked with the Texas Historical Commission to monitor compliance with

historic preservation laws to preserve historic properties and landmarks.

Not If, but When: Renu Khator and the Evolution of the University of Houston

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- Abraham, "TEACH Talks with Dr. Renu Khator – Part 1."
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