

# GATOR



FLORIDA

FALL 2023

## The Sports Issue

We look back at Florida football history and celebrate a year-end sports bonanza that made spring our championship season.

---

Court of Compassion *p* 30 • 100 Years of Blue Key *p* 36 • When Growl Was Funny *p* 40



# THE SWAM

## Why I Give

BY CINDY SPENCE (BS '82, MA '17)



Dayana Falcon (BS '11)  
ESPN Talent Mobility Manager,  
career coach and founder of Gators Unidos  
40 Under 40

*"I want to show the impact Latino Gators have in the world. We're creating the community of my dreams."*



**THEN** Dayana Falcon describes herself as a Latina with Cuban roots. From her home in Miami, she set her sights on the University of Florida and became the first in her family to attend college: "The Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars program took a chance on me." She says she found community in the College of Journalism and Communications.

**NOW** Falcon says her generation of Latino Gators is focused on mentoring the next generation – now 21% of the student population – and creating equal access to opportunity.

**THEN** Falcon remembers being proud of her intersecting identities as a Gator and a Latina. "I was proud of both, but there never was anything that blended UF and my Latino culture."

**NOW** In April 2021, Falcon founded Gators Unidos (Gators United) and built a rock star team of three generations of CJC Latino grads to develop a new line of Gator gear. In May, the nonprofit launched a 25-piece collection celebrating the orange-and-blue heritage of Latino Gators and supporting scholarships for Latino students. The collection premiered in May at the UF Bookstore, both retail and online. The line includes Vamos Gators (Let's Go Gators) T-shirts as well as shirts for alumni, parents, grandparents, babies and an upcoming bandana for pets. "My familia made going to college possible. This is for them."

**THEN** As a Machen Scholar, Falcon knew she wanted to pay it forward and one day create a scholarship for next-generation Latino Gators. "It was important to me that it wasn't just about money. First-generation students need guidance, too, to get through the grind of college."

**NOW** So far, Gators Unidos has funded four \$2,500 scholarships through the Association of Hispanic Alumni. "Millennials know the power of social impact purchasing. As a Latino Gator, I wear Gators Unidos gear, and fight the stereotype that Latinos don't go to college."

 To learn more visit: [uff.to/2bbkym](http://uff.to/2bbkym)

**2** Your letters

**5** Editor's note

## UNIVERSITY AVENUE

**12** Sports quiz

**14** Dorm must-haves (and how to make move-out easier)

**16** The Witness Tree comes down

**18** News & notes

**19** The big idea

## GATOR NATION

**46** Marathon Man David Kilgore wins the World Marathon Challenge

**48** Cats are a calling for Gator100 honoree

**54** 40 Under 40 honoree found her passion early

**55** Here's Barbie (Pressly Tilman) and a new Alumni Board

**70** Basketball star Ric Clarkson turned to golf for a second act

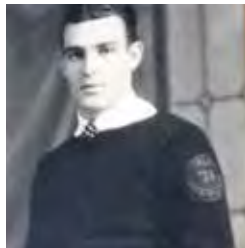
# 24

## MAIN FEATURE

### PIGSKIN PALOOZA

The foundation for Gator football started at Fleming Field, where the team played from 1906 to 1929. Here's a look back at the early glory days.

On the cover: Dale Van Sickel was a threat on both offense and defense, and the Gators won 23 of 29 games in the three years he played (1927-29).



## 28 UF'S SUPERMAN

Dale Van Sickel, UF's first All-American, turned football skills into a career as a stuntman in the early days of Hollywood. You may have seen him: It's a bird, it's a plane ...



## 30 THE RULE OF COMPASSION

A legal team of UF Law alums used compassion to guide the court proceedings after the collapse of a condominium tower in Surfside.



## 36 THE COLOR OF CAMPUS POWER

Florida Blue Key celebrates 100 years of campus — and state — leadership.



## 40 WHEN GROWL WAS FUNNY

Comedians were Gator Growl headliners for generations. Some were fabulous, some flops and some went on to infamy.





## Remembering Old College Inn

Kudos on your story about Gator dives through the decades. As a member of the Class of 1967, I missed most of the joints in your top 10. But you nailed College Inn, Florida Gym and Leonardo's perfectly — especially the part about civil-rights protests in front of the College Inn.

**Bill Swisher** (BS '67)

### Letters

Florida Gator welcomes letters from our readers.

Please send them to [floridagator@ufalumni.ufl.edu](mailto:floridagator@ufalumni.ufl.edu). Include the writer's name, graduation year, address and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

### Flori-DUH

We welcome your corrections. After all, humans — not chatbots — still produce the magazine.

### Bracketology Lesson

Loved the story on the Gator Dives of the Decades (Spring 2023). The accompanying field of 64 was fun too; glad the Purple Porpoise reigned supreme!

That said, have to alert you about a methodology error disturbing the chances for the other competitors to shine. The seeds for a bracket always place the 1 seed on top, the 2 seed on bottom, and so forth so the likely 1 vs. 2 matchup would occur at the Elite Eight level for a chance to make the Final Four. In your bracket the poor 2 seeds got stuck running into the 1 seeds at the second round. Skeeters would have crushed anyone not named Purple Porpoise but had to play them in the second round. Similarly, it should have been Leonardo's vs. The Swamp for a trip to the Final Four in the millennial regional, but again they were forced to match up too soon!

It's a nitpick, but if y'all do another Madness list, get the seeding sorted and it'll be even better! Thanks for the memories!

**Nick Shannin** (JD '94)

**Editor's Note:** We welcome the nitpicks, and we agree it will be even more fun next time!

### Heroics on Display at Museum

I read with much interest the story in the Spring 2023 edition about UF alum Col. Paul Tibbets, pilot of the Enola Gay.

As a 1974 UF alumnus from the College of Education and a retired U.S. Air Force officer, I found the article very interesting for a very particular reason. I currently serve as the education officer at the Miami-Dade Military Museum. In that role and as a UF graduate, I have the distinct and proud pleasure of discussing with museum visitors the story of Col. Tibbets and the flight

of the Enola Gay. Col. Tibbets grew up in Miami and attended our local schools. Our museum display honors him and his crew.

How fortunate I am as a UF graduate to be able to educate the young and old visitors from across our country, as well as students from our local schools, and of course our military veterans about the heroics of a UF graduate who changed the face of WWII in the Pacific.

**Thomas V. Gammon** (BA '74), Lt Col. USAF (Ret)

### Alums Work on Memorial for Pioneer General

Just finished reading the article about








fellow Gator, Col. Joe Kittinger, in the Spring edition of the Florida Gator and wanted to bring to your attention our efforts in Pensacola to honor Gen. Daniel “Chappie” James Jr.

Col. Kittinger was part of our team of supporters in the planning and engineering of the memorial plaza at the Pensacola Bay Bridge to honor Gen. James’ legacy. The new bridge is three miles long and just recently named in his honor.

We are working with fellow Gator engineers and thought you would find our noble endeavors newsworthy.

**Cris Dosev** (BS ’84)

 To learn more about the memorial, please visit: <https://generalchappiejamesmemorial.org/about-general-james/>

### Baseball History, Noted

My darling wife is a 1983 UF alum; I am nobody. But your very nice alumni magazine arrives in my home, and I read it. In the Spring 2023 issue, there is a piece by David Finnerty called The Man Who Fell To Earth. One section of the piece talks about Red Barber and his reactions when Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball in 1947 with the Brooklyn Dodgers.



Finnerty states that the Dodgers went on to win the 1947 World Series, which is not true. The NY Yankees won the Series in 7 games, beating the Dodgers. Again. It was not until 1955 when the Dodgers finally, finally won the Series, beating the Yankees. Jackie Robinson did win Rookie of the Year in 1947.

**Capt. Gary Spivack, USMM**

*Editor’s note: Thank you, Mr. Spivack. Baseball stats don’t lie, but we quibble with your description of yourself. Gators by marriage are, indeed, part of Gator Nation. Thanks for reading.*



### what you’re saying



Brackets might not have been perfect...but the right champ was crowned FOR SURE!!!

**David Greenbaum**



Yay! So glad Purple Porpoise won. Football game halftime, purple kamikaze shots, free or cheap beer during commercials while watching the Simpsons (back when that show just started and no one had Fox), etc. The funtimes and memories were many! Also helped that I lived in short walking distance to that bar. Cheers!

**Pam Elliot**



Ah! the memories come rushing back! 1am Ashers at Skee-ters; Oysters and Wings with my brothers at the Porpoise; lunch between classes at The Rat; met my wife at CJ’s! Let’s not forget Joe’s Deli for the Gator Tail or Burrito Bros for pretty much anything!

**Jeff Garfield**



Sadly the entire strip is so different now with high rises! The loss of Burrito Brothers did me in! Then the Swamp! The new UF-era will never understand the LEGENDARY places!

**Heather Martin Morse**

### Weigh in on Social

 @UFAlumni

 @UFAlumni

 @UFAlumni

 @UFAlumni

### FLORIDA GATOR

Florida Gator is published by the University of Florida Alumni Association Inc. for its members.

**Cindy Spence** (BS ’82, MA ’17)  
Editor

**James Baer** (BS ’97)  
Art Director

**Rob Mack** (BS ’93)  
Assistant Art Director

**Tina Banner** (BS ’99)  
Social Editor

Writers  
**David Finnerty**  
**Barbara Drake** (MFA ’04)  
**Julia Bauer** (BS ’23)



# Explore new paths.

Retirement is your time to grow and enjoy new things in life. Oak Hammock at the University of Florida is the perfect place to explore new paths and surround yourself with like-minded individuals. Our Institute for Learning in Retirement offers a range of courses, from language and literature to science and industry. You can even try your hand at painting, gardening or tai chi. Spend the morning meandering our picturesque trails and discover new hiking trails nearby. Newly renovated homes and apartments offer comfort and style in a variety of floor plans—all with access to on-site rehabilitation, assisted living, memory care and skilled nursing services. Our resort-style activities are geared toward health and wellness, arts and culture, social interaction and lifelong learning.

**See for yourself why people from all over the U.S. choose Oak Hammock.  
Schedule your tour today, call 352.548.1024 or visit [oakhammock.org](http://oakhammock.org).**

---

Oak Hammock  
— at the University of Florida® —

WHERE RETIREMENT IS THE PURSUIT OF A LIFETIME.



A Not-For-Profit Community Affiliated with the University of Florida. The University of Florida is not responsible for the financial or contractual obligations of Oak Hammock at the University of Florida, Inc. Copyright ©2020 Oak Hammock at the University of Florida®. All rights reserved.



# From the Editor



Cindy Spence

## That Championship Season: Spring

There's a saying in higher ed that sports is the front porch of a university.

Once we cross that porch, we head to different rooms, some for English, others for engineering, some with supercomputers and some with books stacked to the ceiling. But sports puts out the welcome mat, and in this issue we celebrate the nostalgia of football past as well as a spring sports season that kept us on the edge of our seats.

Entering spring sports, UF was in 25th place in the LEARNFIELD Directors' Cup, a national award for excellence in college sports, and its streak – a top 10 finish in each of the last 38 all-sports standings – was not a slam dunk.

Then gymnastics – and Trinity Thomas – happened. Thomas scored perfect 10s in all four events over the season, becoming one of only three gymnasts in intercollegiate history to achieve 28 perfect scores in a career and winning a Honda Award as the most dominant female athlete in her sport. But for a late-season injury, she might have made up the 0.150 points that kept Gator gymnastics from a championship.

Then came golf and a come-from-behind victory over Florida State in match play to go on to the finals. And a championship.

Then came track and the fastest 4 x 400 race ever in college athletics. And a championship.

Then came baseball, with a record-breaking slugfest in game 2 of the College World Series finals and a heartbreaking loss in game 3.

And then came a fifth-place finish in the Director's Cup, preserving UF's streak.

That's a big front porch, but as you get over the threshold, we hope you'll enjoy reading about the UF Law team that achieved the remarkable feat of bringing closure, with compassion, to the families of victims in the Surfside condominium collapse of two summers ago. And for nostalgia buffs, we have stories on the centennial of Florida Blue Key and great moments in Gator Growl.

We also need to let you know that we'll be publishing just twice this year, as we adjust to rising costs. But until the Spring issue hits your mailbox, we've added ways to stay connected. Look for callouts with stories to help you share your ideas, find a Gator Club®, join the UF Alumni Association or connect with us on all our social channels.

We're also doing a readership survey. What do you like? What would you like to see more of? Please tell us by using the QR or link at left or on the back cover.

In between issues, please catch up with us via our e-newsletter, Gator Nation News, by being sure we have your current email address on file.

The 2023-24 sports season got off to a great start with wins by the Gators soccer team under second-year coach Samantha Bohon and the volleyball team, a powerhouse as usual under Mary Wise, UF's winningest coach.

And if you're in town, please join us this football season for tailgating at Emerson Alumni Hall.

Go Gators!

**Cindy Spence** (BS '82, MA '17)  
Editor

Scan to take our  
readership survey.



or visit:  
[uff.to/mag-survey](http://uff.to/mag-survey)

## GUTSY GOLF

Florida fans spent a week in May glued to the Golf Channel as the Gators got a first crack at match play since the NCAA implemented the format for its championship tournament in 2009.

It turns out, match play suits them.

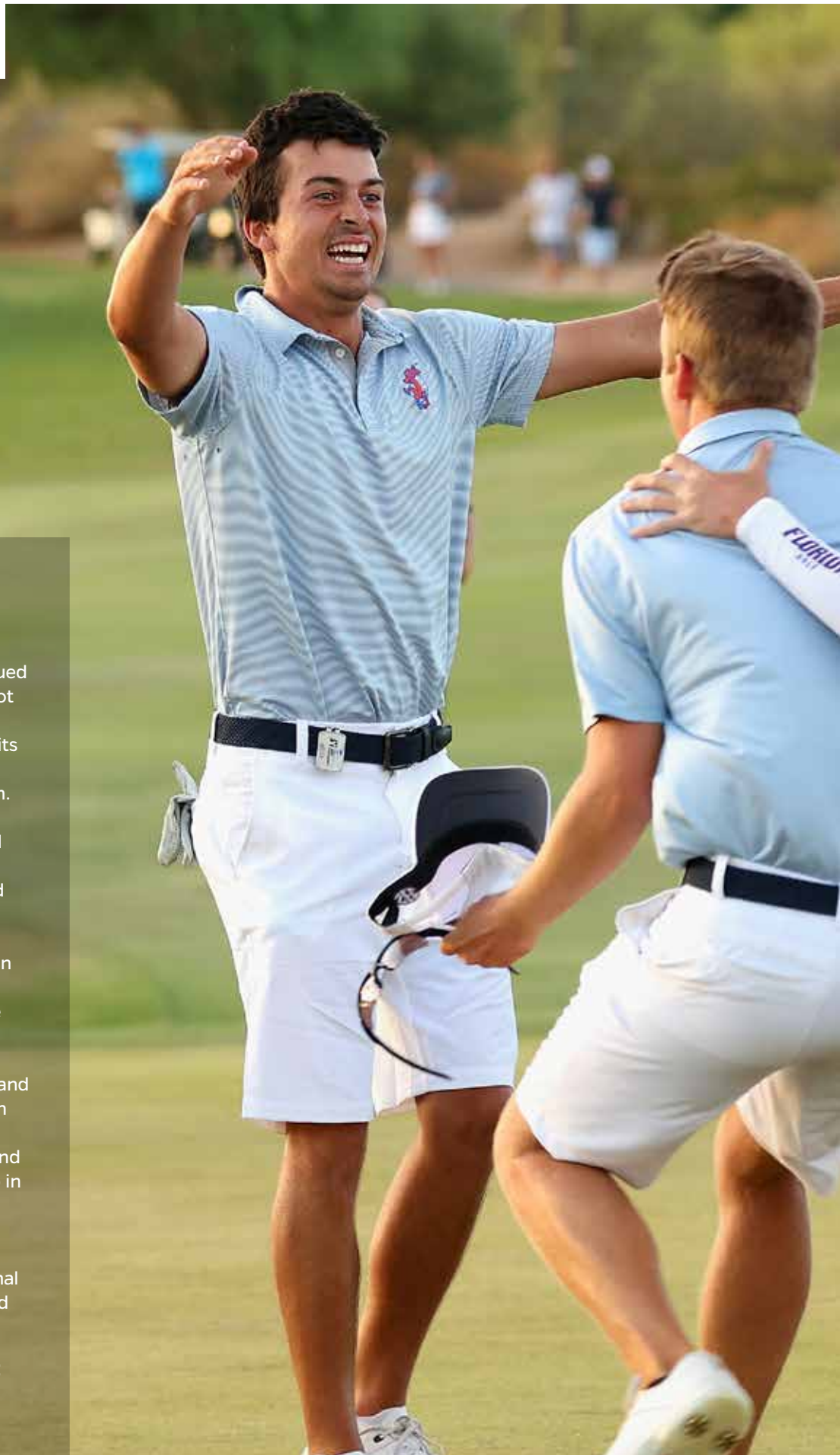
Senior Fred Biondi, far left in photo, became the NCAA individual champion, then two days later — after nail-biters against Virginia and Florida State to get to the finals — Florida captured its first national championship in 22 years and fifth in program history.

Against Florida State in one of the great rallies in UF sports lore, Ricky Castillo came from two down with three holes to play to tie his match and then win on the third hole of sudden death. John DuBois, Yuxin Lin and walk-on Matthew Kress all had a hand in the drama at Grayhawk Golf Club in Scottsdale, Ariz.

“We’re the Gators. We got a little something on our name,” said J.C. Deacon, who was named the National Coach of the Year. “I’m just so proud to be their coach.”



For a recap of the season, please visit: [uff.to/8c5km2](http://uff.to/8c5km2)







Photos courtesy of the University Athletic Association







Photos courtesy of the University Athletic Association


## RUNNING AWAY WITH THE TITLE

In the final race of the NCAA Men's Outdoor Championship, the 4x400 team of Emmanuel Bamidele, Jacory Patterson, Jevaughn Powell and Ryan Willie, shown here in the qualifier, ran a collegiate record time (2:57.74), breaking their previous record and securing the national team title for the Gators program.

All 11 of the men's titles have come under Head Coach Mike "Mouse" Holloway.

"It is an incredible feeling. I get asked all the time what

my favorite championship is, and I jokingly but not jokingly say the next one. There are different people, different experiences, different emotions involved. We had new athletes who had never done it before," Holloway said after the meet. "We do not think about last year or think about defending anything. Our job was to come in here and win this one and that is what we did."

 To watch the race, please visit: [uff.to/zq4emq](http://uff.to/zq4emq)





### A SUMMER SLUGFEST

The Florida baseball team pulled out a streak of one-run wins throughout the season, staying on course for the 2023 College World Series in Omaha.

And in Game 2 of the CWS finals, the team put on a hitting clinic, collecting 23 hits en route to a 24-4 victory that put the Gators in the winner-take-all Game 3 title

game, eventually won by LSU. Ty Evans, who hit just four home runs during the regular season, blasted five in the CWS, including a grand slam in Game 2 that touched off the slugfest.

The next night, the Tigers proved one game better in a slugfest of their own, but along the way the Gators had





some impressive baseball stats:

- 24 runs, the most in a game in the CWS.
- Six home runs, a single-game record at Schwab Field.
- 14 homers, a team record in a CWS.
- The second-largest run differential — 20 runs in Game 2 — at the CWS since 1957.

Said catcher B.T. Riopelle of Game 2: "It was our day."

The next day was not, but the Omaha experience proved a blast for the Orange & Blue and beyond. When the final ESPN viewership numbers were in, an average of 2.86 million watched each of the three games, not only a CWS record, but up 75 percent from the 2022 championship series.



ARE YOU UP ON YOUR GATOR SPORTS TRIVIA?

# GATOR SPORTS GALLERY 2023

Take the quiz and find out.

Trinity Thomas on

## #1

Gators QB Anthony Richardson was taken fourth in the NFL draft by the Indianapolis Colts. Which Gator is UF's highest draft pick ever?



AR with NFL commissioner Roger Goodell at 2023 draft

## #2

Shortstop Skylar Wallace broke the UF softball record for highest single season batting average at .447 in 2023. Whose record did she break?



Skylar Wallace at UNF in Feb. 2023

## #3

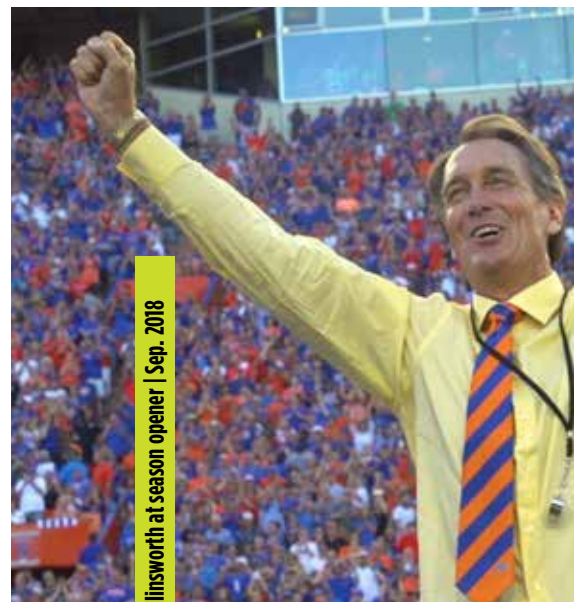
Gator men's golf won both the individual and team national championship this year. When did they previously achieve this and who was the individual champion?



UF Men's Golf Team — 2023 NCAA National Champs

## #4

UF's Guest Mr. Two Bits tradition celebrates 10 years this fall. Among the Gators to do the honors were Cris Collinsworth, Danny Wuerffel, Dara Torres, Chandler Parsons and Bridget Sloan. Who was the first?



Cris Collinsworth at season opener | Sep. 2018





balance beam



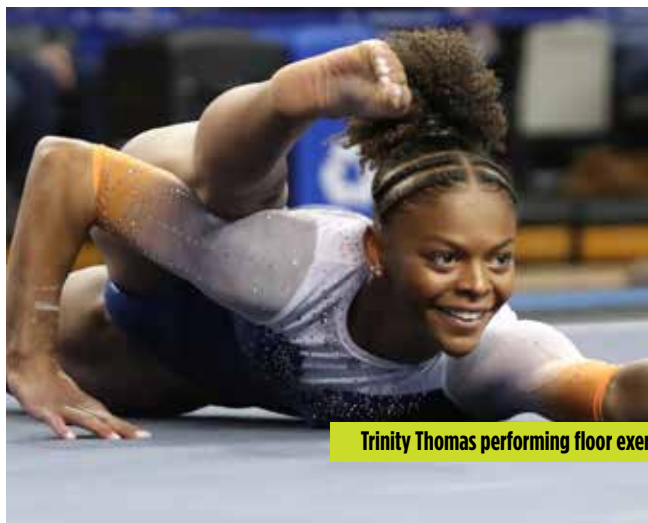
Trinity Thomas on vault

#5

What feat makes Trinity Thomas the most "perfect" Gators gymnast ever?



Trinity Thomas on uneven bars



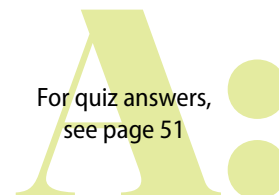
Trinity Thomas performing floor exercise

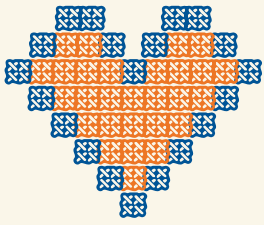


**BONUS**

Who won the Orange & Blue game?

For quiz answers, see page 51





# DORM SWEET DORM

By Julia Bauer (BS '23)

The average dorm room is about 225 square feet, and generations of Gators have filled them to the brim. Here's some advice from Gators past on must-haves for the Class of 2027.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY @MADDHAUS.STUDIOS

## Basic pots and pans

For trips to the communal kitchen. Who will be the future Iron Chef of the floor?



## Storage crates

New Gators will bring too much stuff, guaranteed, and from August to May, stuff will multiply. Storage crates are a must. Most will fit under the bed, and they can be organized by occasion — game-day gear, workout togs, night-on-the-town outfits.



## Mini fridge

A mini fridge can stash a case of Pepsi or just dining hall leftovers.



## Handheld vacuum

Good for catching those crumbs from the midnight munchies after coming back from the library (or wherever).

## Shower caddy

A trip to the communal bathroom can be as easy as grab and go with a caddy for toiletries.



## Big water bottle

Campus is nearly as swampy as the Swamp. Gatorade is a Gator go-to, but water works, too.



## Shower shoes

Communal bathrooms are part of almost every residence hall. Tootsies need protection and shoes with good traction.



## Matchy matchy

A color scheme — bedspreads, rugs, curtains — can pull a room together, especially when roommates coordinate.

## Move over brides and parents-to-be. Freshmen can have gift registries, too.

Many websites that host gift registries for weddings and baby showers now offer dorm room gift registries, too. Register for a storage crate or a coffee maker. Check it off as the goods roll in. Brick-and-mortar stores like Target also have registries, as does Amazon.

More ways for new Gators to gear up.



# What Moves In Must Move Out

By Julia Bauer (BS '23)

Dorm gear is responsible for UF's two biggest trash days, one during move-in, one during move-out.

Managing that waste stream is a many-dumpster task, says Liz Storn, program coordinator for Sustainable UF.

During move-in, UF recycles 90 tons of cardboard boxes and packaging.

"We put out dumpsters for cardboard specifically," she said. "The big goal is to get everybody to break down their boxes and put them where they need to go."

When move-out rolls around, what went into a dorm room comes back out, and that makes the area around a dumpster look like a messy yard sale. Those mini fridges and mattress toppers – must-haves in August – are often unwanted in May.

Move-out generates almost 40 tons of waste, and in the two weeks leading up to move-out, Storn says 23

temporary 20- to 30-cubic-yard dumpsters are placed near campus housing to encourage students to get a head start. During the actual five-day move-out window, five extra dumpsters are added, and those are emptied three times a day.

Many of the items ending up in the trash could be recycled with a little planning.

"As a student, I remember that I would be so focused on my exams and final papers that I wouldn't be packing up until it was the very last minute," she said. "And then at that point, what are you going to do? You just need to get rid of your stuff the fastest way you can."

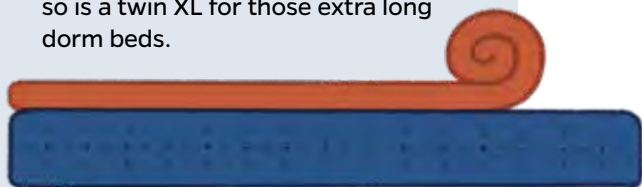
UF's Department of Housing and Residence Life partners with agencies – the Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, Haven Hospice, Hitchcock Field & Fork Pantry and Tools for Schools – to find homes for unwanted clothes, furniture and food.

"If students were able to take some time to think it through, we would have way less going into the trash," Storn says.

Although move-in and move-out generate a lot of trash, it's only a fraction of the 9,000 tons UF produces in a year.

## Mattress topper

A good night's sleep is crucial and so is a twin XL for those extra long dorm beds.



## Noise-canceling headphones

Roommates and music just go together, except on the eve of a big test. For studying and keeping the peace, try noise-canceling headphones.



## Coffee maker

Freshmen might not be coffee drinkers — yet. A cup of joe can be just the ticket for mornings after all-nighters, academic or otherwise.

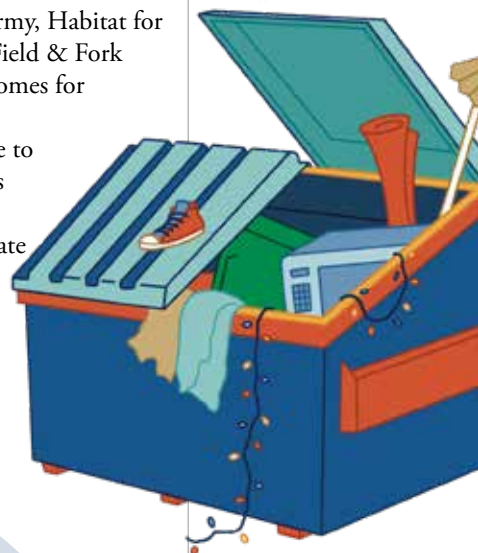


## Portable laundry basket

For neat freaks, a collapsible basket might work. For those on a once-a-month laundry cycle, a cart with wheels makes the trek to the laundry room easier.



FLORIDA GATOR



For Earth-friendly tips on move-in, check out the "green your move" guide: [uff.to/c9s86z](http://uff.to/c9s86z)

Alums, do you have freshman year advice for new Gators? Let us know at [floridagator@ufalumni.ufl.edu](mailto:floridagator@ufalumni.ufl.edu)

A majestic  
longleaf pine  
had witnessed  
the history —  
and prehistory  
— of campus.  
Until May.



Anna Ward,  
a student in  
Harpold's class,  
says farewell.

 To see WUFT  
coverage by Elliot Tritto  
(BS '23), please visit:  
[uff.to/k5cph6](http://uff.to/k5cph6)

# Witnesses *for* the Witness Tree

By **Cindy Spence** (BS '82, MA '17)

The words of UF's alma mater once rang truer:  
“where palm and pine are blowing. . .”

In 1976, on a shadier campus, UF joined in celebrating the nation's 200th birthday by identifying its oldest tree, standing for a hundred years or more before the first Gator set foot on campus.

It was named the Bicentennial Tree. An engraved stone was placed at its base and a lightning rod installed to protect it from harm.

Years passed, the bicentennial optimism fading as the tree fell into obscurity, its stone becoming weathered and nearly illegible.

Then, in 2019, its star rose again thanks to an English class. Professor Terry Harpold was teaching “The Literature of Sustainability” and during a discussion of “The Overstory,” a novel about the lives of trees, a student asked Harpold if he knew which tree was UF's oldest.

Stumped, Harpold said he'd find out.

With help from the archives, Harpold realized a majestic longleaf pine whose crown he had admired countless times from his office window in Turlington Hall was very likely UF's oldest living tree.

Harpold took the class to visit the tree, and Brooke

Whitaker (BSBA '21) became intrigued. The tree became the subject of her honors thesis: “An Anthropocene Tree: A History of the Non-Human.” She noticed yellowed needles and a bald spot in the crown and posed the question, “What possible harm could there be in honoring this pine in the last years of its life?”

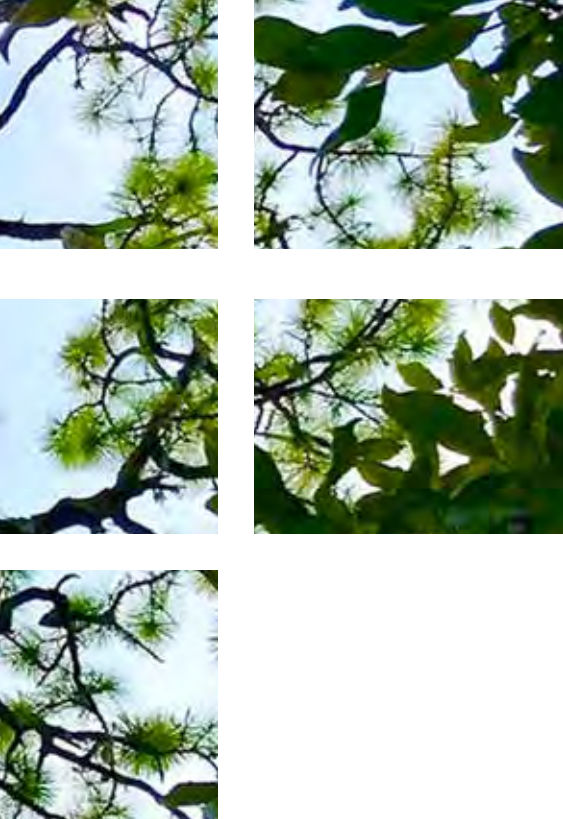
As her thesis notes, longleaf pines once covered 92 million acres of the South. Today, only about 12,000 acres remain, along with isolated trees here and there, including the tree outside Keene-Flint Hall.

One day in the spring, Harpold peered out his office window and could see something was amiss. The tree's crown was bare, its limbs gnarled and gray. With hurricane season about to begin, Harpold knew the tree — “my dear old friend” — had to come down.

In a final homage, he invited a group of friends and passersby for a gathering on May 17. As the chatter hushed, he read Maya Angelou's poem, “When Great Trees Fall.” The closing lines:

*They existed. They existed.  
We can be. Be and be better.  
For they existed.*





Harpold plans to incorporate the trunk in an educational exhibit, and he hopes to get a marker to accompany the stone, which now sits beside the stump.



Whitaker's thesis includes photos of the campus tree canopy through time. Read it at:

[uff.to/k5cph6](http://uff.to/k5cph6)



Womens basketball player Zippy Broughton joined other UF athletes on Capitol Hill in advocating for a national framework for NIL.

## Gators, SEC Make NIL Case on Capitol Hill

By Chris Harry | [Floridagators.com](http://Floridagators.com)

The Southeastern Conference invited its institutions to Washington, D.C., in June for "SEC Advocacy Day on the Hill." All 14 member schools were represented by administrators and coaches, who met with congressional leaders from their respective states.

All but the University of Florida, that is.

Oh, the Gators were on Capitol Hill, led by Athletic Director Scott Stricklin and Deputy Athletic Director Lynda Tealer, the current chair of both the NCAA Division I Council and the NCAA NIL working group. UF, though, was the only conference school to bring along multiple student-athletes (rather than coaches) to make a case for national uniformity on Name, Image & Likeness. Trinity Thomas, the 34-time All-American and three-time national champion gymnast, was joined by Zippy Broughton (women's basketball) and Jack Pyburn (football) in meeting with representatives, including Sen. Marco Rubio (BA '93).

"They heard true stories of how NIL impacts three different student-athletes that play three different sports," Pyburn said.

The goal of UF's athletes — and the rest of the SEC — was to advocate for uniform NIL rules and guidelines nationwide.

"We wanted to express how much we want Congress to implement a national [NIL] framework," Broughton said. "Everything should be pretty much the same from state to state. If some states get a competitive advantage, then from an economic standpoint the playing field will not be level and some universities could end up acting as an oligopoly."

The UF trio reiterated that NIL has been a huge positive for student-athletes, but its current environment — without true regulation and oversight — was unsustainable, with NIL too often being used as an inducement for recruiting and with no regard to fair market value or actual NIL work. Their message: Only Congress can fix it.

"You could tell they really cared and were interested in what we had to say," Pyburn said.

Critics of a bill in California worry that revenue-sharing with student-athletes could jeopardize non-revenue sports, including women's and Olympic sports.

"It's been incredible for me, but in other instances I know it's also been misused," Thomas said. "When it comes to recruitment and pay-for-play, things need to be put in place to make sure everyone, from state to state, is on the same playing field."

## Say Ahh! UF Celebrates New Student Health Care Center



For 90-plus years, University of Florida students seeking health care services on campus made a beeline to the Infirmary at 331 Fletcher Drive. Built in Collegiate Gothic style in 1931, the three-story brick structure was originally designed to house patients for overnight stays. As UF's student body grew, wings were added, and the infirmary evolved into an outpatient clinic, renamed the Student Health Care Center, with clinical offices, a pharmacy, women's care and more. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1989 and is a contributing property in the UF Campus Historic District.

The new UF Student Health Care Center opened in

May 2023 at 2140 Stadium Road, by the O Dome. This 46,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility focuses on comprehensive health care and wellness needs for today's students. As with the old facility, the new SHCC offers primary and acute care, immunizations, a women's clinic, sports medicine, physical therapy, a lab and X-rays. Students can also access psychiatric services (previously housed in the UF Counseling and Wellness Center), nutrition counseling and a spacious demonstration kitchen to put healthy eating practices in action.

The \$26 million center is among the first in the country to incorporate a specialized infectious disease unit to safely treat patients with airborne infections.

## Public Safety Gets a Modern New Home

The University of Florida's new 51,000-square-foot public safety building opened in June.

The building houses UF police and other emergency operations and includes a community meeting space that will be used for student safety training sessions. Technology feeds from across campus will be streamlined in the new facility for enhanced real-time monitoring for campus safety.

Construction of the \$26.5 million building began in 2021 on the site of the original WRUF Radio Station, built in 1928. Honoring history in a sustainable fashion, bricks salvaged from the former police station were used to construct the low bench wall on the exterior of the new building.





# the [big] idea

## What if your doctor prescribed art for better health?

On Friday afternoons, Keith and Stephanie Early load up their service dog, Riley, and drive to Gainesville to fill a prescription. Instead of heading to the pharmacy, the Earlys arrive at an industrial park on the outskirts of town where they'll spend the next few hours blacksmithing at Crooked Path Forge.


"It redirects your train of thought. It keeps your mind off stuff," says Keith, who has post-traumatic stress disorder.

He pulls a glowing metal rod from the 2,600-degree forge, places it on an anvil and starts shaping it with a hammer. After 24 years in the Navy and Air Force, he's used to staying calm in dangerous situations. Blacksmithing, though, is helping Keith and his wife, a fellow veteran, find that calm throughout their lives.

They're part of a UF program in social prescribing, connecting patients to arts and cultural activities as part of their healing.

The pilot, launched by UF's Center for Arts in Medicine and the Veterans Administration, is one way researchers are laying the groundwork for social prescribing nationwide, and not just for veterans. As overburdened primary care providers struggle to meet patients' needs, community activities like these show promise to boost well-being and prevent the onset of disease.

**- ALISSON CLARK (BS '98, MA '16)**

 For more big ideas on science and scholarship at UF, please visit Explore, UF's research magazine, at [uff.to/pqarg7](http://uff.to/pqarg7)

 Have a big idea to suggest? Tell us at [floridagator@ufalumni.ufl.edu](mailto:floridagator@ufalumni.ufl.edu)

PHOTO BY JOHN JERNIGAN

*The rare Ghost Orchid was featured in the book "The Orchid Thief" and the 2002 movie "Adaptation." It resembles a ghost when its white flowers move at night.*



## New Tool in Responding to Stroke: Mobility

Florida's first mobile stroke unit was unveiled this summer in Gainesville, one of only 20 mobile stroke units nationwide. More units are planned for The Villages and Jacksonville. The vehicles include special equipment, medications and staff to treat stroke, increasing the likelihood that patients receive care in the Golden Hour, when treatment is most effective. Stroke is the fifth leading primary cause of death and leading cause of long-term disability.



## An Orchid Superstar

A Florida Ghost Orchid propagated in the lab of professor emeritus Michael Kane and tended by Larry Zettler (BS '87) was shown for the first time in May at the Chelsea Flower Show, a world cup-level event in the botanical world. About 160,000 people attended the show at the Royal Botanic Garden in Kew, and the orchid drew oohs and aahs as crowds waited for it to bloom. Scientists estimate only 2,000 of the flowers grow in Southwest Florida.

## News to Share

### UF Online

#1 Online Bachelor's Program (US News & World Report, 2023)

### National Cancer Institute

The prestigious honor was bestowed on UF's Cancer Center in June, bringing with it increased federal funding. UF's NCI is the only one in North Central Florida.

### 5 Stars

Money magazine has named UF a "5-star college," its highest rating, and one of the top 5 bargains in higher education. The rating is based on graduation rates, cost, financial aid and alumni salaries, among other datapoints.

### Top in Fulbrights

UF is a top-producing institution for the 2022-23 Fulbright U.S. Student Program, with 11 students selected for Fulbright Awards. Fulbright is the government's flagship international education exchange program.

## Track Renovations Set

James G. Pressly Stadium/Percy Beard Track will get a \$4.1 million renovation to be funded by private gifts and completed in February, in time for the Gators to host the 2024 Southeastern Conference Outdoor Championships, last in Gainesville in 1989.







## First in the SEC

Pamela Soltis, a distinguished professor and curator at the Florida Museum of Natural History, has been named the 2023 Southeastern Conference Professor of the Year, awarded annually to one SEC faculty member whose teaching, research and service places them among the elite in higher education. Soltis, director of the Bioversity Institute, is the first honoree from UF.



## Powerful Words

*"I never would have imagined the risks both freedom seekers and conductors took to escape the horrors of slavery. I believe these multiracial alliances could serve as great examples for antiracist activists today."*

- Donovan Carter (MA '23)

The Samuel Proctor Oral History Program is using a \$350,000 grant for research on the abolitionists and allies who worked on the Underground Railroad. Above, Anthony Cohen, a descendant of a freedom seeker, tells his family's story to Paul Ortiz, program director, as Donovan Carter videorecords the story.



## Updating The Swamp Experience

Those scorching season-opener games in The Swamp could get shadier under plans for a \$400 million-plus renovation for Ben Hill Griffin Stadium.

Also on tap are new concessions, less congested concourses and better premium seating in an effort to boost the fan experience in the 93-year-old structure. The call for architectural proposals also mentions updating tailgating spaces and dedicated amenities for alumni. The space vacated by the football offices, which moved to the Heavener Football Training Center, also could be redesigned.

## Call him Dr. Tom Petty

The UF School of Music conferred an honorary Doctor of Music degree on Tom Petty at the Spring Doctoral Ceremony in May. In honor of the occasion, the Tom Petty family has established the Tom Petty Endowment for Guitars & Innovation in the UF College of the Arts. Their \$100,000 gift will also help expand the Music Business & Entrepreneurship program in the UF School of Music. Director Kevin Orr noted that Petty's music "continues to unite us as a community."



Commemorative doctorate limited edition poster.

Art credit: Shepard Fairey

Photo credit: Mark Seliger

Image provided courtesy of the Tom Petty family





# GATOR NATION™ GAME-DAY Tailgates

UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA  
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

## 2023 DATES

September 9	McNeese State
September 16	Tennessee
September 23	Charlotte
October 7	Vanderbilt (HOMECOMING - OPEN TO PUBLIC)
November 4	Arkansas
November 25	Florida State

The UF Alumni Association invites all members and their guests to gather at **Emerson Alumni Hall** prior to each home football game. Located directly across the street from the Swamp, these family-friendly tailgates feature a prime view of the **Gator Walk**, live music, face painting, kids crafts, tailgate games, food and beverage for purchase from **Mojo Hogtown Barbeque** and Gator gear from the **UF Bookstore**.

For more info visit  
**[uff.to/tg22](http://uff.to/tg22)**



MOJO  
**HOGTOWN**  
BAR-B-QUE

**UF** | Bookstores  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



## peek into the past

### Centennial for Pharmacy

UF's new School of Pharmacy opened 100 years ago. "The opportunities in pharmacy were never brighter than at the present time," UF's 1923 catalog proclaimed. Pharmacy became the first of six colleges under the UF Health umbrella. Today, it's one of the nation's highest-ranked pharmacy colleges.

 For more, please visit: [uff.to/qtwjrc](http://uff.to/qtwjrc)



*"I see a majestic building rising on the campus of the University of Florida, dedicated to the enlightenment of pharmacy, with portals swung wide in generous invitation to the aspiring youths, who converging, surge towards it from every part of the state."*

Townes R. Leigh, chemistry department head who was appointed to lead pharmacy.



### Gator aid for Brooke the alligator

Brooke, a 376-pound resident of St. Augustine Alligator Farm Zoological Park, came to the UF Veterinary Hospitals in July for a thorough evaluation after exhibiting unusual, intermittent head-rolling in the lagoon where he lives. After an MRI, the zoological medicine service team diagnosed an ear infection, and Brooke returned home later that day.

 For more photos of Brooke's visit to UF, please see [uff.to/pxc6b8](http://uff.to/pxc6b8)



### Dapper Daisy

Daisy Mae is back to dressing up after three months of treatment at the University of Florida's Large Animal Hospital. Daisy was unable to stand when admitted and Clinical Assistant Professor Daniela Luethy suspected a bone infection, later confirmed with a CT scan. With antibiotics and physical therapy, Daisy Mae recovered and went home to The Villages and her routine of watching Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy with owner Amanda Cohen. "It's maybe not a normal goat's normal, but Daisy has always been different and loves her life." Cohen drove over 60 miles back and forth to see her beloved Daisy Mae every day.

# Pigskin Palooza: Old-Time Florida Football Fandom



**By Barbara Drake** (MFA '04)

PHOTOS FROM UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA ARCHIVES, GEORGE A. SMATHERS LIBRARIES, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Long before 90,000 fans roared in the Swamp, “football enthusiasts” gathered on open fields to cheer for UF’s varsity team. The home “stadium,” those first years in Gainesville, was a downtown ballpark.

That changed in 1911 with the installation of bleachers at University Athletic Field. There, through 1929, the Gators played for crowds of up to 8,000, initially as part of the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (1912-1921) and later with the Southern Conference (1922-1932).

Sideline commentators offered play-by-play through that newfangled contraption, the radio. The era also launched some of UF’s most enduring traditions, including the Gators nickname. By the mid-1920s, the Gators had achieved national recognition. In 1928, under Coach Charlie Bachman, the team led the nation in scoring and lost only one game (to Tennessee), precluding an invitation to the Rose Bowl.

And the rest, as the saying goes, is history.



## Pee-Wee's Boys

In UF's first varsity football game on Oct. 13, 1906, the Orange and Blue beat the Gainesville Athletic Club, 16-6. The team would play six games that season (not eight, as often cited), against amateur athletic clubs from Florida and Georgia, as well as Mercer University and Rollins College.

Overseeing the team was head football coach and director of athletics, 24-year-old Jack "Pee Wee" Forsythe. During his three seasons, Forsythe simultaneously coached and played fullback, receiving \$1,000 annually for his dual duties.

One photo of "Pee-Wee's Boys" is inscribed, "We licked Savannah 6-0. Hallelujah." The words, however, are wrong. It was Rollins that UF beat 6-0 that season. In fact, Florida lost decisively to the Savannah Athletic Club, 27-2. Posterity lists the 1906 record as 5-3; but in 2016, FloridaGators.com writer Scott Carter (BSJ '95) reported differently. A local teacher dug through old records and determined that the Gators were 3-3 the inaugural season.



## Dressing for Success

Jerseys, pants and helmets evolved during the early decades of Gator football. In 1921, the Gators adopted a uniform in school colors: a blue-and-orange jersey and striped socks. The back of the jersey featured the player's number. The design changed slightly from season to season.

The most popular protective headgear of the late teens and '20s was the leather dog-ear helmet, whose flaps tied under the chin. With its extra padding, it offered better protection than earlier flat-top models. Helmets were not mandatory in college football until 1939, and early games typically featured a mixture of bare heads and variety of helmets.

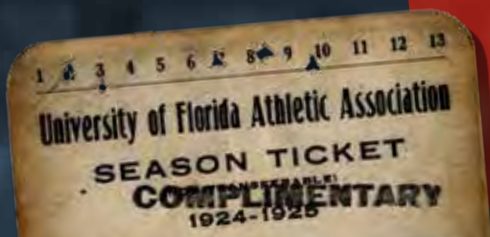
In the photos, 1910 captain Earle Abbott "Dummy" Taylor (BS 1913), left, wears a typical Florida uniform from the aughts and teens: a dark wool jersey, breeches, leather shoes and socks (which eventually rose from ankle to knee length). Pants were made of padded canvas reinforced with wooden reeds; they laced up the front and were cinched with a belt. J.C. Waldron (BSAE '32), right, poses on Fleming Field in the Gators' 1929 uniform.



## Home Field Advantage

University Athletic Field began as a practice space. It stretched from Thomas Hall to Gale Lemerand Drive and West University Avenue to within 150 feet of the current north endzone on Florida Field.

In 1915, UF renamed the field in honor of Francis Fleming, Florida's 15th governor. Between 1911 and 1930, the Gators posted a 49-7-1 record at Fleming Field (which tended to flood when it rained). Fleming Field also hosted UF baseball games, Gainesville High and Lincoln High in the 1910s and '20s.





Pee Wee Keezel, Head Cheer Leader;  
Buck Collier, Fats Thornton, Maggie  
McGee, Assistant Cheer Leaders

## “The cheering was vociferous and encouraging”

Cheerleading began with an all-male squad whipping up enthusiasm on Oct. 25, 1906, when Florida beat Rollins, 6-0. The local University News reported: “Mr. S. A. Sanborn, leader of yells and college songs, stood in the middle of the group and loosed his lusty lungs through the magnificent medium of a massive megaphone. The cheering was vociferous and encouraging.”

In addition to performing at games, cheerleaders organized pep rallies and, prior to gameday, roused freshmen from their beds to march down University Avenue in midnight pajama parades.

## The Poet-Athlete

Early UF students strived to excel in multiple pursuits, including athletics, debate and drama. Poetry was a favorite. Football players sometimes penned odes to their sport. One such Renaissance man was Earle Abbott “Dummy” Taylor (BS 1913). His poem “A Foot Ball Martyr” (1911) tells of a strong, “handsome” player who, after being injured in an away game, returns to his alma mater a pitiful state:



*“Gone were his toes and half his nose;  
Both of his eyes were shut up tight.  
Left one tooth, his ribs, forsooth,  
Were stove in on each side.”*

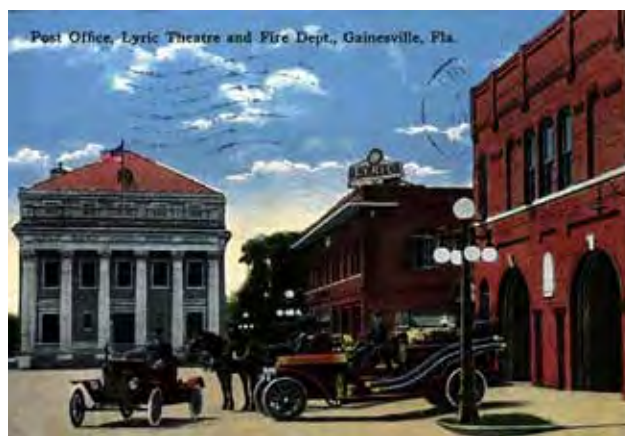
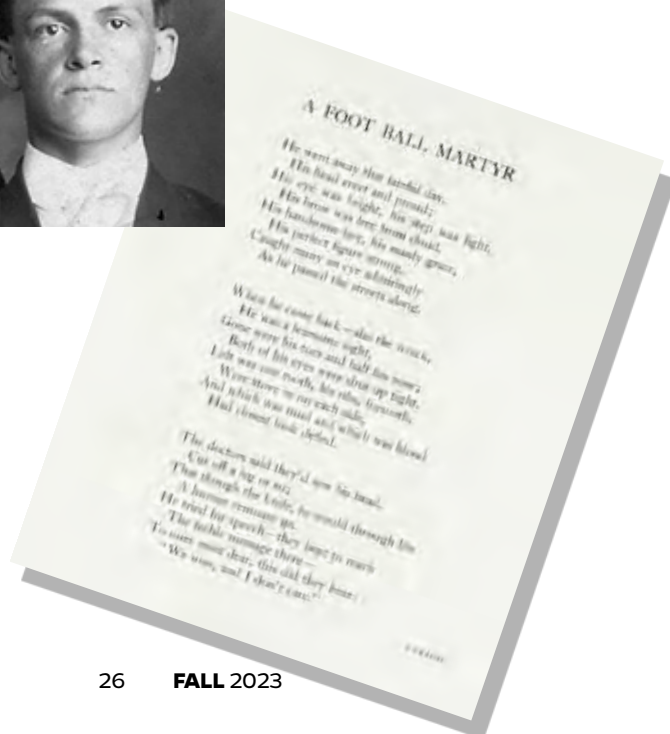


PHOTO COURTESY FLORIDA MEMORY

## “We Are the Boys”

The Fleming Field era also gave us UF’s beloved fight song, “We Are the Boys of Old Florida.” One version of the song’s origins claims that a similar tune was written for students in Toledo, Ohio, in either 1906 or 1924, and UF just tweaked the lyrics. Another account has it that UF students Robert Swanson and John Icenhour composed the song in 1919 for their barbershop quartet or a dance band.

In a 1973 interview for the Samuel Proctor Oral History Project, Swanson admitted to having written the tune. “We Are the Boys” is still sung at the end of the third quarter at home games.



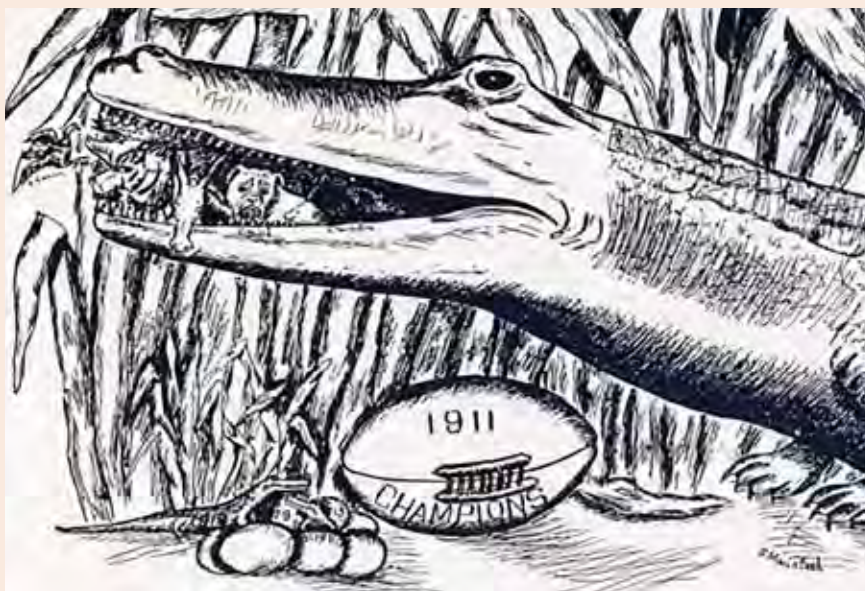
## Go, Gators

1911 was a milestone year. The team finished 5-0-1, making it UF's first undefeated season. Enthusiasm was so high that season, 2,000 fans and the Gainesville Brass Band greeted players when they returned from beating Clemson, 6-5, on Oct. 26, 1911.

A headline the prior week had even greater import for the team – and university. On Oct. 21, 1911, Florida played the South Carolina Gamecocks in Columbia, tying 6-6. “The earliest printed references to the team as the Alligators occurred on October 20th in both the South Carolina and Florida newspapers. ‘Gamecocks clash with Alligators’ was the headline in *The State*, South Carolina’s leading newspaper,” according to Smathers Libraries’ records.

The same month, sportswriter Laurence “Kiddo” Woltz called the team the Gators in his column for the *Florida Times-Union*. The following spring, students voted to change the student newspaper’s name from *The Florida Pennant* to *The Florida Alligator*.

Historians differ on the inspiration for the name “Alligators” and its diminutive form. One popular explanation is the



mascot appeared on pennants sold at a Gainesville soda shop starting in 1908. Retired UF historian Carl Van Ness (MA '85), however, believes the name derives from the 1911 football team's larger-than-life captain, Neal “Bo Gator” Storter (class of 1912).

A child of wild Florida, Storter grew up in the Everglades and Fort Myers, and at 16, in 1907, took his first train ride to Gainesville, where he joined the

student body of 100 men. According to a 1962 speech given by Thomas Bryant (BS '12, JD '15), senior class president of 1912, Storter's Everglades origins and his unsophisticated mannerisms earned him the nickname “Brother Gator” or “Bo Gator,” and he and his rowdy compatriots became known as the Bo Gator Club.



## 1924 Mascot Challenger

Making newspaper headlines in 1924 was a young black bear that wandered onto Fleming Field during football practice.

The *Miami Times* wrote:

“The other afternoon, the long-enthroned Gator mascot, known familiarly as the Orange and Blue Alligator, seemed on the verge of losing its job as representative of the Fighting Gator football team when a newcomer trotted majestically out on Fleming Field with all the necessary air of a conqueror.

“It was none other than a Florida-born, Florida-bred black bear, who

invaded the Florida gridiron.”

The bear was owned by freshman “Rat” West, who said he captured it in the Everglades. The story continued: “While scampering about the Gator field, some loyal football fan slapped a large Florida banner upon the back of the bruin and this he wore the rest of the afternoon.”

The bear appears to have been good luck. Three days later, Florida demolished Rollins, 77-0.





# UF's SUPERSTAR

## First All-American Dale Van Sickel's football prowess into a

By Barbara Drake (MFA '04)

In the late 1920s, the Florida Gators produced their first superstar: All-American-turned-Hollywood-stuntman Dale Van Sickel (BA '30).

Afficionados of football lore know Dale Van Sickel as Florida's first-ever first-team All-American (1928) and College Football Hall of Fame inductee (1975). But even if his name doesn't ring a bell, you've likely seen his thrilling stunt work in films like "Spartacus" and "North by Northwest." Appearing in 400-plus films and TV shows over a 44-year career, Van Sickel doubled for stars such as Sean Connery, Clark Gable and Robert Mitchum and performed stunts deemed too dangerous for Superman himself, actor George Reeves of TV's "Adventures of Superman" (1952-1958).

Despite his achievements, Van Sickel, who died at age 69, never let success go to his head, said his daughter Judy Buehlman. That included not bragging to Hollywood swells about his early days as a football hero.

"My dad was very humble," Buehlman recalled. "A lot of people he worked with never knew he played football before. He just wasn't one to talk about himself, which was rather endearing considering all the things he did."

Van Sickel's journey to gridiron glory and beyond began when his father moved the family to Gainesville around 1910. The youngster's natural athletic abilities made him a star for the Gainesville High Purple Hurricanes — many consider him the greatest high-school player produced in the state prior to 1930 — and a year after Van Sickel enrolled at the University of Florida, Coach Charlie Bachman deployed him at the right end of the Gators' line of scrimmage. (Van Sickel also lettered in baseball and basketball.)

As was typical for footballers in the 1920s, Van Sickel played both offense and defense, and his prowess at tackling and blocking, as well as his ability to "snare passes out of the ether" (as described in the 1928 Florida Alligator), made him a standout in that first great era of Gators football. During Van Sickel's three seasons with the Gators (1927-1929), the team



# RMAN

## Van Sickel turned Hollywood career



Van Sickel performed in Disney's "The Love Bug" (1968) and Republic Pictures features like "Zorro" in the 1940s and '50s.

won 23 out of 29 games, and in his junior year, 1928, they posted an 8-1 record, losing by one point to Tennessee in the final game of the season, precluding a trip to the Rose Bowl.

Buehlman recalls her father telling her he played so hard as a Fightin' Gator, his post-game ritual involved downing a pint of ice cream and a quart of buttermilk.

After earning a bachelor's in education in 1930, Van Sickel stayed on for two years as an assistant coach for Gators football and basketball. However, his wife, Iris, had other plans for the handsome 6-footer.

"My mother sent stills of him to the different studios," she said. "That's when they called him to come out and do a movie."

That first film, "Touchdown!" (1931), finds Van Sickel mining his

Gator gridiron training, but he quickly expanded his repertoire. In addition to stunting in Saturday matinee serials like "King of the Rocket Men" (1949) and "Zombies of the Stratosphere" (1952), Van Sickel was frequently a "heavy" in those same pictures, scowling and punching his way through "Canadian Mounties vs. the Atomic Invaders" (1953), "Man with the Steel Whip" (1954) and "Ghost of Zorro" (1949).

Growing up in Los Angeles in the 1940s and '50s, Buehlman said she and her older brother heard few details from their father about his dangerous work.

"Later at the movies we'd see the things he did," Buehlman said.

To perfect his moves for Superman stunts, Van Sickel bought a trampoline and set it up on a grassy slope outside the family home, next to a swing set.

"I remember he would run up, bounce

on the trampoline and grab hold at the top of the swing set, over and over again," she said. "That was so he could do the shot of Superman flying out the window."

Van Sickel's other forte was driving. Some of his best roadwork can be seen in "The Love Bug" (1968) and Steven Spielberg's "Duel" (1971).

It was Van Sickel's perilous car stunts, though, that led to his demise.

In a July 1975 stunt, Van Sickel's car skidded into a pylon, and he smashed his head on the dashboard. He passed away in January 1977.

Fans can pay tribute to this Gator Great outside Ben Hill Griffin Stadium, where Van Sickel's College Football Hall of Fame plaque is installed on a low brick wall and inscribed with words by Coach Bachman: "He was the greatest all-around end I've ever seen."



Van Sickel, left, doubling for George Reeves as Superman, prepared to take a punch in "The Mind Machine" (1951), season 1 of the "Adventures of Superman." Photos courtesy of Judy Buehlman.

---

With legal acumen and empathy – and record speed – a team led by a UF law alum resolved the staggeringly complex class action lawsuit that resulted from the Surfside condominium collapse in one year.

---

# Court Compassion

By Natalie Van Hoose (BA '06)

**O**n June 24, 2021, around 1:22 a.m., tragedy struck the beachside town of Surfside, Florida. Two-thirds of the Champlain Towers South building plummeted to the ground in seconds, killing 98 people and leaving 136 unit owners homeless. It was the third-deadliest construction failure in U.S. history.

In the aftermath, a team of Florida judges and lawyers dedicated themselves to a single goal: to render justice as swiftly as possible to survivors and families of the victims. They won a \$1.1 billion settlement in less than a year and advanced a model for future cases.

## The judge and 'the Black Swan'

Days after the Surfside collapse, a class action lawsuit was filed on behalf of the victims, residents and condo owners. The suit fell to the oversight of Judge Michael Hanzman (JD '85) in the Miami-Dade County Circuit Court. Judge Hanzman's legal career had been diverse and rewarding; before joining the bench, he was a private litigator for more than 20 years. He relished the challenge of pressing into new branches of the law and had worked in criminal law, courts of appeal and dependency court, where he presided over cases of abandoned, abused and neglected children.

The Surfside case would be unlike anything he had ever faced. It was a massive piece of litigation. Encompassing 98 wrongful death lawsuits and more than 100 property loss suits, it would be procedurally and substantively complex, emotionally charged and public. Judge Hanzman would come to think of it as "the Black Swan."

"I had no doubt it was going to be the most challenging assignment of my career," he said.



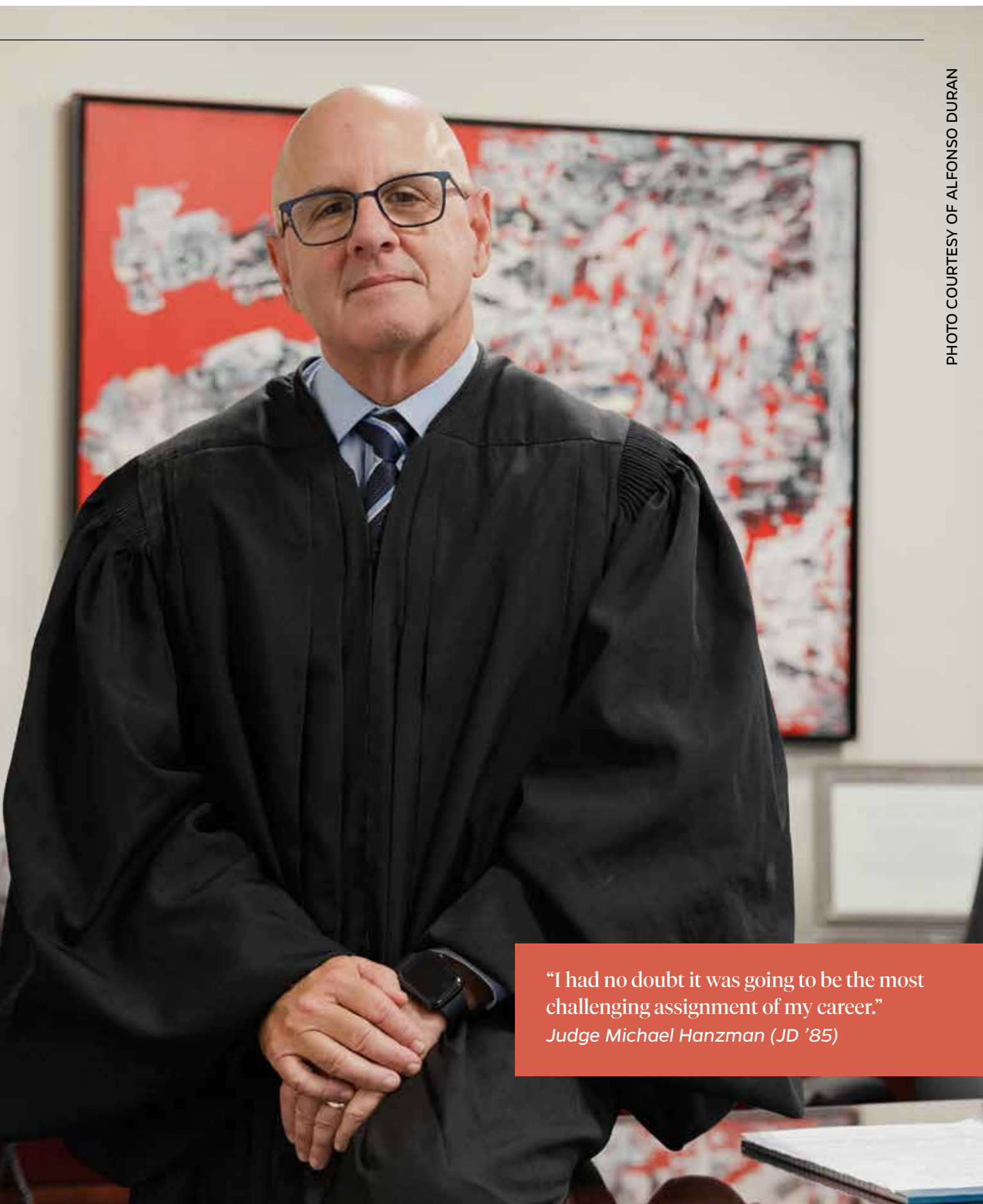
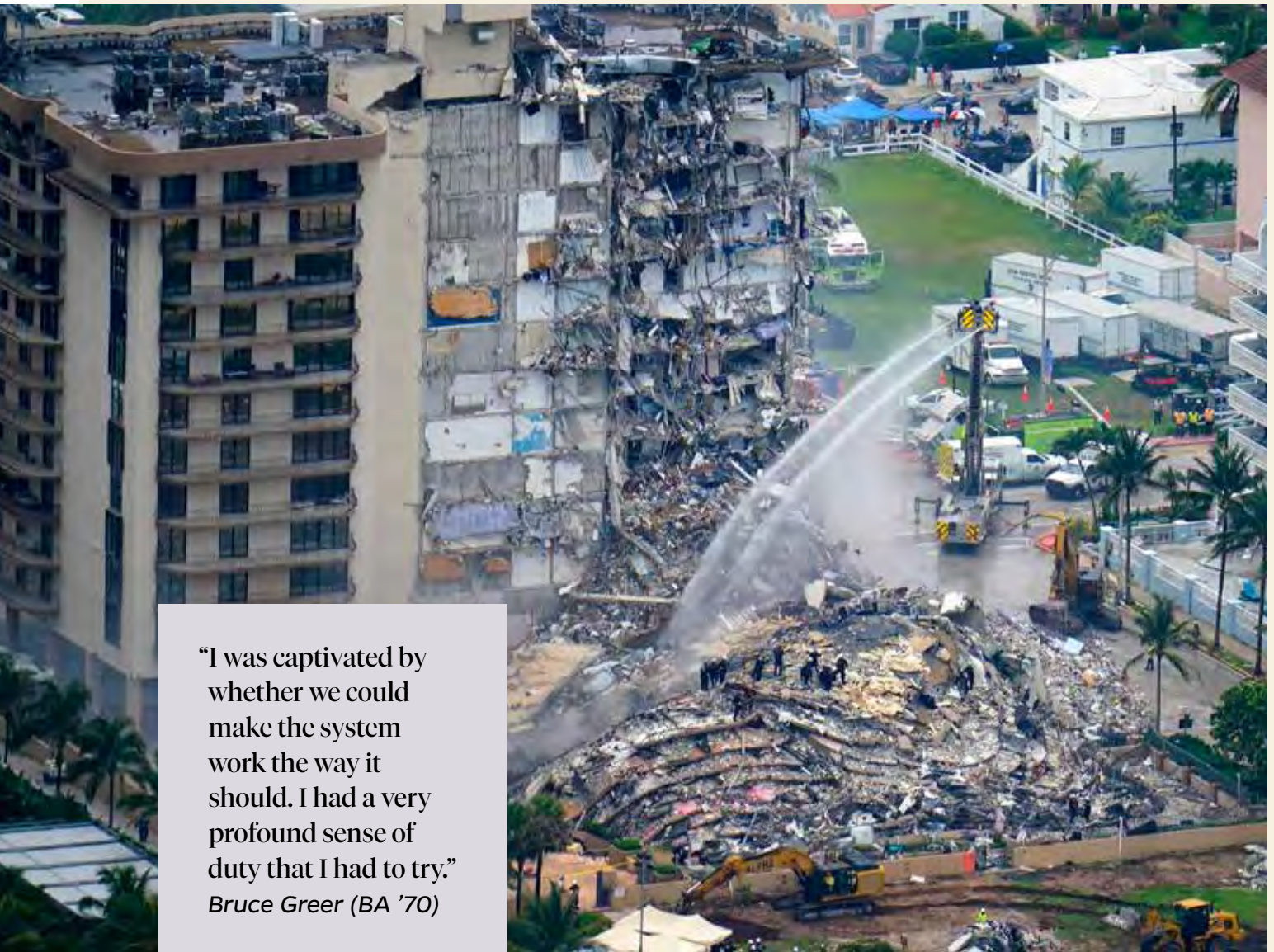


PHOTO COURTESY OF ALFONSO DURAN

“I had no doubt it was going to be the most challenging assignment of my career.”

*Judge Michael Hanzman (JD '85)*



“I was captivated by whether we could make the system work the way it should. I had a very profound sense of duty that I had to try.”  
*Bruce Greer (BA '70)*



### **‘There was no playbook’**

Hanzman made an unusual decision at the outset: to settle the case in a year. It was a formidable goal. The only mass tort cases in the history of the U.S. legal system that bore a resemblance to a tragedy of this magnitude – 9/11, school shootings, bridge collapses – typically took five to 10 years to resolve.

The proposed timeline was the only reason Bruce Greer (BA '70) agreed to mediate the complex litigation process. Greer had retired from law to focus on

his role as president of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden and initially rebuffed Hanzman's requests to come aboard, convinced the case would be too painful. But the judge persisted. He knew Greer had the ability to earn trust and respect and move people toward compromise.

“It was a very delicate task that required a nuanced hand,” Hanzman said. “There was nobody else that I thought would have any chance of getting this case resolved.”

Said Greer: “Justice is a mill that grinds



# “I felt that as painful as it was going to be, these families deserved to be heard.”

Judge Michael Hanzman (JD '85)



**“Buildings don’t collapse every day. There was no playbook.”**  
**Rachel Furst**  
**(JD '07)**

on for years and years for all the wrong reasons. No one gets the result they’re entitled to.

“I was captivated by whether we could make the system work the way it should. I had a very profound sense of duty that I had to try.”

Judge Hanzman also appointed Rachel Furst (JD '07) as co-lead counsel to oversee a team of 15 law firms representing all of the plaintiffs. Her former UF Levin College of Law classmate Michael Thomas (JD '05) served as counsel for several key defendants.

Furst, now a partner with Maderal Byrne and Furst, described the case as “extremely challenging.” There was no single cause for the building’s fall: Design flaws dating back to the tower’s original construction, inadequate structural support, delayed repairs, environmental damage and destabilization caused by nearby construction all contributed.

“Buildings don’t collapse every day,” Furst said. “There was no playbook. There were no obvious sources of recovery. Liability was not immediately clear. We were not optimistic that we could resolve the case successfully in a year.”

As Furst and her co-lead, Harley Tropin, pursued claims against 30 targets, Greer used his prior experience in complex commercial litigation to predict the case’s likeliest outcomes and to steer litigants toward those ends. Over an estimated 350 Zoom meetings and phone calls, he would gauge each party’s

willingness to accept a result. He described the mediation process as a giant Rubik’s Cube – two pieces would align, only for another to fall out of place.

“I believed that if I could finish this under Judge Hanzman’s timeframe, people could, in some way, put their lives back together,” Greer said.

## **Down to the wire**

When the day of Hanzman’s appointed deadline arrived, Greer was engtangled in difficult negotiations with an insurance company based in Europe.

“It was hanging in the balance on the last day,” he said.

Shortly before the 1 p.m. deadline, the company settled. Greer, watching the subsequent court hearing on Zoom, sat back and took a deep breath. The litigation process was over. Together, 132 attorneys had worked more than 34,000 hours on the lawsuits.

Hanzman approved the \$1.1 billion settlement on June 23, 2022, one day before the first-year anniversary of the collapse.

## **Five weeks of funerals**

A final step remained: dividing the settlement among plaintiffs. Rather than appointing a special master or using a formula to allocate the funds, Judge Hanzman chose to offer each of the plaintiffs a personal court hearing. For many, this was a moment to share about the lives of loved ones lost in the collapse.

“I did not think that their award should be based upon a review of a cold, stale written record, or formulas or grids,” Judge Hanzman said. “I felt that as painful as it was going to be, these families deserved to be heard.”

To assist, Judge Hanzman recruited his longtime friend and veteran of the Miami-Dade County Circuit Court, Judge Jonathan Colby (JD '83). Judge Colby, then in retirement, brought considerable experience in personal injury and wrongful death law. But Hanzman also knew he could not endure the heart-wrenching process without his friend alongside him.

Since their days as young lawyers in a crime-ridden Miami, the two men had talked about how the law could work – not as “justice in a box,” but as personalized justice, Colby said. This was their chance to put that philosophy into practice.

# MAKE YOUR MOVE TO HIGHER EDUCATION

"The UF DBA is an elite doctoral education for highly motivated and curious working professionals. The faculty who teach in the program and guide candidate research projects are highly respected in their fields and care deeply about the growth and success of their students. Each cohort includes an unrivaled assortment of successful executives and aspiring academics who become friends for life. The UF DBA is the road less traveled; it is a uniquely challenging but also uniquely rewarding journey."

**DR. RUSS SANDIFER**

Assistant Professor of Business and Finance  
Department of Accounting, Business, and Finance  
WOFFORD COLLEGE

*For more information, contact*

**KAREN EHLERS, ED.D.**

Director of Professional Post Graduate Programs

[karen.ehlers@warrington.ufl.edu](mailto:karen.ehlers@warrington.ufl.edu)

352-273-3208

**WARRINGTON.UFL.EDU/DBA**



**DOCTOR OF BUSINESS  
ADMINISTRATION**

**WARRINGTON** COLLEGE of BUSINESS





Judge Jonathan Colby came out of retirement to assist with the case. He and Judge Hanzman had talked about how the law could work — not as “justice in a box,” but as personalized justice, and Colby thought this was their chance to advance that model.

“We explained to the parties that this was going to operate more like a family,” Colby said. “We would hear facts and follow the law to provide the only justice that we could, which would be compensation for their loss and true compassion from Judge Hanzman and me.”

Bailiffs distributed Kleenex boxes throughout the courtroom each morning and refilled them at lunchtime. The judges concluded each hearing by stepping down from

a day for five continuous weeks.

“It took everything out of me,” he said. “I still have not recovered. I likely never will. But I wouldn’t do anything different.”

### What remains

The Surfside judges and lawyers’ accomplishment has been hailed not only as unprecedented, but as an example for how the legal system could work.

“A couple of things happened in this case, which would not have happened in any parallel universe with a judge other than Judge Hanzman,” Greer said. “When the case had every probability of going off the tracks and into slow motion, he refused to let that happen.”

Hanzman, who returned to private practice this year as senior counsel at the Bilzin Sumberg law firm, credited the defense lawyers and plaintiffs’ counsel with bringing the case to its swift conclusion. Of Greer, who served pro bono, Hanzman said, “He bled for this case and brought it home.”

Colby, who also took no compensation, described it as the greatest privilege of his career.

“I’m so proud to have graduated from the University of Florida where I was mentored by some of the finest professors and academic thinkers that I’ve ever been exposed to,” he said.

“I don’t think that Judge Hanzman and myself will ever be the same. We will always have a different outlook about the beauty of humanity and how painful it is to love so deeply and to lose so much.”

---

“We would think, how  
could the next day  
be even sadder?”

*Jonathan Colby (JD ’83)*

---

the bench and embracing the bereft. Colby would look over at his friend to see tears rolling down his cheeks. It was “a continual grinding of the heart,” he said.

After a full day in court, Hanzman and Colby would head home with videos and notes about the deceased for the next day’s hearings. Within an hour, one of them would call the other, weeping.


“We would think, how could the next day be even sadder?” Colby said.

Hanzman described it as attending three to four funerals









# BLUE THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Many of the biggest names in Florida politics, law and business got their footing in UF's elite, 100-year-old student leadership society.

**By David Finnerty**

**U.S.** Sen. Marco Rubio is one.  
Retired governor Bob Graham, too.

So is stadium namesake Ben Hill Griffin, long-ago UF president Stephen O'Connell, Vice President Mike Pence's communication director Katie Miller, onetime American Bar Association president Chesterfield Smith, legendary politician Lawton Chiles, Florida Democratic Party chair Nikki Fried ... and on and on and on.

All Gators.

All with feet wetted and elbows sharpened in Florida Blue Key.

FBK, as insiders call it, is a brotherhood (and, in more enlightened times, sisterhood) of movers and shakers — a Who's Who of Florida's heaviest hitters: politicians, judges, CEOs, academics, generals.

Think of it as UF's answer to Yale's Skull and Bones, without the winks and whispers. A kingmaker. Bootcamp for the powerful and influential. Steppingstone to the governor's chair, corner office or judge's gavel.

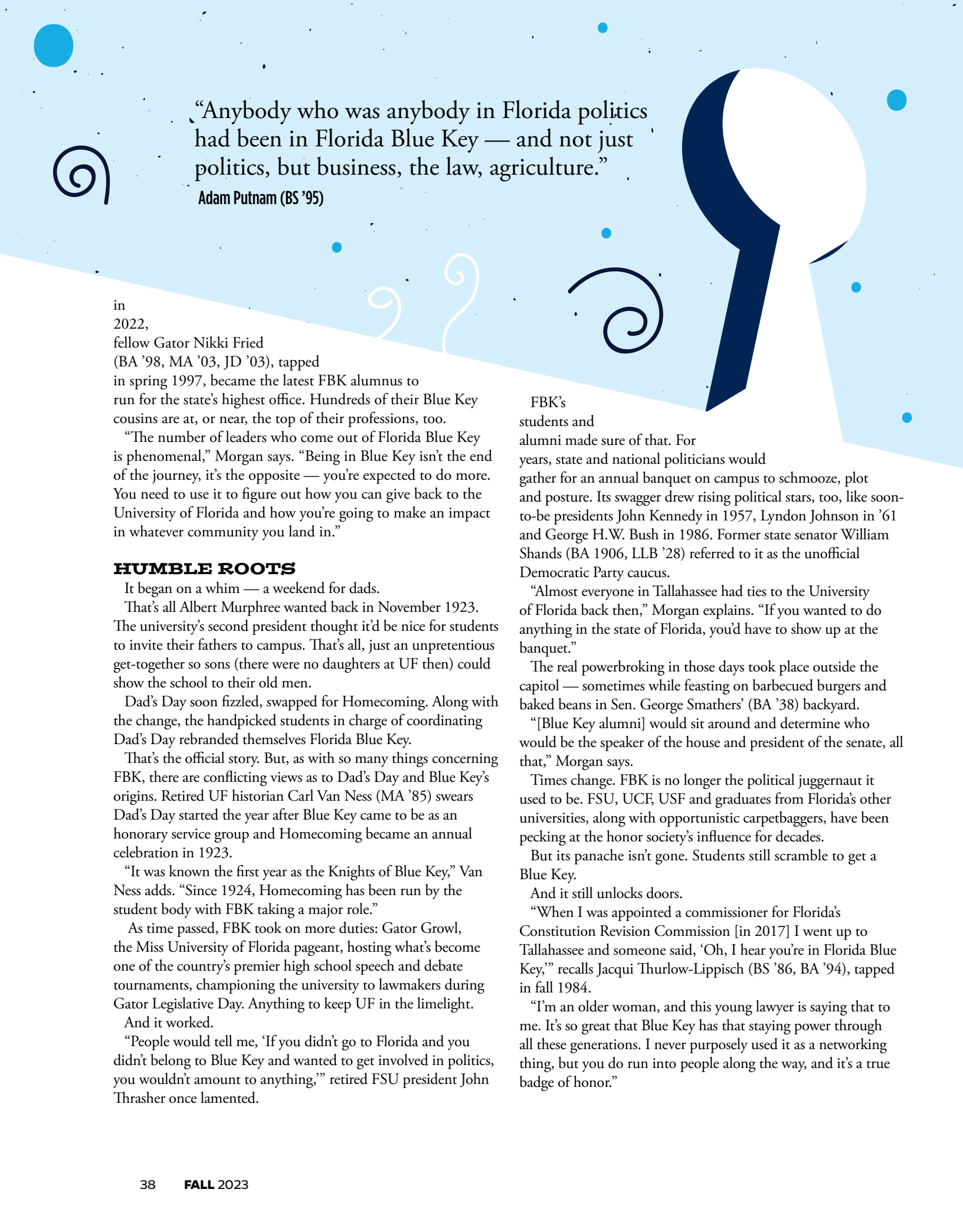
"When I first got here, I remember thinking, 'Holy cow, this is something to be reckoned with,'" says Myra Morgan, FBK's faculty adviser for almost 40 years. "Back then, the president of Florida Blue Key had an easier time accessing the governor than UF's president did."

FBK has been wielding that sword since the silent movie era. To be "tapped" into the honor society these past 100 years has been as close to a shoo-in to the big show as a college student could get. Ten Florida governors, starting in the Roaring Twenties through the new millennium, were tapped. Seven U.S. senators since 1946 are Blue Key. A legion of state Supreme Court justices, congressmen, university presidents, White House officials, generals and business executives also have pins.

"Anybody who was anybody in Florida politics had been in Florida Blue Key — and not just politics, but business, the law, agriculture," Adam Putnam (BS '95) told Florida Trend magazine in 2004.

He'd know.

Tapped in fall 1994, Putnam is a former U.S. representative, Florida commissioner of agriculture and 2018 candidate for governor. Four years later,



“Anybody who was anybody in Florida politics had been in Florida Blue Key — and not just politics, but business, the law, agriculture.”

Adam Putnam (BS '95)

in 2022, fellow Gator Nikki Fried (BA '98, MA '03, JD '03), tapped in spring 1997, became the latest FBK alumnus to run for the state's highest office. Hundreds of their Blue Key cousins are at, or near, the top of their professions, too.

“The number of leaders who come out of Florida Blue Key is phenomenal,” Morgan says. “Being in Blue Key isn't the end of the journey, it's the opposite — you're expected to do more. You need to use it to figure out how you can give back to the University of Florida and how you're going to make an impact in whatever community you land in.”

## HUMBLE ROOTS

It began on a whim — a weekend for dads.

That's all Albert Murphree wanted back in November 1923. The university's second president thought it'd be nice for students to invite their fathers to campus. That's all, just an unpretentious get-together so sons (there were no daughters at UF then) could show the school to their old men.

Dad's Day soon fizzled, swapped for Homecoming. Along with the change, the handpicked students in charge of coordinating Dad's Day rebranded themselves Florida Blue Key.

That's the official story. But, as with so many things concerning FBK, there are conflicting views as to Dad's Day and Blue Key's origins. Retired UF historian Carl Van Ness (MA '85) swears Dad's Day started the year after Blue Key came to be as an honorary service group and Homecoming became an annual celebration in 1923.

“It was known the first year as the Knights of Blue Key,” Van Ness adds. “Since 1924, Homecoming has been run by the student body with FBK taking a major role.”

As time passed, FBK took on more duties: Gator Growl, the Miss University of Florida pageant, hosting what's become one of the country's premier high school speech and debate tournaments, championing the university to lawmakers during Gator Legislative Day. Anything to keep UF in the limelight.

And it worked.

“People would tell me, ‘If you didn't go to Florida and you didn't belong to Blue Key and wanted to get involved in politics, you wouldn't amount to anything,’” retired FSU president John Thrasher once lamented.

FBK's students and alumni made sure of that. For years, state and national politicians would gather for an annual banquet on campus to schmooze, plot and posture. Its swagger drew rising political stars, too, like soon-to-be presidents John Kennedy in 1957, Lyndon Johnson in '61 and George H.W. Bush in 1986. Former state senator William Shands (BA 1906, LLB '28) referred to it as the unofficial Democratic Party caucus.

“Almost everyone in Tallahassee had ties to the University of Florida back then,” Morgan explains. “If you wanted to do anything in the state of Florida, you'd have to show up at the banquet.”

The real powerbroking in those days took place outside the capitol — sometimes while feasting on barbecued burgers and baked beans in Sen. George Smathers' (BA '38) backyard.

“[Blue Key alumni] would sit around and determine who would be the speaker of the house and president of the senate, all that,” Morgan says.

Times change. FBK is no longer the political juggernaut it used to be. FSU, UCF, USF and graduates from Florida's other universities, along with opportunistic carpetbaggers, have been pecking at the honor society's influence for decades.

But its panache isn't gone. Students still scramble to get a Blue Key.

And it still unlocks doors.

“When I was appointed a commissioner for Florida's Constitution Revision Commission [in 2017] I went up to Tallahassee and someone said, ‘Oh, I hear you're in Florida Blue Key,’” recalls Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch (BS '86, BA '94), tapped in fall 1984.

“I'm an older woman, and this young lawyer is saying that to me. It's so great that Blue Key has that staying power through all these generations. I never purposely used it as a networking thing, but you do run into people along the way, and it's a true badge of honor.”



## SHENANIGANS, CONSEQUENCES and REDEMPTION

Like most alpha dogs, Florida Blue Key has bitten more than a few hands. Scandals, accusations of dirty politics and mudslinging have hounded FBK almost since its start a century ago. Critics mockingly call it “The System” because of its reputation for strongarming student elections and controlling student government.

“It can be a battlefield,” Morgan acknowledges.

“It’s probably more political than the Florida Legislature,” Putnam agrees. “The knives are just as long.”

UF’s student newspaper, the Independent Florida Alligator, once called FBK a “fluid set of alliances governed by a select group of powerbrokers.”

The Tampa Bay Times, in a 2019 article, was even harsher.

“Campus politics in Gainesville have long been controlled by a powerful few with the help of a voting bloc made up of social sororities and fraternities,” Kathryn Varn (BS ’15), herself

a Gator, wrote. “Much of the power-brokering occurs in a highly selective organization called Florida Blue Key.”

All of which means things can (and do) get nasty.

Editors at the Alligator for years suspected Blue Key’s chosen student government candidates of tossing bundles of the campus newspaper into dumpsters when it endorsed someone who wasn’t FBK blessed. Misinformation and out-and-out lies were also a matter of course.

Tactics like those — long a sour pill to those on the receiving end — gave Blue Key a black eye 25 years ago ... and almost cost the honor society its prized position as Homecoming’s gatekeeper.

In a 1995 lawsuit, then-graduate student Charles Grapski (BA ’97) accused FBK of spreading rumors to sabotage his campaign for student body president. Blue

Key, Grapski said, conspired to falsify his criminal record to say he’d been charged with child molestation. A judge sided with Grapski and held FBK and student government liable for \$250,000. John Lombardi, UF’s president at the time, was so disgusted he demanded changes, calling Blue Key’s actions “a pattern of behaviors over many years.”

Those were hard lessons, Morgan says. Even so, she believes that the good Blue Key does far outweighs its shortcomings.

“The perception is that everyone connected to Florida Blue Key is a political hack, but that’s not the case,” she insists. “These are well-intentioned, smart young people who want to serve the University of Florida.”

FBK’s reputation for cutthroat politics doesn’t tell the whole story, agrees Thurlow-Lippisch, a longtime environmentalist who is fighting to protect the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon.

“It’s about more than politics, thank God. If you look at the people who are Blue Key alumni, nine times out of 10 these people have been involved in things

that are good for everyone,” she says.

Thurlow-Lippisch credits FBK for tutoring her in the delicate art of managing prickly situations,

teaching her to look deeper than what’s seen at face value, and, when plans don’t go as wanted, to not take it personally. The former mayor for the Town of Sewall’s Point has leaned on that FBK training her entire career.

All these years later, she still fishes out her old Blue Key pin from time to time.

“Sometimes when I’m getting ground up in one thing or another, I’ll take it out of my jewelry box to remind me that I’m trained for this,” she says. “Blue Key becomes part of you for the rest of your life. I hope it goes another 100 years or 500 years, so even more leaders come out of it.”



**Myra Morgan**

“These are well-intentioned,  
smart young people  
who want to serve the  
University of Florida.”

## NOTABLE FLORIDA BLUE KEY ALUMNI



- **Alto Adams (LLB ’21)**, Florida Supreme Court, 1940-51
- **James Adkins (JD ’38)**, Florida Supreme Court, 1969-87
- **Reubin Askew (LLB ’56)**, Florida governor, 1971-79
- **Paul Barnes (JD ’20)**, Florida Supreme Court, 1946-49
- **Julie Imanuel Brown (BS ’97, JD ’00)**, Florida Public Service Commission, 2015-21
- **C. Farris Bryant (BA ’35)**, Florida governor, 1961-65
- **Leonard Chapman Jr. (BA ’35)**, Marine Corps commandant, 1968-72
- **Lawton Chiles (BS ’52, JD ’55)**, U.S. senator, 1971-89, Florida governor, 1991-98
- **Raymond Ehrlich (BS ’39, LLB ’42)**, Florida Supreme Court justice, 1981-90
- **Nikki Fried (BA ’98, MA ’03, JD ’03)**, Florida Agriculture commissioner, 2019-23, Florida Democratic Party chair, 2023-
- **Bob Graham (BA ’59)**, Florida governor, 1979-87, U.S. senator, 1987-2005
- **Phil Graham (BA ’36)**, Washington Post publisher, 1946-63
- **Ben Hill Griffin Jr. (’33)**, businessman and stadium namesake
- **Stephen Grimes (BS ’50, LLB ’54)**, Florida Supreme Court justice, 1987-96
- **Spessard Holland (LLB 1916)**, Florida governor, 1941-45, U.S. senator, 1946-71
- **Laurel Lee (BA ’96, JD ’99)**, Florida Secretary of State, 2019-22
- **Connie Mack III (BS ’66)**, U.S. senator, 1989-2001
- **Buddy MacKay (BS ’54, JD ’61)**, Florida governor, 1998-99
- **Katie Miller (BS ’13)**, Vice President Mike Pence’s communication director, 2020-21
- **Bill Nelson (’62)**, U.S. senator, 2001-19
- **Stephen O’Connell (BS ’40, LLB ’40)**, Florida Supreme Court justice, 1955-67, UF president, 1967-73
- **Adam Putnam (BS ’95)**, Florida Agriculture commissioner, 2011-19
- **Marco Rubio (BA ’93)**, U.S. senator, 2011-
- **Harold Sebring (LLB ’28)**, Florida Supreme Court, 1943-55, Nuremberg Nazi War Crimes judge, 1946-47
- **George Smathers (BA ’38)**, U.S. senator, 1951-69 (usher at John Kennedy’s wedding), Smathers Libraries namesake
- **Chesterfield Smith (JD ’48)**, American Bar Association president, 1973-74
- **W. Reece Smith Jr. (JD ’49)**, American Bar Association president, 1980-81
- **Jamal Sowell (BA ’05)**, Enterprise Florida president and CEO, 2019-21
- **B. Campbell Thornal (JD ’30)**, Florida Supreme Court justice, 1955-70
- **Fuller Warren (’28)**, Florida governor, 1949-53
- **Stephen Zack (BA ’69, JD ’71)**, American Bar Association president, 2010-11





By Barbara Drake (MFA '04)

This Homecoming marks the 100th anniversary of Gator Growl, the largest student-run pep rally in the nation, along with the centennial of its sponsor, Florida Blue Key.

Gator Growl has evolved from student cheers around a bonfire to an elaborate production headlined by entertainers like George Burns, Robin Williams, Billy Crystal, Jeff Foxworthy, Dave Chappelle and Sinbad, who made crowds of 70,000-plus convulse in laughter.

Playing to Growl's split audience — rowdy students on one side, older parents and alumni on the other — proved daunting for even seasoned pros. Bob Hope got booed in 1983. Ray Romano's kid

jokes put the student section to sleep in 1998.

"It was just awful, so boring," alum Courtney Logan Caldwell (BA '03) posted on Facebook about Romano. "But now that I have a kid, I would probably find it hysterical! #thisis40."

Conversely, comedians who ramped up the raunchiness sent scandalized family members running to the exits. Alum Tommy Craig recalls Growl headliner Dane Cook in 2004: "I never saw parents and grandparents get out so quickly. He was out of control."

Recently, we asked Gators on social media to share their Growl memories.







# FOND MEMORIES NEW DISCOVERIES UNDER THE GLOW OF ORANGE & BLUE

MULTI-DAY MUSIC & ARTS EVENTS  
AWARD-WINNING CRAFT BREWERIES  
ON THE SIPPIN' SEVEN ALE TRAIL  
DELECTABLE DINING &  
FARM-TO-TABLE EXPERIENCES  
THOUSANDS OF FREE-FLYING BUTTERFLIES  
ACRES OF BOTANICAL GARDENS  
CRYSTAL-BLUE FRESHWATER SPRINGS  
100'S OF MILES OF TRAILS  
FREE NIGHTLY BAT SHOWS  
WORLD-CLASS MUSEUMS  
LIVE MUSIC ON DOZENS OF STAGES

INSPIRATION FOR THE GATOR NATION  
IN BEAUTIFUL GAINESVILLE & ALACHUA COUNTY



Visit  
**GAINESVILLE**  
Alachua County, FL



PLAN YOUR VISIT WITH THE AWARD-WINNING **WHAT'S GOOD**  
GUIDE OF WEEKLY EVENTS AT [VISITGAINESVILLE.COM](http://VISITGAINESVILLE.COM)



## Dangerfield Gets Some Respect (1981)

"I can't get no respect. I said to a bartender, 'Make me a zombie.' He said, 'God beat me to it.'"

Self-deprecating zingers were Rodney Dangerfield's trademark, an act he honed in the Catskills in the 1950s and '60s. The bug-eyed comic's performance in the 1986 film "Back To School" may have been inspired by the 1981 Gator Growl, where he stood onstage in a rumpled black suit and fired perfect one-liners at a record-size crowd.

**"He did more than 50 minutes of material in front of 60,000 people."**

Gregory Hardy (BS '95, MA '02)

"He did more than 50 minutes of material in front of 60,000 people," Gregory Hardy (BS '95, MA '02) tweeted when Dangerfield passed in 2021. "If that wasn't his largest, in-person live audience, I'd love to know what was."

By the end, Gators were screaming "Rod-ney, Rod-ney," and the humble 59-year-old comedian shuffled back for an encore.

"I've never experienced anything like this in my life," Dangerfield admitted to the crowd.

## Robin Williams & "Mr. Happy" (1982)

Comedian Robin Williams was a force of nature at the 1982 Growl. The 31-year-old actor was at the peak of "Mork & Mindy" fame, and the crowd's energy unleashed his improvisational brilliance, as well as a racy stream-of-consciousness.

**"I have NEVER laughed so hard in my life."**

Cindy Chytil (BS '81)

"This is great with an echo," Williams riffed. "I go, 'Ooh, wow!' I feel like I'm having an orgasm in front of 65,000 people. I feel like smoking a cigarette and asking, 'Was it good for me?'"

UF administrators and some alumni were shocked by Williams' material, including repeated references to a part of his anatomy he dubbed "Mr. Happy." The

**"The Gator Growl against which all others are measured."**

Ana Wallrapp (BA '77, MA '79)

student section, however, wasn't fazed.

"I have NEVER laughed so hard in my life," wrote Cindy Chytil (BS '81). "And since!"

"Hands down the absolute best," agreed Jane Johnson (BS '86). "Very glad I was sitting on the student side and not anywhere near my parents, who were on the alumni side."

"The Gator Growl against which all others are measured," commented Ana Wallrapp (BA '77, MA '79) on Growl's Facebook page. "So far, none have come close."

## Celebrity Cameos: "Let the Gator Growl!"

"I always liked the videos of celebs saying, 'Let the Gator growl,'" recalled Kimberly Farinas (BAE '97, MED '98).

Notables who prerecorded spots include:

- US presidents George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama
- TV hosts David Letterman, Katie Couric, Alex Trebek and Conan O'Brien
- Comedians Adam Sandler, Jason Alexander, Jonah Hill and the Wayans Brothers
- Athletes Shaquille O'Neal and Emmitt Smith
- Model Cindy Crawford
- U.S. senators John McCain and Mitt Romney

## Before They Were Famous (1987, 1988)

Growl producers had a knack for nabbing comics on the cusp of stardom. When Jay Leno headlined in 1987, he was

**"I still remember his 'hair in the shower' bit."**

Sara Prince (BS '90)

mainly known for Doritos commercials and standup on David Letterman; three years later, he replaced Johnny Carson as the host of "The Tonight Show."

In 1988, Growl producers signed a little-known New York comic as an opening act.

The name? Jerry Seinfeld.

"I still remember his 'hair in the shower' bit," wrote Sara Prince (BS '90).

"He was in awe of performing in front of a stadium full of Gators!" remembered Michele Brodsky (BS '89).

Nine months later, "Seinfeld" — "a

**"He was in awe of performing in front of a stadium full of Gators!"**

Michele Brodsky (BS '89)

show about nothing" — debuted on NBC.

## Everybody Hates Raymond (1998)

The Growl audience was tough, and it didn't hold back when four comedians shared the stage in 1998. Dave Chappelle, Carlos Mencia and Larry the Cable Guy kept the fans happy, but the biggest star, Ray Romano, prompted massive booing with talk of his kids.

"He was absolutely terrible, and his material was, at best, for the 'other side of the stadium,'" wrote Matt Lawson (BS '00).

"I wanna say he had a photo slide show

**"He was absolutely terrible, and his material was, at best, for the 'other side of the stadium.'"**

Matt Lawson (BS '00)

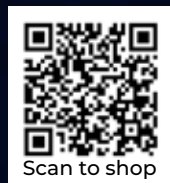
of his twins or something?" added Erin Bearss (BA '00).

"I remember people filing out of the stadium," wrote Karen Dieter (BA '98, MEd '99). "Think we left and went to the [Purple] Porpoise."

Even Romano is haunted by his disastrous Growl performance. When the New York Times asked him in 2017 to name his single worst night of standup, he responded:

"There was one, after 'Everybody Loves Raymond' had been on for a year, out at the University of Florida's Gator Growl. It's in the stadium, like, 30,000 people, Dave Chappelle, Larry the Cable Guy and me. Five minutes in, I heard a woman yell out, 'You better start getting funny.'"

# *new gear* FOR GATOR GRADS



Scan to shop



BOOKSTORE

UFloridaShop.com

# SHOW YOUR GATOR PRIDE



[herff.ly/uf](http://herff.ly/uf)

HERFF  JONES

**UF** BOOKSTORES  
[www.ufl.bkstr.com](http://www.ufl.bkstr.com)  
Museum Road & Reitz Union Drive  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA





The women of Alpha Chi Omega, top, perform a skit at Gator Growl in 1949. Bottom, Growl packs Ben Hill Griffin Stadium in 2007 in this Gainesville Sun photo.

## The Highs & Lows of “America’s Dad” (1984, 2002)

Bill Cosby doesn’t have much to laugh about these days, after serving three years in a federal prison for drugging and sexually assaulting women.

But in 1984, “America’s Dad” was revered for his warm, home-grown humor.

“[Cosby] has a mainstream brand of

**“The best from my time at UF was Bill Cosby.”**

Valerie Hofferica Reeves (BA ’85)

humor that will please everybody,” Growl producer Jeff Sandler (BA ’80, JD ’84) told the Alligator in October 1984. “His comedy will be for adults. But it certainly won’t be dirty or offensive.”

To this day, many Gators cite his two performances, in 1984 and 2002, as peak Growl.

“The best from my time at UF was Bill

Cosby,” wrote Valerie Hofferica Reeves (BA ’85).

“He was hilarious,” commented Nini DeBraganza Peterson (BS ’01, MS ’04, PHD ’10) about Cosby’s sold-out second appearance in 2002.

## Sister Hazel (1997, 2013)

Homegrown alternative rock band Sister Hazel is remembered with special fondness by Gators.

In 1997, despite a busy tour schedule after their hit single, “All for You,” lead vocalist Drew Copeland (BS ’95) and his bandmates could not resist performing at Growl, and even pulled perhaps the biggest prank in Growl history.

“I remember sitting in the stands, and a video was being played suggesting Sister Hazel couldn’t attend,” wrote Deandra Wilcox. “Then the curtains opened, and it was Sister Hazel!! The crowd was so loud, cheering for their appearance! So much love.”

“I was there!” wrote David Bilu (BS ’04). “I still get goosebumps thinking about the entire crowd singing the breakdown part of the song [‘All for You’].”

Copeland gets choked up looking back on that evening.

**“I was there! I still get goosebumps thinking about the entire crowd singing the breakdown part of the song [‘All for You’].”**

David Bilu (BS ’04)

“My parents (God rest their souls) still lived in the house I grew up in and said they could hear the entire stadium singing our songs back to us,” he wrote. “This is what Gator Growl used to be like. It was awesome.”





# GLOBETROTTER

**Seven marathons. Seven continents. Seven days. Seven wins.  
One unbelievable week for Gator David Kilgore.**

Kilgore (BS '15), an ultrarunner sponsored by Red Bull and On Running, sprinted across the planet Jan. 31-Feb. 6 for the 2023 World Marathon Challenge. The whirlwind journey took him and 34 other runners to Antarctica, South Africa, Australia, Dubai, Spain, Brazil and Miami in a dizzying 168 hours — and with a 26.2-mile race at each stop.

In the end, Kilgore, 31, was crowned the ultimate marathon man, winning all seven.

"I'm a bit beat up from the magnitude of climates, miles and broken-up sleep, but it's nothing I haven't faced before," he told Outside magazine afterward. "Events like this make me fall in love with the sport all over again."





## KILGORE'S RACE TIMES

---

<b>DAY 1:</b> Novo, Antarctica	<b>(3:23:17)</b>
<b>DAY 2:</b> Cape Town, South Africa	<b>(2:58:15)</b>
<b>DAY 3:</b> Perth, Western Australia	<b>(2:55:07)</b>
<b>DAY 4:</b> Dubai, UAE	<b>(2:52:05)</b>
<b>DAY 5:</b> Madrid, Spain	<b>(2:44:27)</b>
<b>DAY 6:</b> Fortaleza, Brazil	<b>(2:56:59)</b>
<b>DAY 7:</b> Miami	<b>(2:41:50)</b>

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID KILGORE

# Cats are good business for the Cat Lady

Subscription boxes for cats and cat lovers? Well, yes, and business is booming. You can buy one box or subscribe to get one every month. **They're PURRRfect.**

By Cindy Spence (BS '82, MA '17)

Dorian Wagner (BS '02) listened intently to the Gator100 countdown, especially as the list hit 50. She had placed 48th on the list of the fastest growing Gator-owned businesses last year and was eager to see if she maintained that spot in 2023.

"It was bananas. I thought 'cool, we're in the top half.' When they passed 48, I'm like, 'yay, we beat last year.' Then they finished the 40s and hit the 30s and now people are looking at me and asking, 'what was your business again?' It was just hilarious," Wagner says.

At the No. 30 spot, CatLadyBox climbed 18 places, a tribute both to Wagner's business model and cat lovers everywhere.

"I think people see the name and they think I'm packing boxes out of my house," Wagner says.

In fact, CatLadyBox manufactures and tests all its products, which don't begin to fit in Wagner's dining room. Cat lovers can sign up to get a box every month, filled with cat-themed goodies and treats for their fur babies.

Since her first cat, Cinnamon, at the age of about 7, Wagner has always had a cat, except for a year in the dorm in Jennings Hall. When she moved into an apartment her sophomore year, she and her three roommates couldn't resist getting a kitten despite a no-pets policy.

"This was back when you would use the classifieds for free kittens, in the actual newspaper. We met some lady on a corner on 13th Street and she gave us a kitten out of a cardboard box," Wagner says. "We named him Pimp. We were four girls, and he was the only guy."

Before long, they got a notice on the door: The cat goes in seven days, or you do.

Wagner went.

"It was very clear that this was going to be my cat, so I moved out," she says. "I continued to pay rent, but I also got a one-bedroom apartment, so there I was in college, paying two rents and bartending at Chili's so I could keep the cat (in photo, above right)."



## Q&A

### Was he worth it?

He stayed with me through my entire adult life. He almost made it to 21. He just passed two years ago.

### You've had a number of cats. Was Pimp your favorite?

Pimp was definitely my heart cat, just the best cat. He was awesome.

### When did cats become your business?

I started a blog, and called it Your Daily Cute. Every Tuesday I wrote about my cats, Pimp and Moo, so everyone got to know my cats and me.

### How did you get involved in rescues?

One day, I posted a picture of a super cute cat at our shelter in Broward County. His name was Chalse. Somebody said she would adopt him, but she was in Illinois. If keeping the cat alive

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DORIAN WAGNER



**GATOR100 2023**

THE WORLD'S FASTEST-GROWING GATOR BUSINESSES

**CatLadyBox #30**



meant getting him to Illinois, I thought “we’ve got to get this cat to Illinois.” ... I posted on my blog, and people started signing up for [two-hour relay] legs. I called it the Cute Transport Network. We got Chalse to Illinois and actually picked up another cat, Wendy, along the way in Georgia from another shelter. The whole time I had chills. Everyone was sharing pictures when they had the cat. At the end, we got a picture of this adorable older couple, each one holding a cat carrier with these cats we saved. I thought, “oh my gosh, let’s do it again.”

**Along with rescues, you used to do a toy drive for cats. How’d that work?**

I called it Santa Paws Drive to get toys for shelter cats. People could purchase toys from our website; we would order them wholesale and get them to six different rescues for the holidays. That was freaking awesome.

**You also worked with shelters outside of Florida. Why?**

Rescues up North are not as overrun with kittens. Here, kittens are a constant cycle, so we don’t have enough adopters. Northern groups would go to our shelter websites, essentially “shopping” for kittens for us to transport to them. We were

saving multiple litters of kittens and moms and sending them to Illinois, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Wisconsin. We ended up saving over 450 cats that probably would’ve died.

**Sounds like a lot of work outside your job?**

This was in my free time, a total labor of love. In my day job, I start to notice that subscription businesses are becoming popular. There was a shoe club called ShoeDazzle and a few ladies and I at the office subscribed, and we would compare our shoes when they arrived.

**How did CatLadyBox come to be?**

The idea just popped into my head. I went to a few friends in my community of cat lovers and did a sanity check. I told them, ‘I have this idea, it’s either crazy or genius. Either nobody wants this, or everybody needs it right now.’ When I launched, I announced it to my blog readers.

**What happened to your day job?**

I quit before we shipped one box. ... I didn’t have anybody depending on me except my cats, so I was in a position to make that leap.

**Is the term “cat lady” pejorative?**

I used to think about trying to kick the stereotype to the curb. But if you’re a cat lady, you’re proud of

it. For the majority of cat people, “cat lady” isn’t a bad thing, it’s a good thing. It’s who we are. We totally own it. We celebrate it.

**Why are you still active with shelters and rescues?**

It’s super important to me. We have CatLadyBox Cares, we sponsor the free-roaming cat adoption room at Good Karma Pet Rescue and a 5K called Running for Rescues. We also do a spay and neuter campaign. Our theme for the April box was “Feral and Fabulous,” and all our donations that month went to organizations that assist people who care for community cats. When you think of CatLadyBox, I want people to know we’re doing good and we have good stuff.

**Do you still have cats?**

I have two, Moo and Phantom. Phantom was a foster fail. He was supposed to go to another person and that fell through. I said, “you live here because you are awesome and there’s no way I can let you go.” He’s probably my other heart cat. Moo just showed up at my door, like cats do. Literally no one says I want another cat. Cats just happen, and we love them.



2023  
GATOR  
100  
CLASS  
FACTS

77

Florida  
companies

13

UF colleges  
represented

36

Gator leaders hold  
two or more degrees  
from UF

2006

Most represented  
graduating class

46

First-time  
honorees



GATOR 100 2023

T O P T E N



#2 Pulse Clinical Alliance

#3 Bearbottom Clothing

#4 Aceapplications

#5 Slice Engineering

#6 Pacifica Engineering Services

#7 Bintelli

#8 The Intuition Consulting Firm

#9 Biggs Construction Co. Inc

#10 Spark Inc

The UF Alumni Association recognizes the 100 fastest-growing Gator businesses each year, with generous support from presenting sponsor Wells Fargo. The deadline to apply for the 2024 class is Oct. 28.

WELLS  
FARGO



#1

**Q:** Gators QB Anthony Richardson was taken fourth in the NFL draft by the Indianapolis Colts. Which Gator is UF's highest draft pick ever?

**A:** Paul Duhart earned his varsity letter in 1942, then entered the Army in 1943. The Gators disbanded that year — nearly all the players were drafted or enlisted in the Army for World War II — so Duhart needed a special ruling by the NFL to enter the 1944 draft, where he was picked second. UF has had five players picked third, including Steve Spurrier, who went to the San Francisco 49ers in 1966.



Paul Duhart

#2

**Q:** Shortstop Skylar Wallace broke the UF softball record for highest single season batting average. Whose record did she break?

**A:** Michelle Moultrie, who hit .443 in 2011.



Michelle Moultrie

#3

**Q:** Gator men's golf won both the individual and team national championship this year. When did they previously achieve this and who was the individual champion?

**A:** Gator men's golf previously won both the individual and team national championships in 2001, led by Nick Gilliam.

#4

**Q:** UF's Guest Mr. Two Bits tradition celebrates 10 years this fall. Among the Gators to do the honors were Cris Collinsworth, Danny Wuerffel, Dara Torres, Chandler Parsons and Bridget Sloan. Who was the first?

**A:** Errict Rhett in 2013.



Errict Rhett

#5

**Q:** What record makes Trinity Thomas the most "perfect" Gators gymnast ever?

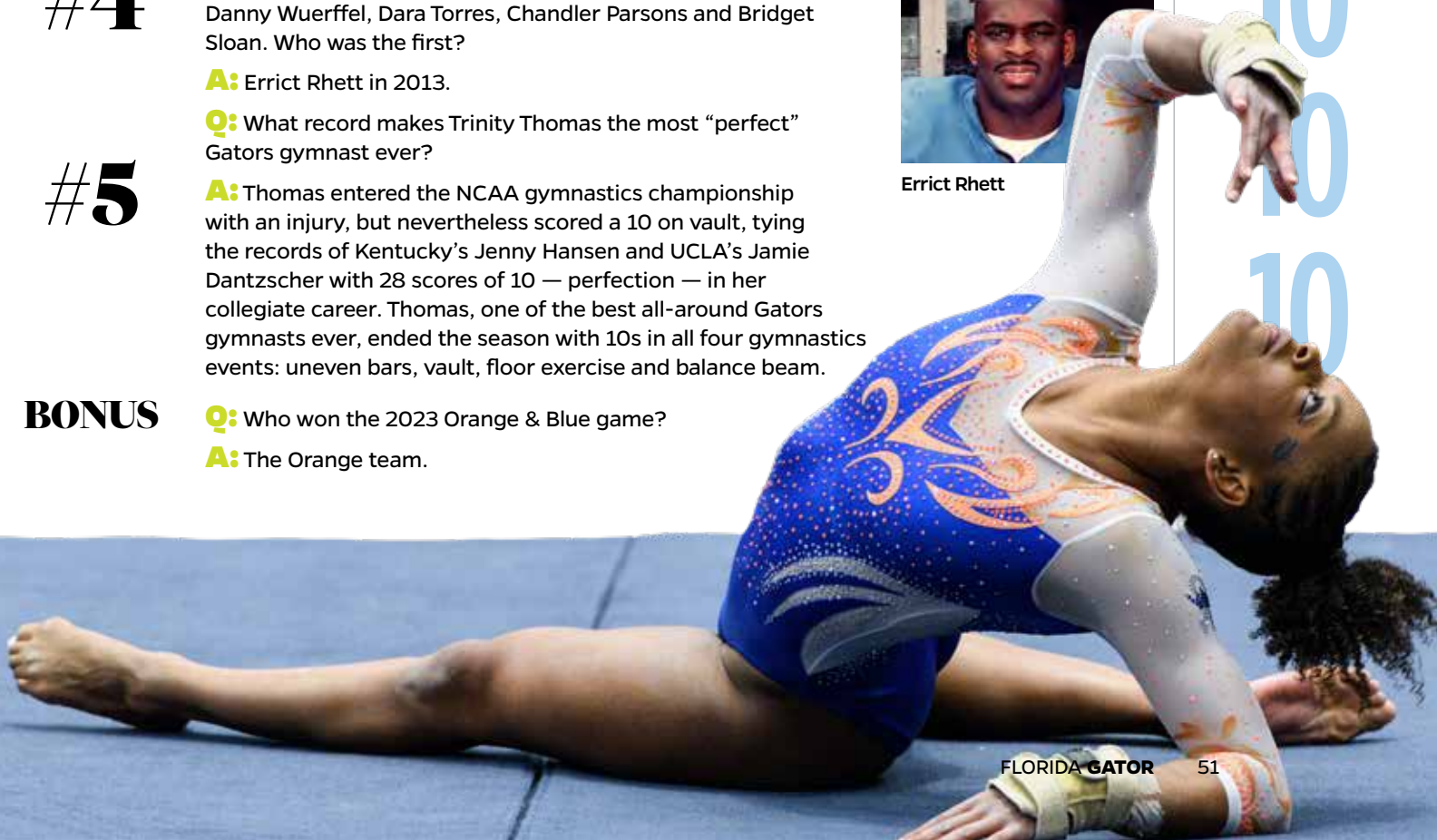
**A:** Thomas entered the NCAA gymnastics championship with an injury, but nevertheless scored a 10 on vault, tying the records of Kentucky's Jenny Hansen and UCLA's Jamie Dantzscher with 28 scores of 10 — perfection — in her collegiate career. Thomas, one of the best all-around Gators gymnasts ever, ended the season with 10s in all four gymnastics events: uneven bars, vault, floor exercise and balance beam.

## BONUS

**Q:** Who won the 2023 Orange & Blue game?

**A:** The Orange team.

HBC

10  
10  
10

## The Gator Nation is everywhere.

Once a year, the Alumni Volunteer Leadership Conference brings members back to Gainesville to connect, collaborate and celebrate the spirit of the Gator Nation. Thirty-seven Gator Clubs® and nine affiliates were represented, including the newest clubs, the Southern Crescent Gator Club® from the Atlanta Metroplex and the Northwest Arkansas Gator Club®.

**Gary Manton**  
Desert Gator Club  
Phoenix

**Rodney White**  
Gateway Gator Club  
St. Louis



**Brian Habing**  
Southern California  
Gator Club



**Gina Wansour**  
Sacramento  
Gator Club

**Megan Harrison**  
Emerald Coast  
Gator Club





**Anita Maharaj**  
Windy City Gator Club  
Chicago

**Ray Palisoc**  
Music City Gator Club  
Nashville

**Liz Levine**  
Gotham Gator Club  
New York

**Dennis Kelleher**  
Space Coast  
Gator Club

**Kendra Williams**  
Broward  
Gator Club

**Ryan Chase**  
Sarasota  
Gator Club

**There are 79 Gator Clubs® around the world.** Membership is open to all alumni, parents, friends and students of the University of Florida. Alumni Association members are automatically members. There are no additional dues to pay. *Find a club near you by going to* [uff.to/k28n8w](http://uff.to/k28n8w)

PHOTOS BY JONAH SCHWAB

# 40 Gators Under 40

From foster-care silence to speaking up for others.

by Barbara Drake (MFA '04)

Photo by Aaron Daye



Onchantho Am's career as an attorney was inspired by childhood challenges. The family portrait, above, was taken at their home in Clearwater. Am is on the far left.

Attorney Onchantho Am (BA '08) had little say over the circumstances of her childhood. After fleeing the Khmer Rouge, her Cambodian parents met at a refugee camp and later emigrated to a housing project in Clearwater. They hoped for a better life for their children, but the traumatized couple struggled with culture shock before succumbing to joblessness and alcoholism. At age 15, Am and two younger siblings were removed from their parents and ultimately placed in separate foster homes.

For two years, they were kept apart, even on holidays.

Finally, Am — an honor-roll student despite her tumultuous home life — skipped school one morning to attend a court hearing. With a beating heart, she stood before the judge and told him she and her siblings should be reunited under one foster roof. Moved by the children's plight, the judge granted her request.

"It was my first time being heard," she said in a recent interview. "I was about to age out of the foster system myself, but I wanted to give them a foundation and successfully unite them."

"When I walked out of there that day, I felt like a weight had been lifted off of me," she added.

Realizing she could be a voice for change, Am boldly

charted a new life's course.

With the help of a mentor, Am became the first member of her family to attend college. As an undergraduate, she provided guidance to lawmakers on Florida systems and services for older and former foster youth, helping to shape new state laws on child welfare. In 2011, she earned a law degree from Stetson University.

Her achievements contrast with those of most foster-care youth: Only about 46% graduate from high school, and just 3-4% earn four-year degrees.

Today, Am persuasively advocates for the safety and wellbeing of children, adults and their communities and serves as associate general counsel at the University of Central Florida's College of Medicine.

In April 2023, Am had the pleasure of returning to the Gainesville campus with her husband and three daughters to accept the 40 Gators Under 40 Award from the UF Alumni Association, of which she is a proud life member.

"I'm humbled and honored; this recognition means so much," Am said. "To be back on Gator soil, receiving this award, with my entire family supporting me, is the most amazing experience."



Read more online about the entire class of 2023 UF 40 Under 40 honorees at [uff.to/8gqkge](http://uff.to/8gqkge)



# Make Room for Barbie!

Barbie Pressly Tilman dishes on her leadership role models, balancing parenthood and service to UF, and a life-changing encounter at a Florida-Georgia watch party.

By Barbara Drake (MFA '04)

Hey, Gator Nation. There's a new Barbie in town.

No, not the new movie. We're referring to warm and personable Barbie Pressly Tilman (BS '00), the new University of Florida Alumni Association president as of July 1.

The longtime Tampa resident has served on UFAA's board of directors since 2012 and was honored, along with her extended family, with a Lifetime Volunteers Award in early 2023. Still, she says taking over for previous UFAA president James E. Gadsby (BSBA '91) is a whole new level of engagement.

"James has just been an exceptional leader," she said. "His philosophy is to lead with love, and I'm so inspired by that and by the other UFAA presidents, like Mark Criser [BA '92, MA '94, JD '97] and Brian Burgoon [BA '94, JD '97], who've come before me."

As a student at UF's College of Health and Human Performance in the 1990s, Barbie majored in event planning and played intramural tennis (she comes from a family of SEC and national collegiate

champions). She also belonged to Florida Blue Key, Savant and Delta Delta Delta sorority and served as a Florida Cicerone, among other roles.

Degree in hand, she ran her own wedding planning business for years before turning her attention to raising three daughters with husband Matt Tilman (BSEE '97, MBA '05), whom she met at a Florida-Georgia watch party in 2007.

Barbie's family connection to UF started in 1915 with the graduation of ancestor Uriel Blount. For more on Barbie and the Pressly family, please see the links at right.

**TOP** Barbie Pressly Tilman says that as the UFAA's new president, she looks forward to connecting alumni with the university and helping them grow their personal and professional networks.

**ABOVE** New UFAA Board members, left to right, Craig Thompson, Andrea Pelt-Thornton, Ann Alsina, Cristina Cabrera, Christina Criser Jackson, Isabella Montoya.



Photos by Aaron Daye



 For excerpts from a Q&A with Tilman, please visit: [uff.to/pgk32s](http://uff.to/pgk32s)

 For a story on the Pressly family's century-plus connection to UF, please visit: [uff.to/r9m197](http://uff.to/r9m197)

# alumni notes



 Does your Gator Club® celebrate the season (football season, that is) with our SEC partners? Send us photos at [floridagator@ufalumni.ufl.edu](mailto:floridagator@ufalumni.ufl.edu).

## Florida-Georgia, Gateway Style

The Florida-Georgia game is Oct. 28

In Jacksonville, Gators and Bulldogs get along well enough to share tailgating territory around the stadium for the Florida-Georgia game.

But even away from that epicenter of football, you can sometimes find Gators and Bulldogs getting together for some good-natured rivalry revelry.

Rodney White (BS '85) of the Gateway Gator Club

says local Gators and Bulldogs gather for a joint watch party at Ballpark Village at Bally Sports Live every year. White says he's holding out hope for more wins to come (us, too), but mimicking the atmosphere of the game in Jacksonville with his Bulldog neighbors is still fun.

The Gateway Gator Club likes its football, and busses to Missouri every other year to catch a nearby Gator game. And the club also gathers with other SEC alumni clubs. Like the ads say, football and the SEC just go together.

## Juan Vitali Appointed to White House Post

Juan Vitali (BS '84, ME '87, PHD '92) has been appointed the assistant director for nuclear energy innovation at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Vitali, a leader in clean energy technologies and conservation, will be an adviser on energy-related issues.

Vitali moves to the White House from the Pentagon, where he was chief of the Army Nuclear Power Branch within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

At the Air Force Research Laboratory, Vitali helped find alternatives to the use of halons, eliminating one source of damage to the ozone layer. Within the Pentagon,

Vitali focused on development of advanced nuclear reactors and technologies to address key challenges facing the nuclear industry, such as safety, waste management and proliferation. Vitali has worked on development of so-called "small modular reactors" that are safer and more flexible than traditional nuclear reactors.

At UF, Vitali researched plasma physics, radiation technologies and reactor engineering and cofounded the Alpha Chapter of Alpha Epsilon Lambda, the honor society of graduate and professional school students. He also served as a founding officer of the UF



Graduate Student Council along with Debbie Wasserman Schultz, a U.S. representative from Florida.





## UF Alum is World Multisport Legend

May-li Cuypers (DVM '92) won the title of World Multisport Legend on the Island of Ibiza, Spain, in May.

Multisport legend is the title earned by any athlete who qualifies at the national level, then races and completes five or more World Championship races at the Multisport World Championships. Events include duathlon sprint, duathlon standard, cross duathlon, cross triathlon, aquathlon, long distance triathlon or aquabike. Previously, athletes had to complete four events, but starting 2023, athletes must complete five or more races.

Cuypers emerged from a pool of over 4,000 athletes from 61 nations. She was one of only 15 athletes who raced and completed five or more events and completed the duathlon sprint, the

aquathlon, the cross duathlon, the cross triathlon and the long distance aquabike. She was one of only two females and the only US athlete to earn the title.

"I like the fact they added one event, because you can now get this title only if you race one of the cross events," Cuypers said. "I think that this embodies the idea of a Multisport Legend, someone who can go short, who can go long, and who can handle the off-road."

"I challenge any athlete to get out of their comfort zone, to try a new adventure, a new discipline," Cuypers said. "It will open your horizons, and you might be surprised at how well it suits you."



## Warm Welcome for New Gators

Hostess Cathy Riley (JD '98) welcomed about 60 families of current and incoming UF students in May at a Parent & Family Philanthropy Council event in her Winter Park home. Council members Julie (BS '92) and Rob Simon (BA '92) told the guests about their decision to support the Hitchcock Field and Fork Pantry and how families can make a real impact in the lives of all UF students. The Simons said a trip to the pantry opened their eyes to food insecurity and the role of the pantry in easing it for the UF community. Bobby and Sophia Simon, a rising sophomore and rising senior, and Conner Riley, a rising sophomore mingled with the incoming students and talked about their UF experiences.

To learn more about the council, please visit [uff.to/1nzdt3](http://uff.to/1nzdt3)

## Band Alumni Anniversaries

The Gator Band Alumni Association is celebrating two milestones this fall.

The large bass drum known as Big Boom will celebrate 70 years of performing with the Pride of the Sunshine. The drum was a gift to the university by a donor who wanted a giant drum, but it had to be mobile. David Snedeker (BA '72) is the caretaker, and he gets up at 6 a.m. on gamedays to show off the drum as it rolls through tailgates on its way to the stadium.

The Gator Alumni Band is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its first official performance on Florida Field in 1973, when only a few turned out. Today, band alums turn out in droves to take the field like old times.

The GBAA reunion is in October. You can support the David Snedeker Big Boom Drum Line Scholarship here:

[Ufgive.to/bkezhz](http://Ufgive.to/bkezhz)



# new alums

## A Gator nursing legacy

To the Bertulfo family's three Gator grads, the UF College of Nursing is a second home.

Tara Fernandez Bertulfo (BS '92, MS '96) has fond memories of meeting her husband Joseph (BS '93) not too far from the college, when they worked at the Shands Labor and Delivery unit after graduation.



Now, 30 years later, the pair watched daughter Jillian graduate from their alma mater.

For Jillian Bertulfo (BS '23), the path to becoming a Gator Nurse was paved by her parents. "I always knew I wanted to be a nurse, but more specifically, I wanted to be a Gator Nurse."

During school, she discovered that professors remembered her

family and some of her own professors graduated with her parents.

"It was surreal to see them recognized, which showed me just how much they have achieved and the impact that they have made," Jillian said.

The Bertulfos are among the college's strongest supporters, joining the College of Nursing Alumni Council and mentoring students.

The Bertulfos are leaders in nursing practice and scholarship. Tara is a clinical associate professor at Mercer University and Joseph is director of the Occupational Health and Safety Office at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Jillian plans to start her career at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

"Jillian has grown so much in her knowledge and skills, and it is so much fun to talk with her as a new colleague about health care topics," Tara says.

**- KYLE CHAMBERS**

## An EduGator alum 43 years in the making

David Byrd Yeaman originally planned to graduate in 1980. In May, he finally did, getting a BA with highest honors from the UF College of Education.

During his first years at UF, Yeaman grew frustrated and moved on to a career in insurance with his father. He recalls feeling self-conscious about leaving and never mentioned it until about three years ago, when one of his children asked him what year he graduated. He explained that he never did.

"That moment stands out in my mind," he stated.

Forty-three years later, he decided to finish his bachelor's degree, thanks to online classes. Worried that he might not succeed, he kept his readmission a secret. But two semesters into classes, his wife saw an email from a fellow student working on a project with her husband on his computer.

"Talk about a blown cover," Yeaman stated.

Yeaman says he felt inspired watching the talent of his largely Gen Z classmates. Wife Jennifer said his work ethic earned him straight A's.

Although always a Gators fan, Jennifer says "he's a real, true, dyed-in-the-wool Gator now."







## Online MAB program suits nursery owner

Second-generation nursery grower Erik Tietig (BA '98, MAB '23) grew up working alongside his mother, Colleen Boggs, who founded Pine Island Nursery in 1972.

When he decided on graduate school, he needed an online option, and he found it in the UF Master of Agribusiness degree. The professional master's program was designed for students like Tietig to provide skills in finance, management, marketing and economic theory, and Tietig said it was a great way to begin the next 50 years at the nursery with new skills. Tietig is president of the nursery and co-owner of Miracle Fruit Farms with his brother.

In addition to classes, students complete a capstone project, and for his, Tietig worked with UF/IFAS Extension on a study of the agricultural sector in Miami-Dade County. He said it aligned perfectly with his coursework.

"Much of what I was learning in my classes was plug-and-play right into the farms," Tietig said. "What I learned in the MAB program will fundamentally change how the farms are managed. It already has in many ways."

**- ALENA POULIN**



## Double-Cross

How many Gator Greats can say they had two children graduate from UF in a matter of six months? Dan Cross, one of the most decorated players in Florida basketball history, can.

Cross, a two-time first-team All-Southeastern Conference point guard, guided the program to its first Final Four in 1994 and eventually graduated with a telecommunications degree.

"UF was the best four years of my life," said Cross, now 49 and living in Orlando.

Now his son and daughter can say the same thing. In May, Rachel Cross received her degree in Health Science, just six months after Daniel Cross Jr., a walk-on wide receiver for the Florida football team, received his degree in journalism.

"Just very thankful and grateful for the opportunity that the University of Florida has provided to my family. It's been the ultimate experience of a lifetime! Go Gators!" Cross said.

Daniel, entering his final season with the football squad, is enrolled in the UF sports management master's program, while Rachel is headed for law school at Florida International University.

**- CHRIS HARRY**



 New alums — all 10,000+ — can join the UF Alumni Association by going to [uff.to/whg7g7](http://uff.to/whg7g7)

# International Gator Day

From coast to coast, Gators turned out on International Gator Day in May to lend a hand in their communities.



▲ Chris Schmidt and Kristina Dellone Schmidt helped the **Rocky Mountain Gator Club** plant trees in Cheesman Park for Denver Parks & Recreation.



▲ The **Panhandle Gator Club** distributed food at Grace Presbyterian Church with help from, left to right: Pat Varner, Donna Cronwell, Kyle Albritton, Linne Morgan, Kathryn and Everly Gaye, Sara Green, Mike Varner. Brenda Dye and Susan West.

▼ The **Martin County Gator Club** raised money for a diaper bank for families of newborns. Left to right are: Aubrey Campbell, Jessica Tharp, Treasurer Steve Swindler, President Ilona Scully, John Carrigan, Ashley Calderone, Randy Pennington and Sheena Thomas.



▲ The **Sarasota Gator Club** partnered with the Miracle League of Manasota, a baseball league for adults and children with disabilities. Here, Athletic Vice President Jennifer Grosso cheers on her buddy as she scores at home plate.





◀ The beneficiaries of the **Desert Gator Club's** handiwork were the animals at the Phoenix Herpetological Society. The club built planters and walls and helped clean up the pens for capybaras, tortoises and, yes, alligators.



◀ The **DC Gators** prepared lunch for the families at a local Ronald McDonald House.



▲ ▲ The **Gator Club of Historic St. Augustine** turned out for a sunny day of beach cleanup.

▲ The **Sacramento Gator Club** did a notecard drive to provide residents of a senior community with cheerful messages.



▲ The **Association of Black Alumni** turned out for a park cleanup at Reverend Samuel Delevoe Memorial Park in Fort Lauderdale.

 To find a Gator Club® near you, please visit: [uff.to/ajcydp](http://uff.to/ajcydp)

# Gators Gettin' Global

Reader-submitted photos from around the world.

Compiled by Julia Bauer (BS '23)

## Antarctica

**John Skiratko, Randy Loos (BS '77), Jolene Loos and Karen Roberts Skiratko (BS '75, MA '76),** left to right, trekked to Antarctica.



## Egypt

**Maj. Richard Bustamante (MBA '20)** traveled from Destin to roam the deserts of Egypt.



## Groton, Connecticut

**J.N. "Jack" Breed (BS '82)**, an adjunct professor of geomatics, was on the dock in Groton, Connecticut, to welcome home son PO3 Luke Breed and the USS South Dakota from deployment around the globe. Go Navy! Go Gators!





## ◀ Palace La Alhambra

PA-C Physician Assistant **Armando Montana** (BS '93) celebrated his retirement by visiting Palace La Alhambra and traveling throughout Spain.

## ▼ Tanzania

**Todd Leedy** (PHD '00), the associate director of UF's Center for African Studies, traveled to Tanzania with this group of Gator alumni and stood on the rim of Ngorongoro Crater. From left to right: **Todd Leedy** (PHD '00), **Cheryl Banack Roseland** (BA '77), **Brad Wynalek**, **Schuyler Roseland Wynalek** (BS '15), **Nicholas Roseland**, **Elizabeth Gregg Santana** (BS '07), **Scott Hawkins** (BS '80), **Lisa Hawkins** (BA '75, MED '84).



**THE GATOR  
NATION IS  
EVERYWHERE**

Please send  
your photos and  
captions to

**FloridaGator@  
ufalumni.ufl.  
edu.**

Include names  
left to right,  
degree and year,  
hometown,  
and something  
interesting that  
happened on  
your travels.

Or, share online

**@ufalumni  
#gatortravel**



## Iceland

The **Lackner** family hiked 4 miles to Iceland's latest volcano. From left to right: **Cata**, **Katelyn**, **Bella** and **Drew Lackner** (BS '99).



## Stonehenge

The **Altieri** family chomped their way across Southern England, stopping in Stonehenge. From left to right: **Anthony Altieri** (EDD '14), **Stephanie Jackson Altieri**, **Kyle Altieri** and **Amelia Altieri**.



# Pet Portraits

Our furry, feathery and scaly members of the Gator Nation.

Compiled by Julia Bauer (BS '23)



▲ **Scooter** the 2-year-old red-footed tortoise will be able to cheer the Gators for decades to come if she lives a normal tortoise life of 90 years. Her owner, **Cassidy Hudson** (CALS4), said Scooter could grow to over a foot long, double her current size. Hudson's love of tortoises inspired her to major in environmental science at UF, and she brought Scooter to school with her from Tampa in 2021. Scooter's favorite sweet treat is blueberries.

► **Archie** is a rowdy reptile who dressed the part, thanks to UF alumnus **Elizabeth Tobener** (BA '15), an audiologist from Melrose.







◀ **Garfield** is a 33-year-old Congo African Grey parrot who loves playing with his toy Gators helmet. He and his owner, **Ryan Mackman** (BS '03), live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

▶ **Judi Aronson Patrick** (BS '83) and **Berry Patrick** (BS '82) met at UF in 1981. They live in Colonial Beach, Virginia, with their dogs, **Josie** the Cavapoo, and **Jessie** the Havapoo, half-sisters who share the same Poodle dad. Their family includes 10 Gator alumni.

▼ **Bella** loves her Gator toy. Her Mom and Dad, **Dick Monroe** (BS '67, MA '68) and **Lorene Monroe**, live in Windermere, and their favorite time of year is Gator football season.

▼ Nine-year-old **Chea** and 4-year-old **Brody** are a dynamic Aussie duo who love to tailgate. They live in Durham, North Carolina, with **Jason Damiani** (BS '12), a senior data engineer at Barstool Sports, and **Jessica Damiani** (BSA 2010, BSN 2012), a surgical oncology nurse practitioner.



#### GATOR PETS PRIDE

To have your pet featured, send photos of your furry, feathery and scaly friends (pet portraits only please, no humans) to:

**FloridaGator@ufalumni.ufl.edu**

*Include your name, occupation, town and your pet's name, along with a sentence or two about your pet.*

Or, share online

**@ufalumni**  
**#gatorpets**



◀ This trio loves Gator bandanas. Nine-year-old **Maverick** lives in Tampa with his owners, **Scott Leslie** (BS '85) and **Dara Leslie** (BS '86). The puppy in the middle, **Albert**, lives in Atlanta, Georgia, with **Carter Leslie** (BS '18, MSBA '19) and **Sydney Leslie** (BS '18). Two-year-old **Spurrier** also lives in Atlanta with **Sean Gilmore** (BSBA 2015, MSBA 2016) and **Lauren Leslie Gilmore** (BS '18, MA '18).

# In Memoriam



## Louise Courtelis

Louise Courtelis, a longtime supporter of the UF College of Veterinary Medicine whose contributions in the late 1980s and early 1990s, along with those of her late husband, Alec, were directly responsible for the successful completion of key facilities projects at the college, passed away at her home in Kentucky on March 30.

The Alec P. and Louise H. Courtelis Equine Teaching Hospital at UF, which opened in 1994, was named in honor of the couple, whose involvement in college life was notable during a difficult period in the 1980s marked by regulation and accreditation challenges as well as sick building syndrome.

Born on a dairy farm in Corfu, New York, Louise Courtelis, née Hufstader, studied at the University of Miami, where she received a bachelor's degree in education. It was there that she met her future husband, Alec Courtelis, a successful real estate developer. In 1970, the Courtelises founded Town and Country Farms in McIntosh, Florida, which they subsequently built into the largest Arabian horse-racing facility in the United States.

When the college faced regulation and accreditation problems in the 1980s — relating to a lack of adequate space to accommodate teaching and patient care needs, along with the problem of sick building syndrome, a



## Murray Dubbin

Murray Dubbin (BA '49, JD '51), a member of a pioneering Jewish family in Miami and a Florida legislator for 12 years, died Oct. 5, 2022. He was 93.

Dubbin was elected to the state Legislature in 1963, one of the first two Jewish legislators, and became freshman legislator of the year. He chaired the 1968 Constitutional Revision Commission and was a key figure in the creation of Florida

International University. FIU now houses the Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU, which grew out of the Florida Jewish History Mosaic Project, in which Dubbin and his wife Helene were instrumental.

Son Sam Dubbin said his father's one sorrow as a legislator was the state's failure to pass the Equal Rights Amendment.

Dubbin met his wife at UF in 1950, and they married after her

sophomore year. She later finished her studies at FIU. Dubbin's father, Albert, was active in UF's Tau Epsilon Phi fraternity as TEP No. 7, and Murray Dubbin followed in his footsteps as TEP No. 48. They were the first father-son TEP legacy.



term used to describe building-related sickness relating to ventilation problems — the Courtelises, early advocates of expanded equine treatment facilities at UF, stepped up.

Louise Courtelis used her impressive managerial talents to bring a statewide focus of philanthropic support to bear on the problem. In 1987, she volunteered to chair the college's advisory council, leading the college through the development of a strategic plan and an aggressive fundraising program. This program resulted in more than \$1.75 million for the Alec P. and Louise H. Courtelis Equine Teaching Hospital, which opened in 1994, and \$2.9 million for the college's Veterinary Academic Building, which opened in 1996.

She was personally responsible for the extraordinary success of the 1991 and 1992 Florida Derby Galas — fundraising dinner-dances that were among the most successful events by a public university in Florida at the time, bringing in \$750,000 in private funds for the college. She also led the college's major gifts committee in UF's first capital campaign, which raised \$10.4 million for the UF College of Veterinary Medicine. In 1993, she received UF's Distinguished Achievement Award in recognition of her contributions and accomplishments on behalf of veterinary medicine, education and UF.

Part of the Courtelises' lasting legacy on Florida education was their joint effort to create the Alec P. Courtelis Facilities Enhancement Challenge Grant Program, which provides state matching funds for private gifts made in support of campus construction projects. The projects the couple helped bring to fruition at the college benefited from this program at a time when such support was badly needed.

"Learning about Louise's passing caused me to have an immediate emotional setback," said Dr. Michael Schaer, a professor emeritus of small animal internal medicine who specializes in emergency and critical care. "She epitomized graciousness and humanity and helped rescue the college during the lowest point in its short life.

"The financial situation of the hospitals had run amuck, the entire AVMA accreditation was at risk and the teaching hospital was ground zero of sick building syndrome," Schaer recalled. "Although she focused much of her attention to the large animal hospital, because of her love of the college, she was wise enough to see the importance of the small animal hospital and the impact its success would have on the state.

"Louise was a light of inspiration because she never accepted the word 'never,'" Schaer said. "She was a doer, and our college should forever remember her name."



## Hal Dresner


Veteran film and television writer Hal Dresner (BS '58) died in March of cancer in Ashland, Oregon. He was 85.

Dresner is credited with the line "What we have here is a failure to communicate" in the film "Cool Hand Luke." His career as a writer and producer included the "The Harvey Korman Show," "The Eiger Sanction," "CBS Summer Playhouse" and "M\*A\*S\*H."



## Ada Dorfield

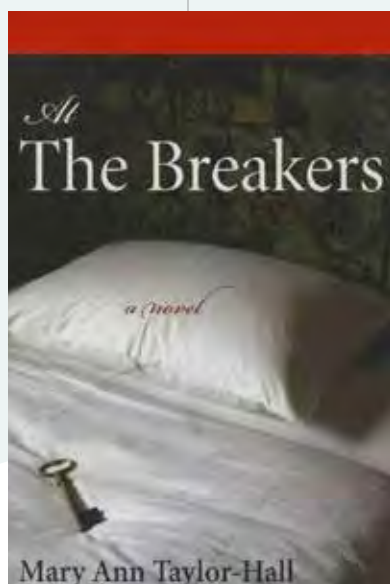
Ada Rosenson Dorfeld (BA '52, MA '55) passed away March 31, 2023. She was 91. Dorfeld worked her way through college and taught in Miami-Dade County. She supported the UF College of Education and its students and established the Ada Rosenson Dorfeld Florida Opportunity Scholarship.

 To support the Ada Rosenson Dorfeld scholarship fund, please visit: <http://ufgive.to/t3hzf7>

# Great Gator Reads

Six new reads by Gator authors.

BY BARBARA DRAKE (MFA '04)



## At The Breakers

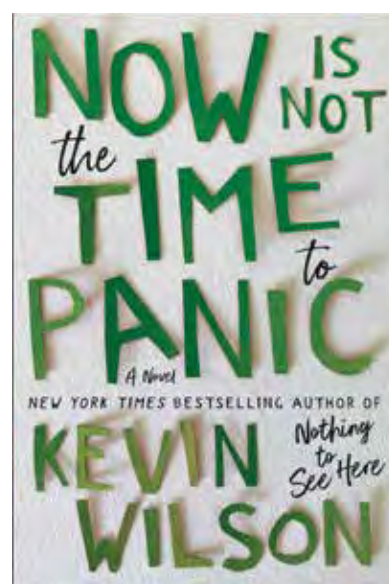
A winner of the Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Award, Mary Ann Taylor-Hall (BA '59) tackles the difficult topic of a mother who fails her child through a moment of inattention in “At The Breakers” (University of Kentucky Press, 2022), her second novel.

After a shocking attack, single mother to four Jo Sinclair flees an abusive relationship and finds herself in Sea Cove, New Jersey, in front of The Breakers, a salty old hotel in the process of renovation. Impulsively, she negotiates for a job painting the guest rooms and settles in with her youngest child, 13-year-old Nick. As each room is transformed under brush and roller, Jo finds a way to renovate herself, reclaiming a promising life derailed by pregnancy and a forced marriage at age 14. “A tale of reconciliation, forgiveness, hope and love written by one of Kentucky’s most intriguing writers” (Tucson Citizen).

## Now Is Not the Time to Panic

Kevin Wilson (MFA '04) pens an exuberant, bighearted novel about young love, identity and the power of art in “Now Is Not the Time to Panic” (HarperCollins, 2023).

Sixteen-year-old Frankie Budge — aspiring writer, indifferent student, offbeat loner — is determined to make it through yet another summer in Coalfield, Tennessee, when she meets Zeke, a talented artist who has just moved into his grandmother’s house and who is as awkward as Frankie is. Romantic and creative sparks begin to fly, and when the two jointly make an unsigned poster, shot through with an enigmatic phrase, it becomes unforgettable to those who read it, setting off a panic that spreads far beyond the small town. “Colored by Wilson’s appealingly offbeat prose, so that even the most straightforward coming-of-age moments have a funky freshness” (Vogue).



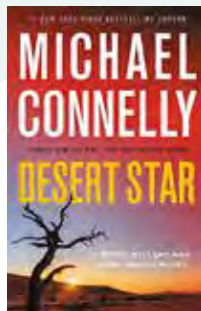




### Children Under Fire: An American Crisis

Washington Post staffer John Woodrow Cox (BSJ '08, MS '10) shines a light on gun violence through profoundly affecting stories of the children who live with its everlasting repercussions in "Children Under Fire: An American Crisis" (Ecco, 2022), longlisted for the PEN/John Kenneth Galbraith Award.

Based on his acclaimed series (a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize), "Children Under Fire" Cox delves into the lives of 7-year-old Ava, of South Carolina, 8-year-old Tyshawn, from Washington, D.C. and other children who lived through shootings at schools and in neighborhoods. Through deep reporting, Cox addresses how we can effect change and help children like Ava and Tyshaun. He explores their stories and more, including a couple in South Carolina whose 11-year-old son shot himself, a Republican politician fighting for gun safety laws and the charlatans infiltrating the school safety business. "Cox has a profound respect for children and a willingness to listen to them. In return, they have trusted him with the hardest stories of their lives" (Connie Schultz).



### Desert Star

Bestselling crime author Michael Connelly (BSJ '80) decided to become a writer after discovering the works of Raymond Chandler as a student at UF. His 37th novel finds detectives Renée Ballard and Harry Bosch teaming up to hunt for a brutal killer in "Desert Star" (Little, Brown, 2022).

For years, detective Harry Bosch has been working a case that haunts him: the murder of an entire family by a psychopath who still walks free. When Renée Ballard takes over the reins of the LAPD cold case unit, she makes him an offer: come volunteer as an investigator, and he can pursue his "white whale" with the resources of the LAPD behind him. Battling political pressure, the two must put aside old resentments and new tensions to chase not one but two dangerous killers who have operated with brash impunity. "Longtime Bosch followers will be taking deep breaths after this one's superb finale, especially given its implications for the future" (Booklist starred review).



### Misfire

Life-saving medical technology becomes life threatening in "Misfire" (Oceanview, 2023), the second book in the Kate Downey Medical Mystery Series by Tammy Euliano (BS '87, MD '91), a practicing anesthesiologist and a professor at the UF College of Medicine.

Kadence, a new type of implanted defibrillator, misfires in a patient who is visiting University Hospital for a routine medical procedure, causing the heart rhythm problem it is meant to correct. Anesthesiologist Dr. Kate Downey resuscitates the patient, but she grows concerned for others, including her own Aunt Irma, as the misfires continue — and she learns her department chair is covering up Kadence's mistakes. Can Kate unravel the mystery in time to protect the vulnerable? "A first-rate medical thriller" (Michael Connelly).



### Citizen 865: The Hunt for Hitler's Hidden Soldiers in America

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Debbie Cenziper (BSJ '92) brings her investigative skills to bear on SS criminals who long escaped justice in "Citizen 865" (Hatchette, 2021).

Spanning seven decades, this is the gripping story of a team of Nazi hunters at the U.S. Department of Justice as they raced against time to expose members of a brutal SS killing force, the Trawniki Men, who disappeared in America after WWII. At its heart are harrowing wartime journeys of two Jewish orphans from occupied Poland who outran those killers and settled in the U.S., only to learn that some of their one-time captors had followed. "A page-turning detective story about the hunt for Nazi killers living openly in neighborhoods across the United States" (Michael Isikoff).



# A stud on the court in the 1970s, alumnus Ric Clarson turned to golf for his **Second Act**

BY PAT DOOLEY (BA '76)

The gangly teenager doing his best Mr. Two Bits impression at The Bolles School football game wasn't just a geeky kid trying to impress a girl.

He was a Gator.

Always was. Always will be.

Back then, who would have thought he'd one day sit on the committee that decides which former UF athletes get into the Florida Athletic Hall of Fame? Or rub elbows with the greatest golfers in the world? Or put together million dollar deals for PGA Tour events?

Not him.

"Not in my wildest dreams," Ric Clarson ('79) confesses.

The boy with a whistle and yellow dress shirt turned out to be a basketball stud in high school and at UF. But when time came to put down the basketball for good, he picked up a golf club and became an executive for the PGA.

"I was always a Gator fan, even to the point where my first Pop Warner football number was 11 because of Steve Spurrier," Clarson says.

UF's journalism school, however, sealed the deal when he picked his college.

"I wanted to be in public relations. Believe me, it has continued to pay dividends throughout my career," he says. "I liked the basketball program. I loved the College of Journalism and Communications."

Clarson started for the Gators in 1976 and was named captain in 1979, when he averaged 11 points a game as a senior. Nevertheless, the team went 8-19 and won three conference games.

"I don't think our fans appreciate that time when he was playing, but he was real good," UF basketball historian and former player Bill Koss ('65) says. "He had the good looks, kind of Hollywood, and wasn't afraid to try a hook shot from the top of the key. He had so much personality. Always a big smile on his face."

Armed with that smile and his degree, Clarson tried hoops in France, South America, China and the Philippines. Then, he returned to Jacksonville, worked as managing editor of a Jacksonville magazine, and in 1983 got a job with the PGA.



Clarson drives around Kentucky's Kyle Macy during the Gators' SEC home-opening victory over the Wildcats in January 1979.



“  
Not  
in my  
wildest  
dreams.”





◀ Ric Clarson ('79, on right) and Gator teammate Mark Giombetti ('81) at a recent UF basketball game in the O'Dome.

▼ Gator teammates celebrate Ric Clarson's 25-footer at the buzzer to beat LSU in Alligator Alley, February 1978.



"The Senior Tour was exploding," Clarson explains. "So for three years I was a media official with 32 tournaments a year. The great thing was that there were so many golfers from UF on both the regular Tour and the Senior Tour. That made it an easy transition."

In 2000, Clarson moved over to the PGA's business side. He opened a PGA Tour office in New York City and a couple years later returned to Ponte Vedra Beach to launch the FedEx Cup, among other things.

"I kind of got this rep for pioneering," he says. "If something needed to be figured out, they'd say, 'Let Ric do it.' Then I'd move on to the next challenge, opportunity or crisis."

After 35 years, he retired from the PGA and moved to Dallas with his wife, Kathy. He also started the Clarson Advisory Group to match sponsors with sporting events. One of the deals he's working on is securing naming rights for the Florida-Georgia game.

Two years ago, he was asked to be on the selection committee for the UF Athletic Hall of Fame and tackled it with the same enthusiasm he's shown for everything else in life.

"It's such a heartwarming experience when I come back to go down memory lane," Clarson says. "The thing I see is the continued elevation of UF's academics to be a Top 5 school. That's something all Gator graduates should take more pride in than just the wins and losses of a particular team."

Spoken like a true Gator.

Maybe they'll let him be Mr. Two Bits for a football game. He knows the routine.





# Grand Guard Reunion

THURS-SAT

NOVEMBER

9-11

## Celebrating the Class of 1973!

**Congratulations on the 50th anniversary** of your graduation from the University of Florida. To honor this occasion, we invite you to be inducted into the Grand Guard Society — one of the longest-standing Gator traditions.

A weekend in your honor is planned for Nov. 9-11. For details about activities or to register, please visit

**<https://uff.to/GrandGuard>**

***We hope to see you  
soon, Gators!***



Oak Hammock  
*at the University of Florida*





# JUMPING

## **INTO THE RECORD BOOKS**

By the end of the track and field season and her collegiate career, Jasmine Moore had seven NCAA individual championships in long jump and triple jump and had been named the Honda Award winner for track and field as well as the National Women's Field Athlete of the Year for the 2023 indoor and outdoor season. Moore signed with Puma to start her pro career. Her final jump in orange and blue was a collegiate record triple jump of 48'6" at the NCAA championship meet. Moore broke her own collegiate record in the triple jump five times.

# ALBERT WANTS YOU!



to take our  
readership  
survey.



SCAN

or visit: [uff.to/mag-survey](http://uff.to/mag-survey)