



RETIREE JOURNAL

ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED FACULTY
FEBRUARY 2016



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY





BARBEQUE

FSU RESERVATION

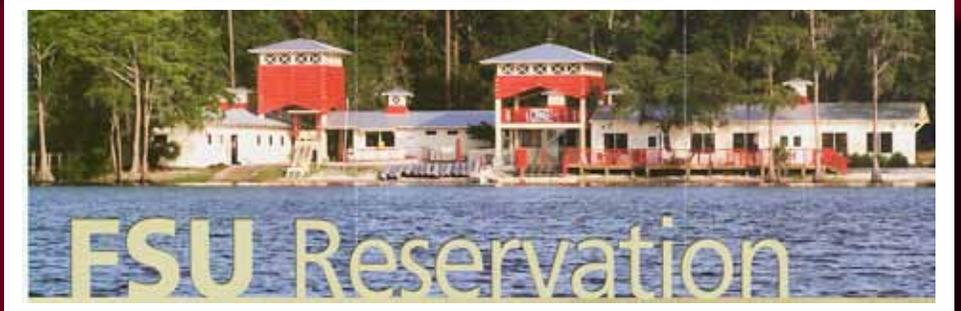
WEDNESDAY

MARCH 23, 2016

11:30 AM

COST - \$10

SONNY'S BBQ



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SPRING LUNCHEON



TUESDAY - MAY 10,
2016
ALUMNI CENTER
BALLROOM, FSU
11:00 A.M. SOCIAL,
NOON – LUNCH
COST - \$22

*For the September issue
of the
ARF Journal
Please submit your
publications and
professional activities by
Monday - August 8, 2016
to: thart@fsu.edu*

From the President

Greetings and best wishes for a happy and healthy 2016! We hope you had a wonderful holiday season and were also able to join us at the Holiday Reception hosted by President Thrasher and Mrs. Thrasher. This event, which is co-sponsored by the Faculty Senate and ARF, was well attended.

We have had a productive year so far in 2016. Because the mission of the Association of Retired Faculty is to continue valued relationships with the university and stay current with events of campus, community, and colleagues, the Board began this year with an informative presentation from Susan Fiorito about the status and well-being of FSU and its faculty. Her presentation was part of an exchange of information between the Faculty Senate and ARF. Dr. Fiorito is the Chair and James Moran Professor of Entrepreneurship, Strategy and Information Systems; Faculty Senate President; and member of FSU's Board of Trustees. She has also just been appointed as the founding Director of the Jim Moran School of Entrepreneurship.

For all of you who have heeded our call to action to help us fund the Sliger Presidential Scholarship, we thank you. We have made progress toward our goal, but still need additional contributions to fully fund this endowed Presidential Scholarship.

This year we have tried to publish special feature articles in each edition of our *Retiree Journal* including an article on Heinz Luebke and his participation in an honor flight to DC and an update on our deans and their interests and backgrounds. We have received some very positive feedback from members and others on campus for these articles. This edition of the *ARF Retiree Journal* features the "Living First Ladies of FSU." We appreciate the willingness of FSU's First Ladies to share some of their experiences with us and hope you find this article informative. I would like to give a special thank you to Max Carraway who interviewed our first ladies and prepared this article.

As noted in our ARF Bylaws, every three years we need to review the Bylaws and Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members to see if any changes need to be made. We are currently reviewing them and will inform you of any potential changes in the near future.

Progress is being made on the Stained Glass window for Dodd Hall that recognizes Faculty, Staff, and Administrators. The Board of Directors has reviewed the design and work is underway. We hope to have it installed this year and plan to have an event to share the unveiling of this window to ARF members, as well as current faculty, staff, and administrators. Stay tuned for this special event.

We look forward to seeing you at our spring events.

Carol Darling, President

2016 Spring Events

Two exciting events are planned for this Spring. First, on Wednesday, March 23rd from 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., will be our Annual Barbecue at the F.S.U. Reservation. Sonny's is not only providing the delicious food, but co-sponsors this fun event with Campus Recreation. This is a great opportunity to visit informally with colleagues and meet some distinguished students.

The luncheon price is amazing at \$10.00 per person. The Registration Form is on the last page of this journal and is needed by Wednesday, March 16th.

An outstanding Spring Luncheon will take place on Tuesday, May 10th, at the F.S.U. Alumni Center Ballroom. The social hour, sponsored by Earl Bacon Insurance will begin at 11:00 a.m. Lunch will follow at noon and includes salad, entree, dessert, and beverage for \$22.00 per person. If you have special dietary needs, please designate them on your registration form.

We are thrilled to have Provost Sally McRorie as our guest speaker! Dr. McRorie's topic will be "Strategic Updates from the Provost."

To assist in planning for this event, please make your reservation by Tuesday, May 3rd.

The RESERVATION FORM for BOTH EVENTS is on the last page of this journal. Checks should be made out to ARF and mailed to:

Tom McCaleb
3037 Godfrey Place
Tallahassee, FL 32309-2115

Betty Lou Joanos
ARF Vice President

**MASTER CALENDAR OF
EVENTS**

**Association of Retired
Faculty
The Florida State University
2015 - 2016**

Barbecue

Wednesday – March 23, 2016
FSU Seminole Reservation
11:30 a.m. - \$10

Spring Luncheon

Tuesday - May 10, 2016
Ball Room – Alumni Conference
Center
11:00 a.m. Social; Noon – Lunch

Joint Board Meeting

Tuesday – May 24, 2016
(Old and New Board)
2:00 p.m. – Meeting, Cottrell
Conference room
3:00 p.m. – Reception, Pearl
Tyner House
FSU Alumni Center

Exchange of Materials

May 25, 2016 – July 31, 2016
(Time for exchange of materials
from old officers to new board
members)

2015-2016

John (Jack) Waggaman May 8, 2015
(Faculty)

William Rogers Brueckheimer May 31, 2015
(Faculty)

William T. (Ted) Gaupin June 13, 2015
(Admin.)

Norma Ellen Mastrogiacomo June 23, 2015
(Faculty)

Louis N. Howard June 28, 2015
(Faculty)

Celia Ann “Johnnye” Luebke
August 12, 2015
(Wife of Faculty)

Elston Edward “Steve” Roady
August 16, 2015
(Faculty)

Evelyn B. Green September 8, 2015
(Staff)

David F. Schrader September 14, 2015
(Admin)

Kurt G. Hofer September 20, 2015
(Faculty)

Bruce Garner Greenwood October 5, 2015
(Husband of Faculty)

Glee Ross Hollander October 18, 2015
(Faculty)

Fred Boska October 20, 2015
(Faculty)

Gregory Robert Choppin October 21, 2015
(Faculty)



Robert M. Shoemaker October 30, 2015
(Admin)

Maxine Stern November 9, 2015
(Admin)

Clifford Ross Hinkle, Sr. December 5, 2015
(Husband of Admin.)

Ernest Matthew Williams, Jr. December 9, 2015
(Admin)

Richard A. Bartlett December 14, 2015
(Faculty)

H. Peter Stowell December 14, 2015
(Faculty)

Joe M. Richardson December 15, 2015
(Faculty)

Michael W. Davidson December 24, 2015
(Faculty)

W. James Giddis January 21, 2016
(Faculty)

**ARF
Board
Nominations
2015-2016**

President

Betty Lou Joanos

Vice President

Walter Moore

Secretary

Jim Melton

Treasurer

Tom McCaleb

Member at Large

Beverly Spencer

Nominating Committee:

Chairman, Leo Sandon (Past President), Max Carraway, Betty Lou Joanos, Marilyn Young

**Living
First Ladies
of FSU**

With the founding of Florida State University (Florida Institute) in 1851, the institution was graced with a first lady, Rebecca C. Fry Edgar. With the exception of one president, FSU has had fourteen (14) hostesses to compliment the presidents who have served.

The role of the first lady, a nonpaid position, requires the understanding of a great leader, the ability to be a statesperson, a steady force, a desire to see the institution progress, and an unfailing support of the President. This person entertains kings, princes, statespersons, faculty, students, staff, alumni, political figures of all ranks, and visitors of all sorts. Most days start early in the morning and go well into the evening.

In 1948 the McIntosh House was moved from downtown Tallahassee to the Florida State University (Florida State College for Women) campus on Tennessee Street. This became the President's House for Mrs. Edna Simmons Campbell, Wife of President Doak S. Campbell. The former President's House was renamed the Pearl Tyner Alumni Welcome Center when the new President's House was completed in 2007.

It is with pleasure that the Association of Retired of Faculty presents the living first ladies of FSU. The Association would like to thank the staff of University Communications, Mrs. Sally Champion Blackburn, Ms. Elizabeth Hirst, Mrs. Greta Sliger Mustian, Mrs. Lynn Peacock, and the First Ladies of FSU for their work on the "Living First Ladies of FSU."

ARF pays tribute to the memories of Elizabeth Blair Lyles Blackwell (First Lady 1960 to 1965), Wife of President Gordon W. Blackwell; Margaret Burnett Strozier (First Lady 1957 to 1960), Wife of President Robert M. Strozier; Augusta Grothaus Conradi (First Lady 1909 to 1928) Wife of President Edward Conradi; Jennie Henderson Murphree (First Lady 1897 to 1909) Wife of President Albert A. Murphree; and Rebecca C. Fry Edgar (First Lady 1887 to 1892) Wife of President George Mathews Edgar.

Jean Moore Thrasher,

Wife of President John Thrasher

First Lady from 2014 to Present



Jean Moore was born in Calhoun, Georgia and moved as a young girl to Jacksonville, Florida, where she spent the remainder of her childhood. While attending Brenau College in Gainesville, Georgia, she met Florida State student John

Thrasher, during a summer break spent with mutual friends. Despite a long-distance relationship in the early days, the two never looked back, marrying in 1964 while John was in his senior year at FSU.

After John's military service in Germany and Vietnam, the couple returned to Tallahassee so he could attend FSU's Law School. Eventually, the Thrashers moved back to the Jacksonville area to raise their young family. As the mother

of three children, Jennifer Jordan, John Thrasher, and Julie Weinberg, and eight grandchildren, family and community have been her priorities. Over the years, many philanthropic efforts benefitted from Jean's public service including the Girl Scouts, victims of domestic violence, and preschool children with special needs.

In 2014, with the selection of John as the 15th President of Florida State University, the Thrashers returned to Tallahassee and settled into their beautiful home at the edge of FSU's campus. Jean immediately embraced her role as First Lady and says her passion today is to stand alongside her husband to promote all that makes FSU great. She participates daily in university activities supporting faculty, students, staff, alumni, and visitors. Whether thanking student veterans for their service to this country, congratulating parents at graduation ceremonies, or dancing with students at the Dance Marathon to raise charity dollars, Jean Thrasher's enthusiasm is contagious.

After nurturing a household of Seminoles that include her husband and two daughters, she's especially excited to welcome her first grandchild to the FSU family this fall. Jean says, "she is grateful for the opportunity to encourage Florida State's incredible young people to find a passion in their learning. She loves her role in encouraging the confidence and successes of so many students, as they work to achieve their hopes and dreams."

Molly Barron,

Wife of President Eric J. Barron

First lady from 2010-2014



Molly Barron was born in La Jolla, California, and grew up in Oceanside. She earned a B.A. in education from Central College in Iowa and began her teaching career on Palomar Mountain (home of the Hale Telescope)

in a two-room schoolhouse where she taught grades 4 through 8 in a single classroom and served as the on-site principal. During this period, she took graduate courses at Northern Arizona University.

In 1981, she moved to Boulder, Colorado where she married Eric Barron. Both of their children, Emily Bantini and James Barron, were born in Boulder. After a

move to State College, Pennsylvania, Molly was actively involved in the school district, serving as president of the PTO, library volunteer, kindergarten aide and frequent substitute. After a long period as a volunteer, Molly accepted a position in the computer technology program in the middle school. With her husband's appointment as a Dean at Penn State and the University of Texas at Austin, Molly became actively involved in student and alumni activities. More recently, Molly has become an avid quilter, adding to the family collection of quilts that now extends to four generations.

Molly is currently first lady of Penn State and continues to support President Eric Barron in his new role. She remembers fondly her FSU family and wishes all success.

Virginia Wetherell,
Wife of President T.K. Wetherell



First Lady from 2003 – 2010

Virginia (Ginger) Bacon Wetherell was born in Anniston, Alabama. She was awarded her bachelors degree from Auburn University and a masters degree from Jacksonville State University. Ginger continued her education at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. She is the mother of two girls, Blakely Bass and Page Bass, who now reside in California.

She had a successful business career prior to entering public service. Ginger was the first woman elected in 1982 to the Florida House of Representatives from Pensacola. In 1988 Virginia and T.K. were married. Again in 1991 she was the first woman to be named Executive Director of the Department of Natural Resources and later held the position of Secretary of the Department of Environmental Regulation and the newly merged Department of Environmental Protection. She started Wetherell Consulting, Inc., and provided environmental and governmental consulting, before the Governor, Cabinet, and the legislature became the developer for a biomass power plant in central Florida.

A gifted designer and decorator with unusual energy, a keen eye for detail and execution, and top level management skills, she served as the guiding force for the development, construction, and furnishing of the privately funded new President's House. She envisioned the house, which opened its doors in 2007, filled with symbols of

the University's heritage, as a place that would be elegant and efficient for entertaining large groups. In her own words, "I wanted this house to feel like it's always been here – to feel like the University grew up around it."

She continues to be involved with her business ventures and loves living in the country with T.K. and finally having time to "smell the roses." Ginger states "our time at FSU was the most unique and special of all our experiences in our careers and a natural conclusion to the range of events we have been so fortunate to enjoy."

Patsy Palmer,
Wife of President Sandy D'Alemberte



First Lady from 1994 to 2003

Patsy Palmer was raised in Missouri. She and Sandy were married in 1989 at The College of Law on FSU's campus. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of Missouri in journalism, a master's degree from the Harvard

Divinity School, and a master's degree in conflict resolution from Antioch University (while she was first lady). Patsy was awarded her J.D. degree in May 2007 from the College of Law at Florida State University. She has always had a love of learning.

Patsy worked as a children's policy coordinator in Florida Governor Lawton Chiles' office. She was a journalist, legislative aide, and White House staff member.

As a trusted advisor to President D'Alemberte, Patsy cared deeply about the educational and cultural functions of The Florida State University. Her admiration for people who lead lives of accomplishment, led her to having a special regard for the alumni who attended Florida State College for Women. She came to understand that the high standards of FSCW are the foundation for so much of what makes Florida State great today.

The President's House had deteriorated over the years, so President D'Alemberte and Ms. Palmer moved out of the aging structure. This paved the way for its renovation

as the Pearl Tyner Alumni Welcome Center and the construction of the new President's House.

Recently Patsy and Sandy have taken numerous trips in the United States and abroad. They both enjoyed the travel, but returned to Tallahassee for work. She and President D'Alemberte practice law together in D'Alemberte & Palmer, PLLC.

In closing, "I will always cherish the friendships I made at the university, and be grateful for our time there."

Marilyn Kay Lick,

Wife of President Dale Lick



First Lady from 1991 to 1994

Marilyn Kay Lick was raised in Marlette, Michigan. She and Dale, who were hometown sweethearts, were married on September 15, 1956. Marilyn attended St. Clair County Community College (Michigan), riverside Community College (California), the University of California, Los Angeles, and Georgia Southern University. She is the mother of Diana Shumans and Ron Lick. Her daughter received a MSW at Florida State and her son was on a golf tour while Marilyn was first lady at FSU. She is the proud grandmother of Wesley, Parker, and Caleigh Ana Lick.

Being a first lady was not a new experience to Marilyn. She served in this role at Georgia Southern College (now University) and the University of Maine. She brought this experience to Florida State and was an effective hostess for students, staff, faculty, alumni, visitors, and community. Marilyn and Dale opened the President's House to everyone.

She actively participated in numerous community endeavors with one of her principal efforts being involved with her church, Community of Christ. Marilyn, an ordained minister, served over the years in many positions, including Pastor of the local

congregation, and for three years, President of the North Florida District of the church. Her deep belief in the worth and dignity of all persons played a major role in her life. She continues today to be actively involved.

Since leaving the President's House, Marilyn has continued to be a support for her husband and has been involved in her community and church. She was a member of their homeowner's association and president for two years. Currently she is treasurer of their square dance club that they have attended since 2012. She is a big fan of the Seminole women's basketball team, attending as many games as possible. Spending time with her children and grandchildren is an important part of her life, as well as traveling to see family in Michigan.

Marilyn states, "Florida State is an exceptional university. I am very proud of the accomplishments of my husband during his tenure and often see good results from his work. I love his statue at the Stone Building and appreciate this recognition of his presidency. I fondly remember those who were so supportive of us during those years. Looking back on life here reminds me of how blessed we are to live in this community and in this nation."

Ruth Margaretta "Greta" Taube Sliger,

Wife of President Bernie Sliger



First Lady: 1976 - 1991

Ruth Margaretta "Greta" Taube Sliger was born in 1924 and raised in Newberry, Michigan. She attended Cleary University and Eastern Michigan University. She and Bernie Sliger married in 1945. She is the mother of four children,

Paul Sliger, Nan Sliger, Sten Sliger, and Greta Lee Mus-tian. In 1978 the Sligers moved into President's House (now the Pearl Tyner Alumni Welcome Center.) They lived in the President's House longer than any other first family.

Among President and Mrs. Sliger's noted house guests were British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, Lillian Carter (mother of President Jimmy Carter), Andrews sisters singer Patty Andrews, and Florida State Alumni Robert Urich and Burt Reynolds. The Sligers enjoyed

the grounds, maintaining a vegetable garden and a rose garden. Mrs. Sliger was honored for her loving and tireless support of the University with the 2006 Mores Torch Award, which honors respect for customs, character and tradition.

She enjoyed being first Lady of FSU, met numerous wonderful people, and had so many opportunities that she would not have had otherwise. When Bernie retired, however, she felt the time was right to relax after so many years in that role.

Greta continued until recently to visit Sweden where her relatives lived. She treasures the time spent with her children and grandchildren, as well as friends. Greta would like for each of us to "Be happy while there is still time."

Shirley Ann Slade Marshall, Wife of President Stanley Marshall



First Lady from 1969 to 1976

Shirley Ann Slade Marshall was raised in Gladewater, Texas. She attended the University of Houston and Laval University in Quebec

City, Canada. Shirley, who married Stan in 1966, is the mother of five children, Sue Jones, Kimberly Rogero, David Marshall, John Marshall, and Drew Marshall. Drew was born while Shirley resided in the President's House (now the Pearl Tyner Alumni Welcome Center).

Shirley worked for J.H. Whitney and Company in New York City. She then joined Pan American World Airways as a stewardess and advanced to purser and management supervisor. The family was active in tennis, baseball, touch football, and swimming. Shirley and Stan enjoyed entertaining and many believe they set a record for the number of events they hosted at the President's House. Some of these notables included the Italian ambassador, actress Helen Hayes, King Hussein of Jordan,

noted athletes, and many others. Easter egg hunts for the children of faculty and staff were an annual event. To assist the family, Syde Deed built a swimming pool and the Marshalls added a tennis court to the complex (no dollars from FSU or the State were used for this purpose). Shirley started her role as first lady in the "tumultuous sixties," but ended her tenure in the calm of the seventies.

Shirley and Stan purchased a home in the Westminster facilities. Although Stan passed away on June 8, 2014, she continues to be a gracious hostess at her home. She still enjoys events that are sponsored by FSU and remains grateful for the Florida State family.

Mary Lanier Champion, Wife of President John Champion



First Lady from 1965 to 1969

Mary Lanier Champion was raised in West Point, Georgia. She attended Auburn University and majored in clothing and textiles.

After graduating from

Auburn University, Mary was planning to enter the family insurance business. However, prior to starting her employment, she traveled to Ann Arbor Michigan to visit her aunt and uncle. During this visit she met John who was working on his Ph.D. in economics and accounting at the University of Michigan. Career plans changed to wedding plans and they were married in 1956. Through contacts at the University of Michigan, John was invited to join the faculty of the College of Business at Florida State University.

Mary is the mother of two children, Sally Blackburn and John Champion. They were eight and six when the family moved into the President's House (now the Pearl Tyner Alumni Welcome Center). One of her first endeavors, as first lady was to remodel and redecorate the President's House. When the Florida Governor's mansion was renovated, Mary acquired

chandeliers for the President's House. Mary brought grace and elegance to Florida State University and loved living and entertaining in the President's House. She kept the house filled with fresh flowers and enjoyed making most of her own clothing, including her formalwear. She was a gracious hostess and the Champions hosted multiple events including spring egg hunts and a Halloween party for faculty children and welcomed new graduates at post-ceremony receptions.

She was a member of Kappa Delta Sorority at Auburn and was active in the Kappa Delta Alumnae Association at FSU. In recognition of her service to the university, Mary was selected for membership in the Garnet Key leadership honorary society. She also was an active member in the Tallahassee Junior League and many other community and charity organizations. Mary and John were among the first members of Faith Presbyterian Church, which continued to be a significant part of their lives.

After leaving the Presidency, John returned to his love of teaching and they were able to combine his teaching with their mutual love of travel by participating in the FSU London Program and a sabbatical at the University of Hawaii in Hilo. After John's retirement, they continued their travels throughout the world. Upon John's death in 2002, Mary moved to Westminster Oaks retirement community. She lived there for 12 years and was an active member in the welcome committee and numerous other activities. She has remained an avid Seminole fan attending games whenever possible. She also enjoyed participating in many cultural events at Florida State University. Florida State has remained a significant part of Mary's life. In 2014, Mary decided to move to North Carolina to be closer to her children and grandchildren. She currently resides in a retirement community in western North Carolina.



Holiday Reception 2015



***Entrance to President's House for
Holiday Reception 2015***







Betty Lou Joanos, Carol Darling & Walter Moore



Provost, Sally McRorie



Rae & Martin Roeder



Mack & Sally Gandy



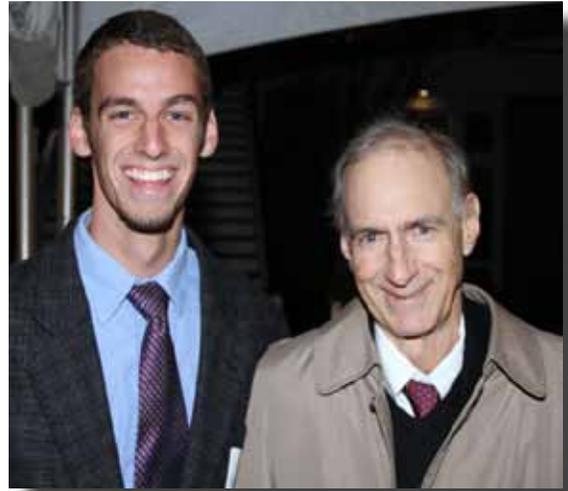
Sharon & Vasken Hagopian



Leo Sandon



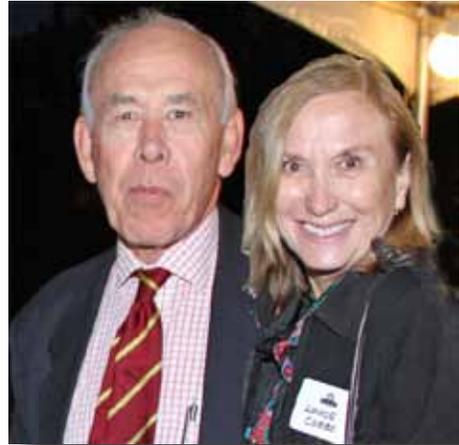
John & Barbara Elam



Myles Hollander and his son



Mary Stutzman & Gary Fournier



Jim & Louise Cobb



Sherry & Tom Hart



Mary Beth & Ken Brewer



Marva Murray, Ivy Mitchell, Freddie Grooms-McClendon & Merlyn Kendall



Ruth Pryor



Jim Pitts



Dot & Jim Skofronick



Marie Cowart & Gary Fournier



Marilyn Young, Anne Rowe & Jennifer Buchanan



Ed & Marietta Schroeder



Aubteen & Shahn Darabi



Santa Balla



Gloria Priest



Genevieve Scott & Fanchon Funk



Kirby & Margaret-Ray Kempeer



Sue Hall



Sherrill Ragans



Jenny & Ron Blazek



Leo Sandon & Linda Schmidt

Tours of Campus 2016

Tour – 1

New Buildings
Antarctic Research Marine
Geology Research Facility



Cold Storage of Antarctic Core Samples



Start of Tour

Tour – 2

National High Magnetic Field
Laboratory



Entrance to Antarctic Marine Research
Facility



Beginning of Tour to Mag Lab -
Home of the World's Strongest Magnet



In Front of Super Conducting Magnet



Statue of Bobby Bowden

Tour – 3
Athletics



Indoor Practice Facility



Start of Tour



Team Meeting Area

AROHE

Transforming Retirement
Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education

AROHE National Biennial Conference

August 14 – 16, 2016

University of Washington, Seattle, WA

*Transforming Retirement:
Re-Writing Life's Next Chapter*

Join us for the 2016 AROHE (Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education) conference, “Transforming Retirement: Re-Writing Life’s Next Chapter,” in Seattle, Washington, Sunday, August 14 through Tuesday, August 16. Become a leader in transforming retirement on your campus and in your community.

At this conference you’ll strategize with peers about changing the role of later life to one that fulfills retirees, enhances universities, and makes a difference on and beyond the campus. Come away inspired by institutions and visionaries who outline a new way.

Who better to lead the charge to change institutional and cultural attitudes than our own staff and faculty retirees?

Participants

Forward-thinking staff and faculty leaders from your Chancellor/Provost’s offices, HR/Benefits, Alumni Associations and Advancement/Development are welcome to attend, exchange new and effective practices that enhance retirement transitions and engagement of university retirees.



Retiree Journal 19

Setting

We’ll gather in a lovely setting on the University of Washington campus in Seattle, hosted by the University of Washington Retirement Association (UWRA), whose members look forward to welcoming you.

Exciting Travel Options

AROHE and the UWRA encourage you to combine this conference with the chance to explore the region. Now is a good time to start planning your visit to Seattle and the Pacific Northwest.

Seattle’s local wonders, including mountain and water views, will lead you to Mount Rainier, ferries across Puget Sound, and the Olympic Peninsula beyond. Venture north (maybe by float plane!) to the San Juan Islands. Vancouver, British Columbia is less than a three-hour drive away; so is Portland, Oregon. Wine country in eastern Washington and the Pacific coast in Oregon are beckoning, too!

Plan to join us in Seattle August 14-16, 2016 and help transform retirement.

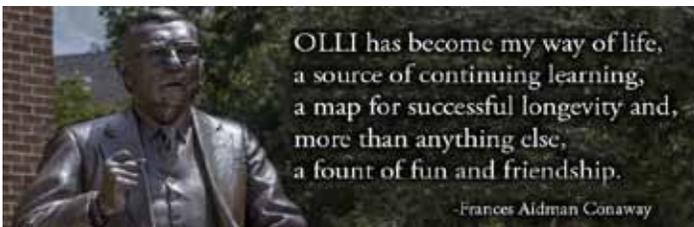
For further information, please contact ARF National Liaison Fanchon Funk (Phone: 850/575-7908; ffunk@fsu.edu).





OLLI AT FSU FOR YOUR GARNET AND GOLDEN YEARS

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Florida State University's Fall 2016 courses begin the week of October 3, 2016. OLLI at FSU offers around 110 courses per year in history, politics, science, literature, current events, and the arts.



Our instructors are from FSU, Florida A&M University, Tallahassee Community College, and community experts in their field. Browse course listings and register beginning September 16th at www.lli.fsu.edu, register by phone at 850.644.3520/850.644.7947 or attend our Showcase of Classes and Activities on Wednesday, September 14th, from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. at the FSU Conference Center (Turnbull Center), 555 W. Pensacola Street, Tallahassee, FL 32306 for more information.



AMAZON ADVENTURE

by
Tom McCaleb

TRAVELS WITH CHARLIE THE "FABULOUS" AMAZON ADVENTURE



Only with some (maybe much?) trepidation, only after seeing photos of the relatively luxurious boat cabin with wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling windows, and only after being assured that she would never have to leave the big boat and could spend the entire five days sitting on the bed watching the scenery go by did the Sultana consent to my proposal for a Spring Break cruise in the Peruvian Amazon.

Lynda and I arrived in Lima late in the evening and spent the first night at a Ramada, which was in the process of transitioning to a Wyndham Hotel, immediately across from the Lima Airport terminal. Mid-afternoon of the next day, we were back at the airport for our short flight

to Iquitos, where we would meet the tour guides. Iquitos is the largest city in the Peruvian Amazon, maybe in the entire Amazon. It is also the farthest inland Atlantic port with a population in excess of 500,000.

Although obviously a poor city, it does have some attractive areas, especially the plaza in front of the cathedral. It is also home to the “iron house,” designed by Gustav Eiffel of Eiffel Tower fame. How did a building designed by Eiffel end up in Iquitos? The story I heard, true or not, is that it was shipped across the Atlantic destined for Quito, Ecuador, but only made it as far as Iquitos, either because of confusion over the name or because the high Andes intervened, or maybe both. We also passed a bar named Margaritaville with a second floor balcony that had a New Orleans French Quarter street sign. Perhaps the owner is geography-challenged.

Iquitos is a very busy city, a center for petroleum and lumber. The streets swarm with motor scooters, mopeds, and motor carts, the latter partially enclosed “cabins” powered by a motor scooter, which serve as taxis, delivery vehicles, and private transportation. There are also open-air public buses, which, given that Amazonia is equatorial, have no need for windows.

Below Iquitos (which sits on “high ground”) is a second city, Belen, which quite literally floats in the river. It is truly a city, laid out in “streets” lined with street lights, a floating church, a floating schoolhouse, floating petrol stations, a floating market, its own water supply, and floating houses fully furnished and equipped with electricity, televisions (we saw one through

an open doorway), and floating outhouses. Why, you might ask, would one choose to build a floating house in the river rather than on the relatively high ground of the city. The answer, not surprisingly to an economist, is property taxes; there are none in the river.



Lynda and I were met in Iquitos by several of the guides from the boat. There were only fourteen of us on this trip, although the tour capacity is 32. The guides checked our names and instantaneously committed names and faces to memory, but more about these guides later. We then made our way to a van, which would take us to Nauta, where the big boat awaited. There is one road leading out of Iquitos, it runs sixty miles to Nauta, and Nauta is truly the end of the road. There is nowhere else to go.

The boat definitely lived up to its description and to the photos—luxury in the jungle. The cabins were spacious, with all modern conveniences except television (who needs it) and Internet (who wants it), and they were serviced two or three times a day. The food was excellent, much of it local. Choices were limited, but even a very picky eater like me found something appealing at every meal.

Mornings began quite early, around 6:00-6:30, except one morning when it was even earlier to watch the sunrise. We had at least two excursions off the big boat each day using 8-passenger motorized skiffs. Each skiff came with a driver, and one of the four naturalist-guides accompanied us on each excursion.



The first day, we encountered rain for our morning excursion, but we were supplied with ponchos. Eventually, three of the four skiffs voted to abort the excursion and return to the big boat; only one stayed out the entire time, and surprisingly it was the one that included the Sultana, who decreed she had not come all this way to be deterred by some rain. After that first morning, the weather was quite satisfactory.

There are only two seasons in the Amazon, low water and high water. March is high water when the river rises with the snowmelt from the Andes. During high water season, the skiffs are able to reach farther into the jungle, so all but two excursions were entirely on the water. Of the other two, one was a visit to a village on the riverbank and the other was a jungle hike. During low water season, most excursions involve jungle hikes, so high water season was perfect for us, especially with Lynda's myriad foot problems. Being equatorial, there is very little temperature variation through the year, but average temperatures are a bit lower in the high water season.

My biggest concern was in fact the heat. My travel clothes are polyester, and although they are vented, they can become quite uncomfortable when it's hot. Furthermore, we were advised to wear only long pants and long-sleeved shirts, which my travel clothes are, to protect from bugs, especially mosquitos. I must say, however, that I was never really uncomfortable. The temperatures were relatively moderate (low-to mid-80's), being on the water most of the time helped, and mosquitos turned out to be a non-problem. We did use "bug wipes" each time we went out, and for those who might not have prepared for the possibility of mosquitos, the boat furnished bug spray.

We spent most of our time on one of the two major tributaries, the Pacaya, that forms the Amazon River proper. In Peru, the rivers are about one-half mile wide in low water season. In high water season, they can reach a mile across and they flood the adjoining lands to a depth of several feet stretching as much as thirty miles back into the jungle.

The local people, of course, build their villages on the edge of the river as that is their only means of transportation, commerce, and communication with the outside world. However, they build their houses on stilts or pilings several feet off the ground so that they are, hopefully, above the high water mark at its peak. The houses are quite simple—flooring planks set on a frame anchored to the pilings, planks for walls that typically only reach about halfway up leaving the houses open to the outside air, and thatch roofs. This creates natural "air conditioning."

I did notice a few houses with tin roofs, which brought to mind something I read about foreign aid provided to some other less-developed countries. As an experiment to try and reduce the waste and corruption that characterizes much foreign aid, cash grants were given directly to some aid recipients, who were allowed to use the grants as they saw fit. To the consternation of the aid officials, many of the recipients used their grants to buy tin to replace their thatch roofs. The aid officials felt this was quite irresponsible and judged the experiment a failure until someone inquired directly of the recipients. The reason given for replacing the thatch roofs with tin was that the thatch required constant maintenance and upkeep, so with low-maintenance tin, they had time for more remunerative activities such as farming, fishing, and city or village work. I relayed this story to one of the naturalist-guides (who, by the way, were all locals from the Peruvian Amazon), and his response was that in the Amazon, the only reason people used tin for roofs was because the government provided them, but it was really much less practical because in the Amazon, tin roofs turn houses into ovens.

Despite their remoteness and their primitiveness, the villages are not without modern conveniences. We saw satellite dishes, street lights (even though the “streets” were flooded), electric generators that operate a few hours each day to serve the village, and a water purification plant with water piped to a set of common spigots for the villagers’ use. Each village appeared to have a building easily identifiable as a schoolhouse, one of which we visited.



I usually take pictures of buildings (architecture) and landscapes. On a trip such as this, I take pictures of plants, trees, flowers, and wildlife. But on this trip, I was fascinated by the people and took many “people pictures.” While they may be poor by our standards or by any material standards, they appeared healthy and their faces showed much animation, often smiling. In the floating city of Belen, a group of children stood on a porch in front of a floating house. One little boy had a stern expression that never changed during the whole time we were paused there. But as we moved off, with no change in expression, his hand went up in a gesture of “good bye.”



So what do these people live on? Obviously, fishing is a major occupation, and we saw many of the locals in hollowed-out canoes, especially early in the morning. We stopped beside one fellow's boat for a look at his catch and it was quite full just from that morning's fishing. In the village that we visited, we saw watermelon and sugar cane along with many fruit trees—mangos, bananas, and plantains. A typical pattern is for a family to build a raft, which they use to transport their produce down river to Iquitos. At the end of the voyage, they sell the produce, break up the raft, sell the lumber, and make enough money to pay for a water taxi ride back to their village and finance their basic needs until the next trip down river.



On the jungle walk, our guide tipped one of the local men to accompany us. He stepped off the trail into the jungle at several points, and each time emerged with some creature. When he returned with a small anaconda, about six feet long, wrapped around a stick, Lynda moved faster than she has in twenty years and put a good twenty feet between herself and the anaconda, but then the iPhone came out and the lady who fears and loathes snakes, began taking photo after photo, albeit from a safe distance. Our man's other finds included a red tail boa, a poison dart frog, about the size of a fingernail, and a pink tarantula.



Needless to say, most of our excursions focused on the native habitat and wildlife. The upper Amazon is a birdwatcher's paradise—macaws, toucans, hawks, weaverbirds, many more. It was amusing to hear our tour companions “ooh-ing” and “aahing” over the white ibises, which are pretty common here in Florida. We saw the unique pink river dolphins, both black and spotted cayman (the blacks being somewhat rare, we were fortunate to come upon one), and river otters, including one that served as a pet for a young man in a house along the river. Sloths, three-toed and five-toed, were numerous as were monkeys—spider and red howler, the latter appropriately named.

So how did the reluctant traveler like the trip? First, I have multiple pictures of her in the skiff and on the jungle trail wearing a big smile. Second, when I decided to pass up one afternoon excursion, she went without me. And finally, when we returned home, I heard her describing the trip to her friends as “fabulous, one of the best trips we've ever taken.”

Friendship Committee

As the Friendship Chair of ARF, it is important to contact our members, spouses, and their parents who are residing in Tallahassee when health issues arise.

I appreciate your help in contacting me so that I can send cards from ARF, make personal visits, or notify other members of our extended family to provide that special care.

In 2016 I have the help of Ron and Mary Ann Braswell, who will assist me in reaching out to those members who reside at Westminster Oaks. If you know of anyone who needs our attention, please contact me at (850)531-0609 or email me at:

ruth.pryor@gmail.com

Best Wishes to all,

Ruth Pryor
Friendship Chair, ARF

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