

AtBuffalo

The magazine for alumni and friends of the State University of New York at Buffalo

E. coli does good **p11**

Bulls in outer space **p32**

De Niro's dad **p64**

Winter 2016



The Magical Worlds of

**Nnedi
Okorafor** **p22**



Members of the media had a
bird's-eye view of the event.

FIRST LOOK

Photograph by Steve Morse

UB Live

An annual tradition brings students together—in more ways than one

By Rebecca Rudell

Opening Weekend at UB is always a flurry of activity: In addition to moving in, students partake in breakfasts, dance parties, picnics, mini golf, Buffalo bus tours—and, of course, the ever-popular interlocking UB photo.

In an annual ritual that began in 2004, about 2,000 students dress in their UB blue T-shirts and file into formation on the Student Union field to create a 128-by-90-foot living UB logo. The entire process is shot from a helicopter high above the crowd.

Coming together as a symbol of their school helps new students feel like part of the UB community from their first moments on campus, and is just one of many memories they'll share over the years.

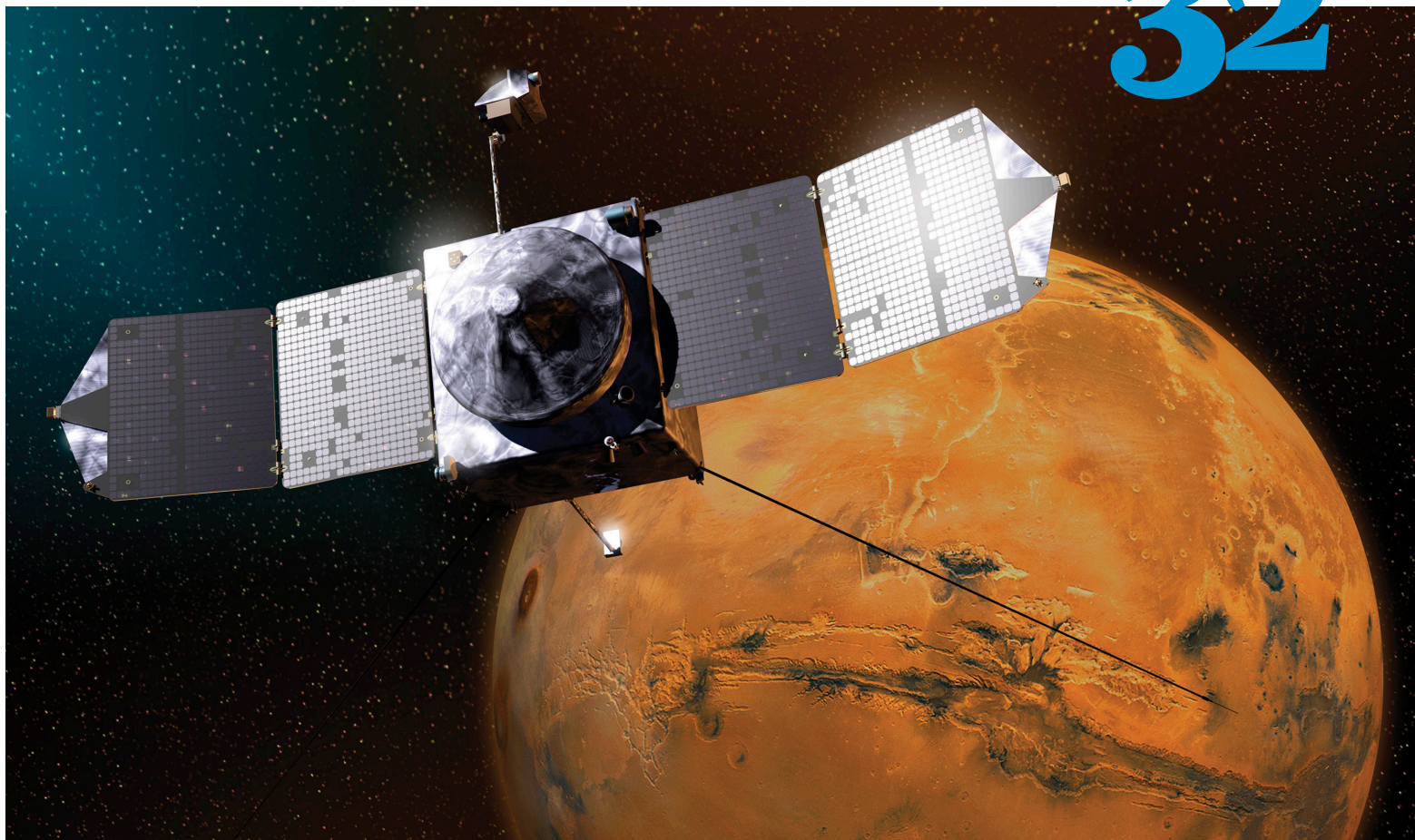
Onstage, members of UB's Breakdance Club later entertained the crowd with their moves.

An enormous video screen let students see themselves as a giant logo.

Table of Contents

Winter 2016 A MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

32



UB alumnus Dave Mitchell was lead project manager for the MAVEN mission to Mars.

Features

Future Imperfect **p22**

UB associate professor and celebrated author Nnedi Okorafor writes some of the most compelling sci fi and fantasy this side of the galaxy. Award-winning writer Elizabeth Hand takes us into Okorafor's seamless worlds of magic realism, Igbo culture and modern American life. Plus: an excerpt from Okorafor's latest book, "Lagoon."

Story by Elizabeth Hand
Photographs by Douglas Levere

The GRoW Home **p26**

UB's innovative solar-powered house was designed and built by students to grow food year-round—even in tough climates like Buffalo's. See how they did it and how they wowed the judges at the prestigious U.S. Department of Energy's 2015 Solar Decathlon Competition.

Story by Julie Wesolowski

The Right Stuff **p32**

UB's relationship with NASA goes back to the early days of space exploration, and continues to thrive today. We highlight our top alums and current students, who are already well on their way to changing our understanding of the world beyond the stars.

Story by Rebecca Rudell



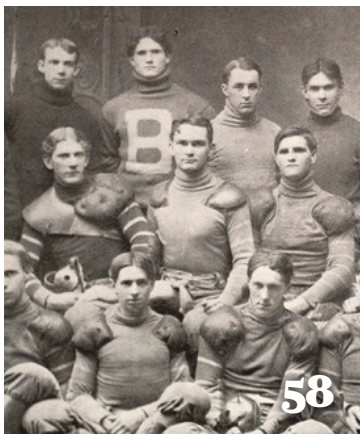
On the Cover This dynamic portrait of Nnedi Okorafor was created for *At Buffalo* by her friend and colleague John Jennings, a designer, curator, illustrator, cartoonist, award-winning graphic novelist and associate professor of art at UB.



“There are 80 things my iPhone purports to be collecting about me. I don’t know what 50 of them are.”

p18

Marc Kiviniemi



“Fame is not a path that’s going to get you to a place of great meaning.” **p20**

Willie Nile



Departments

- 7 On Campus** A historic workshop heals intergenerational wounds; Jacobs’ generous gift; UB’s cleanest room
- 11 Eureka!** Learning to love *E. coli*; Italy’s barbershop poet; happiness in a petri dish
- 15 Locker Room** International b-ball; the book carrier; berry superstitious
- 19 Mixed Media** Finding beauty in brownfields; we’ve got talent!
- 55 Alumni Life** Brand booster; Hallabaloo, it’s 1902!
- 59 Class Notes** Don’t quit your griping; do stop wrecking your coffee; a life well-lived

In Every Issue 4 Editor’s Essay 5 Ask Your President 6 Inbox 14 Objectology 18 Coffeehouse 64 UB Yesterday



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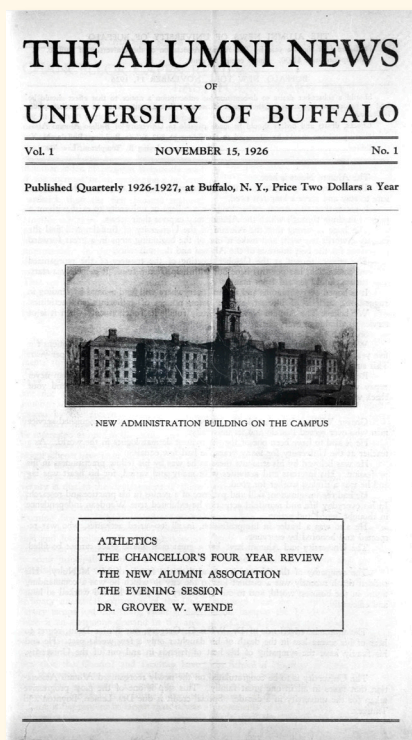
At Buffalo magazine, with a circulation of 150,000, is published quarterly by the University at Buffalo Alumni Association in cooperation with the Division of University Communications and the Division of Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement. Standard rate postage paid at Burlington, Vt. Editorial offices are located at 330 Crofts Hall, University at Buffalo, Buffalo, N.Y. 14260. Telephone: 716-645-4613; fax: 716-645-3765; email: atbuffalomagazine@buffalo.edu. At Buffalo welcomes inquiries, but accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, artwork or photographs. Opinions expressed in At Buffalo are not necessarily those of the University at Buffalo or the magazine editors.



Moved? Please send address or name changes to Alumni Office, University at Buffalo, 201 Harriman Hall, Buffalo, N.Y. 14214, or email ub-alumni@buffalo.edu.

EDITOR'S ESSAY

Is Anyone Out There?



UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

The year was 1926, and Irving Templeton, a UB law school graduate and editor of The Alumni News—the first alumni publication in UB's then-80-year history—was making his pitch for reader input.

"It is hoped every alumnus and alumna everywhere will lend a hand by sending in suggestions, articles of interest, alumni notes, notices of gatherings and activities. We believe The Alumni News completely fulfills its function only when it is of service to all alumni everywhere."

While the language might be different (words like "input" and "feedback" weren't yet part of popular parlance), Templeton's quest for reader response could have been written by any member of the At Buffalo staff today. Then and now, interaction with readers is the lifeblood of magazines.

And as an editor, ensconced in one's office, it is hard not to sometimes wonder whether anyone is really out there, especially when a piece one has slaved over has failed to provoke much reaction, whether positive or negative.

Ninety years after Templeton's pitch, our alumni publication has evolved through a series of successor pieces into today's full-color magazine, in which design and editorial are honed for maximum appeal, and quizzes, contests, service journalism and other types of features fairly guarantee at least some interaction with readers. And yet still we wonder about all those who don't write letters or respond to quizzes. Have they read the issue? Do they like it?

Since debuting At Buffalo two years ago, we've done limited surveying, including mailing a questionnaire after each issue to a sampling of readers and polling informally at alumni events. With this issue, we're ratcheting it up by participating in the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Member Magazine Readership Survey.

In the next few weeks, a cross-section of randomly selected readers will receive an email asking for participation. The survey takes 10-15 minutes to complete and will go a long way toward helping us match our story planning with your preferences.

Did Templeton ever survey his readers to find out what they wanted in his new publication? My guess is he didn't feel obliged to do so formally. Unlike our media-saturated society, where alumni magazines compete intensely for reader attention, Templeton could reasonably expect 1926 readers to read his product; there just wasn't that much competition. Yet he still felt the need to reach out for reaction.

And that's because, unless we hear from you, we magazine editors operate much like a comedian whose laugh lines fall short, but who has no mechanism to find out why—or guidance to improve his material. Templeton told his readers the opening issue was "merely a start." The future, he said, "should see aid from many."

We hope he got that aid, and we hope we do, too.

A Whitcher Gentzke

Ann Whitcher Gentzke, Editor

Question: What makes a degree from UB different?

First, Halley, let me just say that I am incredibly impressed by the amazing experience you've been amassing at UB! Every day, I am so inspired by students like you who are embracing all that UB offers to the fullest, and using that experience as a springboard to make a real difference in the world. So here's the short answer to your question: Students like you are living proof of what makes the UB experience so distinctive.

One of the things that sets UB apart is our reputation for innovation and discovery with powerful impact. Our faculty members are changing how our world responds to the big challenges of the 21st century—from aging and school violence to global warming and economic crises.

That is a huge factor in what makes our university great—and what gives a UB degree such value in the eyes of employers worldwide. But what is really unusual is the number of opportunities UB provides students to be directly and actively involved in this groundbreaking work. All that adds up to a transformative education—a distinctive edge that gives UB grads a great advantage in their professions, and prepares them to make a real difference in the world.

At many top research universities like UB, undergraduates could easily complete four years without ever meeting their department's leading faculty or setting foot in its state-of-the-art research facilities. I think you know from firsthand experience that this is not the case at UB.

Because of this, we attract some of the best and brightest

students—like you—from across the country and around the world. These students come to UB because they know they will have opportunities they aren't likely to find elsewhere—opportunities like working in Greenland on geology professor Jason Briner's climate change study and like the hands-on field experience of the engineering students who just took home one of the top prizes in a NASA competition to build a Mars rover. They include internship and mentorship opportunities with prominent industry leaders, and global experiences—like your own internship at Bloomberg—that are increasingly critical in today's job market.

This kind of direct, meaningful engagement brings classroom learning to life and provides a level of experience, knowledge and global perspective that employers around the world have come to expect when they see a UB degree on a resume.

Just as important, it provides students like you with the courage and the confidence to take risks and to do big things in the world, and then to come back to UB with your life-changing experiences and share them with others—whether as an orientation aide inspiring a new generation of UB students, as a student ambassador out in the community, or as a successful graduate broadening the horizons of tomorrow's alumni leaders.

Whatever your next steps, I know you will put your UB education to excellent use as you venture further into the international finance arena. Best wishes in your senior year and in your exciting plans for the future! ❖

OUR STUDENT

Halley Davide

Interested in finance since childhood (she wrote "hedge fund manager" as her career ambition in her sixth-grade yearbook), Halley Davide chose UB because of its broad academic opportunities and affordable tuition. In addition to working four summers at a boutique accounting and financial advisory firm in Manhattan, the senior economics and international trade double major from Merrick, N.Y., has served as a student ambassador for the College of Arts and Sciences, studied in Florence and interned at Bloomberg Tradebook in New York, sitting on the equities trading desk. Davide is currently applying for analyst training programs and hopes to someday work as an asset or private wealth manager. After chatting about their respective travels to Italy, Tripathi homed in on Davide's career path, urging her to consider an MBA. Not one to turn down good advice, Davide responded, "Definitely!"

President Tripathi

Halley Davide



We want to hear from you!

Send letters and comments to atbuffalomagazine@buffalo.edu with the subject heading "Letters." Or mail to Editor, At Buffalo, 330 Crofts Bldg., Buffalo, N.Y. 14260. Letters are subject to editing for length and clarity. Please include a daytime phone number for verification.

Rules of debate

I support your encouragement of civility through the Coffeehouse section of At Buffalo. A university should teach civil discussion of challenging ideas.

Unfortunately, the substitution of political advocacy for debate is not commendable ("Raising the Minimum Wage," Fall 2015). The advocacy for expansion of minimum wage laws omitted any discussion of the 500,000 workers who would become unemployed (U.S. Government Accountability Office). Further, studies show that only 21 percent of minimum wage benefits go to the working poor. With our dynamic economy, the best policy to help the working poor is encouragement of market capitalism.

Again, I applaud the civil debate goal of the Coffeehouse section. A free civil society needs that skill. There probably were other faculty members who could have lucidly presented challenges to minimum wage expansion.

Tom Reeve (JD '74)
San Diego, Calif.

The nascent North Campus

I wanted to express my thanks to At Buffalo for clearing up in my mind what the North Campus is all about ("UB Yesterday," Fall 2015). I am a 1958 graduate of the UB School of Dental Medicine. I spent three years as an undergraduate at the Main Street campus, then four additional years on the same campus at Capen Hall (now Farber). I have never visited the North Campus, but plan to do so when my dental class celebrates its 60th reunion in 2018. Thank you again for your informative publication.

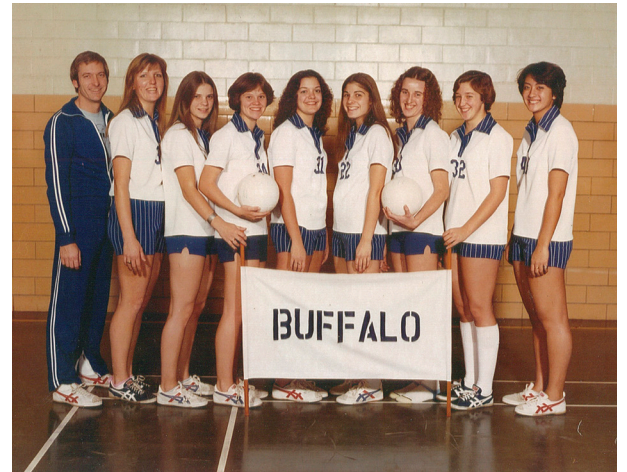
Joseph J. Massaro (DDS '58)
Lynbrook, N.Y.

As a UB student from 1975-79, I loved the UB Yesterday picture of the North Campus taking shape in 1977. I remember that the athletic "Bubble" was informally renamed in honor of UB President Robert Ketter by many who lived on the North Campus. Thus, we knew the Bubble as the "Ketterpillar," due to its resemblance to a caterpillar. Keep up the good work!

David L. Seitelman (BS '79)
Highland Park, Ill.

In this political season, we see a lot of caricatures, but one truly captured our attention when it went viral this fall. It was an illustration of Donald Trump by **Michael Gelen (JD '88)**, a regular At Buffalo contributor, in which Gelen's cat became Trump's infamous mane. According to The Buffalo News, Gelen, who had recently illustrated Trump for a couple of national publications, spotted his curled-up kitty one day and noticed the similarity. "I looked at him one time and just made that connection, a shabby orange cat that kind of resembled Donald Trump's hair," Gelen told the newspaper. "I thought that would be kind of funny to combine the two. It just kind of clicked." Indeed, "Composition in Line and Cat" got 27,000 shares when fellow illustrator Jim Charlier put it on his Facebook page. It also appeared on Huffington Post's Instagram account.

From the Editor's Desk



Susan Trabert (fourth from left) with her team, circa 1977.

Royal recovery

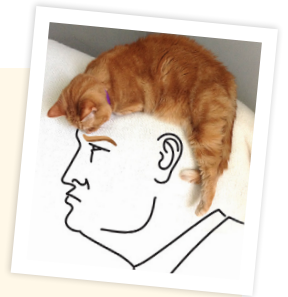
As a member of the women's volleyball team from 1975-78, I've been following the successes of the current team along with news of the new coach, Blair Brown Lipsitz ("She's a Winner," Fall 2015). While cleaning, I came across our team photo from 1977 or '78. Our coach was Peter Weinrich, who helped us to be fairly competitive even though we were Division III in the '70s. Also during that time a contest was held to name the women's teams. I won a \$25 gift certificate for a dinner at a local restaurant for coming up with the UB "Royals" (later changed to the "Bulls"). The school color was royal blue, of course. I have great memories of the old Clark Gym on the South Campus, and had lots of fun playing a sport for UB.

Susan Trabert (BSN '80)
Buffalo, N.Y.

Bared Point?

If these Baird Point columns could really talk ("Last Look," Fall 2015), they would tell you about the '60s, when their pieces were stored, or rather strewn like giant toy blocks, in an area not far off the main path to Goodyear Hall, the new women's dorm. This was well before the age of coed dorms (no men allowed above the first floor of Goodyear). The columns area, by then overgrown with bushes, became a favorite private retreat for couples returning to the dorms at the end of their dates.

Paul Tenser (MS '74, BA '67)
Buffalo, N.Y.



On Campus

- » A community space grows roots
- » Anatomy of a clean room
- » NY pizza battle

Call and Response

UB-led workshop reconnects generations thrust apart by slavery

By Bert Gambini » “It is unprecedented, as far as I know, to have had a gathering of such illustrious descendants of authors of slave narratives in one place,” says Kari Winter, a UB professor of transnational studies.

At a historic three-day workshop held at UB and Buffalo’s Michigan Street Baptist Church this fall, titled “Workshop for Descendants of Authors of Slave Narratives,” Winter brought together nearly a dozen descendants of such notable figures as Dred Scott and Solomon Northup. Among the attendees were authors, educators and two foundation presidents.

Participants shared documents, photographs, family bibles and questions about their backgrounds, describing their experiences and learning from one another to explore new ways of telling multigenerational histories of slavery and the ongoing struggle for liberation.

“One of the processes of enslaving people was to make them genealogical isolates and to sever them from their descendants,” Winter says. “Part of the work of history is to restore that severed connection between generations.”

In 2005, Winter published a new edition of the nearly lost narrative of Jeffrey Brace, who was captured by English slave traders in West Africa, fought in the American Revolution and later settled in Vermont as a free man, eventually reciting his memoirs to an antislavery lawyer in the early 1800s. Winter feels that Brace’s narrative may represent his belief in the importance of understanding family history—the same goal of the workshop she organized.

“My argument is that Jeffrey Brace is making a call to his descendants, asking them to respond as

CONTINUED

“Part of the work of history is to restore that severed connection between generations.”

Kari Winter

Dred Scott circa 1857

NORTH
CAMPUS



Tweetable: Let 'em ring! Silent since 2011, when restoration of Hayes Hall began, the clock tower chimes are finally back. #UBuffalo

On Campus

a way of overcoming that severance from their ancestry,” says Winter. “When people perform that ritualistically, it’s for an entire people and not just their particular biological descendants.”

Every time a particular intergenerational history is discovered and retold, all of us gain access to a richer, more accurate version of the human story, adds Winter, who is hoping the workshop will be the first in a two-year series and lead to the publication of an anthology of essays. ♣



Ancestral Storytellers

Workshop participants descended from a who’s who of slave narrative authors and activists

William Grimes, author of “Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave,” the first fugitive-slave narrative published in America in 1825

Jeffrey Brace, whose oral narrative became “The Blind African Slave: Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nicknamed Jeffrey Brace”

Lewis G. Clarke, an escaped slave, leading abolitionist and likely inspiration for the character George Harris in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”

Solomon Northup, author of the 1853 memoir “Twelve Years a Slave,” on which the critically acclaimed 2013 motion picture was based

Venture Smith, author of the 1798 “A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture, a Native of Africa: But Resident Above Sixty Years in the United States of America, Related by Himself”

Dred Scott, who sued for his freedom when slaveholders took him to a free state, resulting in the devastating 1857 U.S. Supreme Court decision

Moses Grandy, author of the memoir “Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy: Late a Slave in the United States of America,” published in 1843



University Heights residents get tree-pruning tips in CoLab’s South Campus neighborhood.

SOUTH CAMPUS

Putting the “CoLab” in collaboration

Using tools at hand, UB alums build a space for community

By Olivia W. Bae » Darren Cotton (MA ’12, BA ’10) is always excited to see growth in University Heights, and now it’s happening right next door to him.

In 2011, Cotton opened the University Heights Tool Library, a home- and garden-tool rental shop just off Main Street, to help residents maintain their homes. It has since expanded its role, partnering with various local organizations to help improve the South Campus neighborhood.

Recently, with the help of UB and Re-Tree Western New York, a nonprofit organization dedicated to re-foresting Buffalo’s urban areas, Cotton recruited hundreds of volunteers to plant 1,000 trees around the Heights. That, in turn, created a need for educational space, for Tool Library members who wanted to learn how to care for all the new trees.

A solution grew roots with the help of Madelaine Britt, a UB junior who had joined the Tool Library as a volunteer. Seeing potential in the empty storefront

next door to the Tool Library, she helped Cotton and fellow community organizer Joe Kurtz refurbish the shabby space into the University Heights Community Laboratory, or CoLab.

Now in its second year, the CoLab works in tandem with the Tool Library as its “thought-cubator,” as Kurtz calls it. With fresh, white walls, chalkboard paint and modular furniture, it transforms from a classroom into an art gallery into a pop-up shop. It hosts Cotton’s Tree Stewardship Program and workshops on topics like home weatherization, tenants’ rights—even cupcake making. Student groups and other community organizations can rent the space for meetings, poetry readings or jewelry sales.

For UB students like Britt, CoLab is a tangible way to help bolster a neighborhood suffering from a reputation for loud parties and crime. “I realize now that it’s actually a wonderful, beautiful residential neighborhood,” she says. “We need to take care of it.” ♣

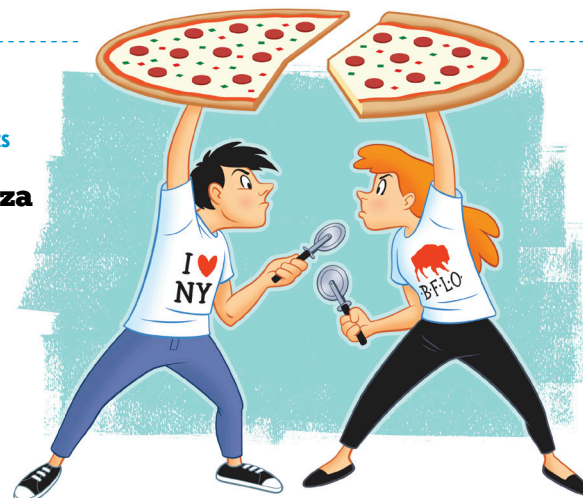
POLL POSITION

An unofficial survey of 100 UB students

Do you prefer Buffalo-style pizza or NYC-style thin-crust pizza?

BUFFALO	42
NYC	52

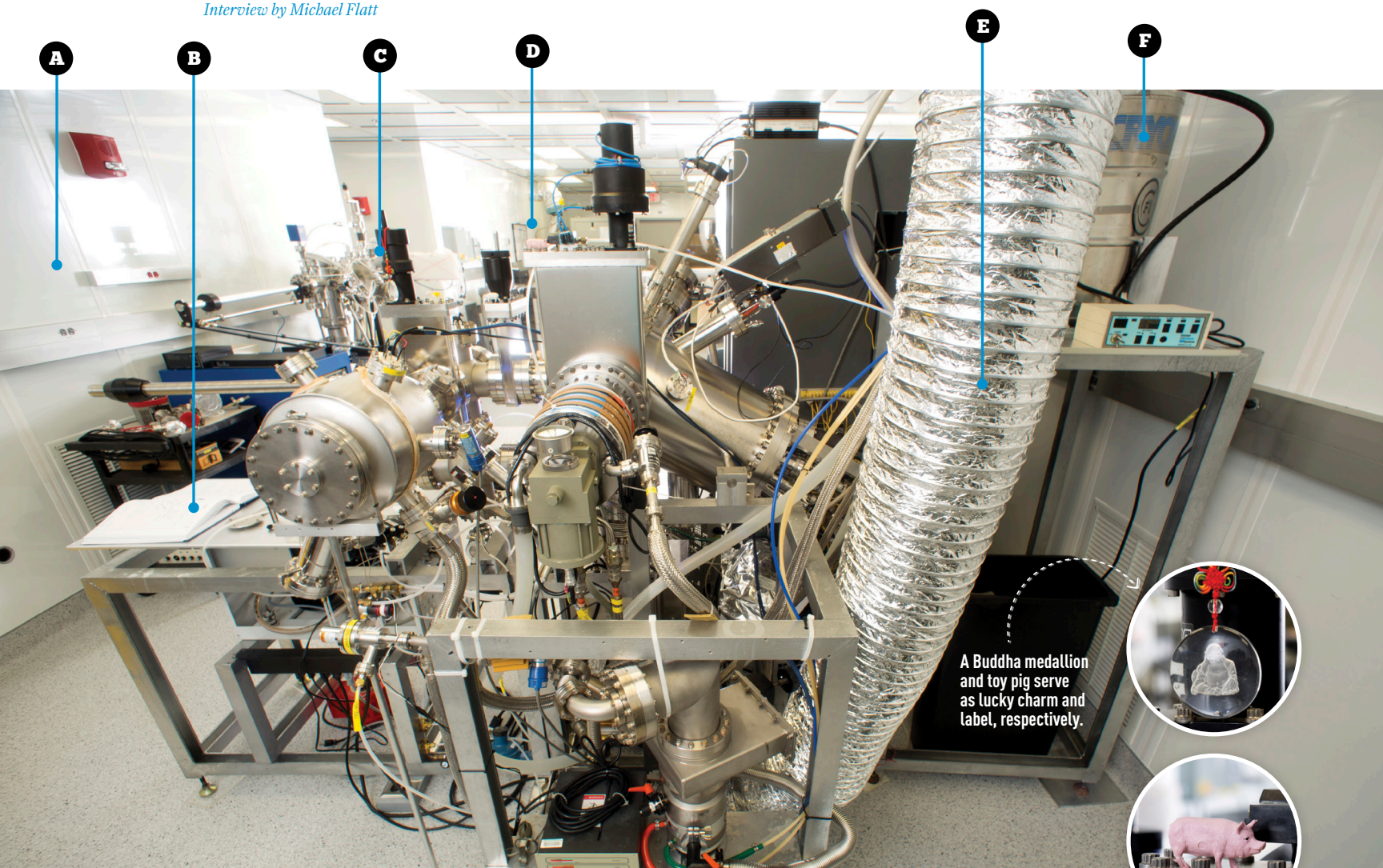
Neither: 6 (most popular write-in: Chicago deep dish)



MICHAEL GELEN, JD '88

Space Invaders A REVEALING LOOK AT UB'S PERSONAL AND PUBLIC SPACES

Interview by Michael Flatt



A Buddha medallion and toy pig serve as lucky charm and label, respectively.

114 Davis Hall, North Campus Davis Hall clean room, MBE machine bay



The clean room is kept at a cool 62 degrees with 40 percent humidity at all times. UB engineers working in the room must wear head-to-toe suits to keep their dead skin cells from contaminating the sterile environment. Precautions like these help protect the room's sensitive machines, like a \$1.4 million scanning electron microscope used for, among other things, examining metal samples for microscopic defects, and a molecular beam epitaxy (MBE) machine that deposits single-crystal layers of metal onto a desired object—useful for making LEDs, lasers and other products. David Eason, the clean room's director, co-designed the MBE machine while working on his PhD at North Carolina State University in the mid-'90s. Now it resides at UB as one of the clean room's centerpieces.

A Bay walls: The clean room is split into multiple bays, and each one is cordoned off by a chase, a space where you put all your water and electricity and other services out of the way while you're working in the bay. It lets you do some dirty work without contaminating the rest of the room.

B Log book: It's not possible to write too much. You may grow

10 films, or epitaxial layers, over 10 months. Later, you discover film number three was the good one, and you can't remember what you did on film number three. So I have all the notes going back to 1995.

C Buddha medallion: That's our lucky charm. At one point, the MBE was being used by Chinese

researchers. This work is like alchemy; there's a lot of trial and error. Sometimes you can repeat your results, and sometimes you can't. So people get very superstitious.

D Toy pig: There are goats and horses as well. We put them on top of valves to identify them. Instead of some clunky description with

a technical name, it's just the goat or horse valve.

E Exhaust hose: When you open up the machine, you have to use this to pull the toxic chemicals out of the air, like arsenic and cadmium, so you don't breathe them. We named it Snuffy, as in Snuffleupagus.

F Liquid nitrogen: That's my PhD adviser's design. It's

gravity-fed, so you fill the tank with liquid nitrogen and gravity pushes it through the hose into the deposition chamber. We use it to control temperature, which we want as low as possible to keep the air pressure low so that nothing interferes with the beam of particles being deposited. We can get it down to 10 degrees Kelvin, or -442 degrees Fahrenheit.



The medical school construction site as it appeared in November.

DOWNTOWN CAMPUS

DONALD LEEVER

A History of Generosity **The Jacobs family gives big to the UB medical school**

By Olivia W. Bae » As cranes swung overhead and the walls of the UB medical school building took shape in downtown Buffalo, the university community buzzed with more good news: In September, Jeremy M. Jacobs, his wife, Margaret, and their family gifted \$30 million to the school. The Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, as it is now called, represents the first school-naming in UB's 169-year history.

Jacobs is an alumnus, longtime UB Council chair and friend of the university. His family has donated more than \$50 million in total to UB. This gift—the largest to date for the medical school's \$200 million fundraising campaign—will be used toward scholarships, research and academic programs.

Once the new building opens in 2017, it will serve as a centralized location for these activities. When classes and local hospitals are down the block from each other, students can spend less time traveling and more time studying or fulfilling rotation hours.

"The Jacobs' gift is helping to improve the medical students' experience," says Eric Kaczor, a fourth-year emergency medicine student. "It's also building a positive atmosphere around Buffalo to recruit the best doctors and attract promising students to the area."

Jacobs credits his late brother, the pioneering neurologist Lawrence Jacobs, for teaching him about the important role medical schools can play in a community. It is the family's hope, he said during the announcement, that the school will become a linchpin of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus.

"My family is honored to make this investment in the community," Jacobs said. "I learned from my brother Larry that a career in medicine is one of lifelong learning and teaching, which is why I'm enthusiastic about moving the medical school to the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. It will be the nexus for researchers, physicians and students, and we look forward to Western New York becoming a world-class destination for health care."

The Jacobs family also has supported the UB Honors College, provided financial aid to female student-athletes, funded academic chairs and created flexible funds for innovation and special needs. In the mid-1980s, they supported the School of Management's new MBA program in China, the country's first academic partnership with an American university. With this latest gift, the Jacobs family marks more than three decades of serving the university. And UB is all the better for it. ❖

(From left): Medical school dean Michael Cain, Margaret Jacobs, Jeremy Jacobs and Satish Tripathi at the press announcement.



Eureka!

» Translational research explained

» The barbershop bard of Florence

» Coal comes clean

E. Coli: Man's Best Friend?

The much-maligned little organism may be a helpful ally in the fight against superbugs

By Charlotte Hsu » When it comes to human health, few bacterial organisms have a reputation as nasty as *E. coli*'s. The term is practically synonymous with foodborne illness. But a UB engineer's research project shows that there's a flip side to this story—that this reviled little organism could actually save human lives.

For more than a decade, Blaine Pfeifer, UB associate professor of chemical and biological engineering, has been studying how to transform *E. coli* into tiny factories for producing new forms of antibiotics.

His work centers on erythromycin, a drug used to treat a wide range of infections, from pneumonia to syphilis.

Like other antibiotics, erythromycin is a naturally occurring compound. In nature, it's produced by a bacteria called *Saccharopolyspora erythraea*, which grows relatively slowly and responds poorly to genetic engineering. These traits mean that scientists can use *S. erythraea* to make erythromycin, but not easily experiment with generating new versions of the antibiotic.

That's where *E. coli* comes in: The microbe grows quickly and accepts new genes readily. In addition, most strains, including those used in Pfeifer's lab, pose no danger to humans.

"We simply view *E. coli* as a great engineering platform through which we can produce and modify important compounds like antibiotics with an expanded set of biological tools," Pfeifer says.

This spring, he announced a major milestone in his research: In the journal *Science Advances*, he and his lab reported that they had created strains of *E. coli* that successfully produced never-before-seen varieties of erythromycin. His team included UB graduate students Yi Li and Lei Fang, and postdoctoral associate Guojian Zhang, who was first author on the paper.

Pfeifer's research effort, spanning many years, involved two broad steps: First, he and his colleagues



Blaine Pfeifer

CONTINUED

altered the organism's DNA so that it generated all the chemical building blocks needed to construct erythromycin molecules—a process analogous to stocking a car factory with all the parts necessary for building a vehicle. With that done, the scientists turned to tweaking the assembly line, that is, engineering *E. coli*'s genetics further so that the bacteria produced a form of erythromycin with a slightly different structure from the version hospitals use today.

Three of the new varieties of erythromycin killed bacteria recalcitrant to other antibiotics—an important finding in a world where doctors and hospitals

“Our system allows us to engage in a game of molecular chess with mechanisms bacteria use to thwart antibiotics.”

Blaine Pfeifer

Pfeifer says. “As opposed to searching for completely new antibiotic compounds, our approach leverages the engineering capabilities of the *E. coli* platform to significantly alter the chemical diversity of an established antibiotic.

“Our system allows us to engage in a game of molecular chess between mechanisms bacteria use to thwart antibiotics and the engineering capabilities we have to produce new compounds.”

Pfeifer notes that despite its notoriety, *E. coli* is actually a “workhorse” in the biotechnology sector, a product of its flexibility in accepting new genes.

Early bioengineering applications of *E. coli* included using the organism to synthesize insulin, which was previously obtained from pigs. More recently, Pfeifer says, *E. coli* has been engineered to produce biofuels and other “commodity” chemicals in high global demand.

“*E. coli*'s ubiquitous use in these industries is often completely ignored compared to the contamination scares, which arise from pathogenic strains that no one works with in the biotech world,” Pfeifer says. “It's unfortunate that these beneficial applications aren't equally recognized.”

The next step in his own *E. coli* research is to continue modifying the species to improve the antibacterial qualities of the erythromycin it makes. The ultimate goal is to generate a drug effective enough to use in hospitals when other antibiotics fail. If that happens, we'll have *E. coli* to thank. ☘

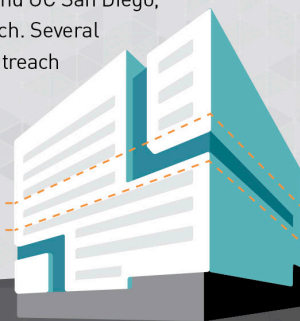
are struggling to treat “superbugs,” bacterial infections that have developed a resistance to existing drugs.

“We look at this as one contribution to the emerging theme of solutions to the antibiotic-resistance crisis,”

FAST TRACK TO TREATMENT

A \$16 million Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA), awarded to UB by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) this past summer, took a good thing and made it even better. The 18 recipients of the award, including Mt. Sinai and UC San Diego, are in the top tier of institutions engaged in translational research. Several factors, including UB's expertise in bioinformatics, community outreach programs and the Clinical and Translational Research Center (CTRC)—a building uniquely designed to foster interaction, with a research center above a hospital and collaborative spaces in between—helped secure our place in this elite group of institutions that are changing the face of medicine.

LABORATORIES ↑
COLLABORATIVE SPACE
HOSPITAL ↓



TRANSLATIONAL, OR “BENCH-TO-BEDSIDE” RESEARCH, DENOTES THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATING BASIC BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH INTO NEW THERAPIES:



T1 Translation to humans

Researchers perform studies in the lab and in animal models to develop new drugs, devices, vaccines and diagnostic tests.

T2 ... to patients

New treatments are tested in humans in clinical trials. Such trials compare a new drug with a placebo or a currently used drug to identify better drugs and novel treatments for diseases that currently have none.

T3 ... to practice

Researchers explore ways to best implement new treatments in a real-world, clinical setting, and evaluate their effect in the community.

T4 ... to population

Researchers assess the impact of new treatments on population health. This research may directly influence public policy by showing benefits of a new therapy on a widespread scale.

SPEEDING UP SCIENCE

The CTSA award will allow UB to provide better health care more quickly to more people through:

RESEARCH FUNDING

Without resources, a brilliant idea is just that: an idea. A portion of the grant will go to jump-starting pilot programs, or financing the preliminary development of a good idea. Researchers whose ideas take off can apply for larger, extramural grants.

ENROLLMENT IN CLINICAL TRIALS

Poor enrollment in clinical trials can slow down drug development and advances in health care. The CTRC is pursuing several strategies to boost enrollment, including utilizing biomedical informatics, partnering with Buffalo's Patient Voices Network (a patient-driven collaborative between patients and physicians) and reaching out to diverse patient populations through the newly established Clinical Research Office.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The CTSA includes a mentored research career-development program to train the next generation of leaders in translational research. The center is also hiring and training new workers, including research coordinators, data managers and bioinformaticians, who will play key roles on clinical research teams.



Beaker Briefs

Research highlights from the desk, lab and field in 50 words or less

By Marcene Robinson (B.A. '13)



Myth-Busting Tobacco

All tobacco is risky business. But not all products are equal. Unfortunately, contradicting reports leave the public misinformed, as researchers discovered that the overwhelming majority of Americans believe chewing tobacco and snuff are as dangerous as cigarettes, and almost half think e-cigarettes are. The reality: Cigarettes are far more lethal.

LED BY Public health researchers Marc Kiviniemi and Lynn Kozlowski

Community Clocks

For years we believed the sun to be nature's timer. But new research suggests that society also influences our internal rhythms. Investigators placed mice together in constant darkness and found that, even without light, they synchronized their daily schedules. The larger the group, the more in sync their behavior.

LED BY Psychology researcher Matthew Paul

Clean Coal

Despite gains by solar power, coal remains the nation's top producer of electricity. But the dark source of energy is also a major culprit behind greenhouse-gas emissions. New research hopes to clean up coal by converting it into a gas and using an energy-efficient filter to sift out carbon dioxide.

LED BY Chemical and biological engineering researchers Haiqing Lin and Mark Swihart



60 SECONDS WITH

Douglas Basford

Interview by Michael Flatt

Douglas Basford, a poet, translator and lecturer in UB's English department, recently won a Literature Translation Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts to support his translation of sonnets by the 15th-century Italian poet Domenico di Giovanni. It seems this 600-year-old poet, popularly known as "Il Burchiello" (the Little Barge) for the way he piled up images like merchandise on a boat, could still teach us a thing or two.

Why Il Burchiello?

I was casting about for something unusual. Wanting to avoid rights issues, I went back to the 15th century, to a vein of colloquial, satirical poetry called the "comico-realist" tradition. Burchiello's sonnets often read like an absurd catalog of things he had "seen," like peasants standing on a roof manufacturing air. Since his own time, critics have dismissed his work as nonsensical. On first reading him, I wasn't so sure.

What makes his poetry relevant to today's readers?

Literature, for much of history, has hovered around courtly or elite atmospheres. Burchiello's work comes instead from a highly charged, diverse social space—he owned a barbershop in the epicenter of Florence, where people of all stripes came by to hear him recite his poems. He could help us reimagine poetry in less formalized spaces than the academy. And his poems about exile, prison, poverty and social exclusion have a lot to say.

Apparently, he held improvised insult-sonnet matches, which sounds a lot like present-day freestyle battles in hip-hop. Is that just a bizarre coincidence?

Not at all! There's resonance in the desire to make one's presence and skills known. Both the "burchielleschi" and rappers, I think, know how language can enrich our lives and give a voice to the voiceless.

Burchiello was popular in his day, and his poetic style was imitated long after his death. Why do you think he isn't more of a household name now?

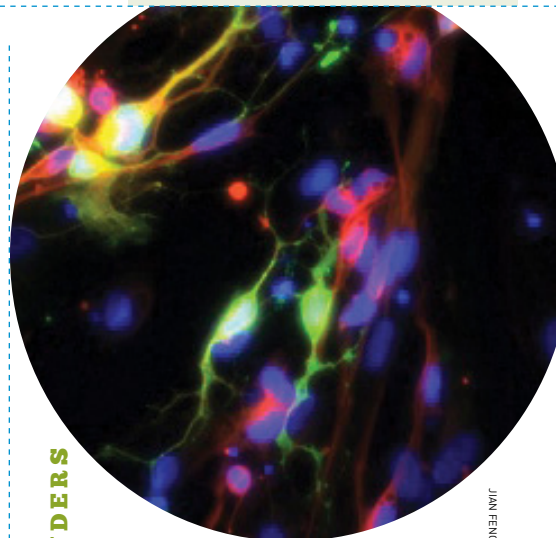
He's infamous in Italy. But generally it has to do with a long neglect of oral and satirical poetry. Anything other than the *dolce stil novo* ("sweet, new style") of Dante and Petrarch, the romantics, modernists and the like, has been labeled unserious. Only oddballs like me have picked up comico-realists.

As a translator, how do you maintain the integrity of a poem in a different language?

To start, I read the original over and over, to the point I hear the poet's voice inside me. But to maintain integrity is also to make your purposes seen—[renowned translator] Lawrence Venuti is right that the translator being "invisible" is a myth. My era has shaped my being as much as the poets' shaped theirs. The key is to be honest about where one's words come from.



Douglas Basford



JIAN FENG

SMALL WONDERS
By Charlotte Hsu

Growing Serotonin

A microscope image shows a colorful universe of neurons in a petri dish. Cells with different properties have been tagged with labels of varying hues. The green ones are neurons that produce serotonin, a chemical in the brain involved in regulating mood and mental states. UB physiology and biophysics professor Jian Feng led a study to generate these serotonin neurons in the lab—an advance that could lead to new methods of researching and treating mental illnesses, including depression, anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder.



Tweetable: A #UBuffalo postdoc was part of the research team that discovered *Homo naledi*, a previously unknown species of human ancestor.

DOUGLAS LEVINE

The Caged Cricket Sings (and Scuffles)

A 20th-century object reveals an age-old Chinese pastime

The Chinese love their crickets, both for their song and, less obviously, for their fighting prowess. Cricket fighting emerged during the 12th century, at which point the Chinese had already been keeping crickets in cages for a few hundred years. The example here is from Cravens World, a collection of cultural objects donated to the UB Anderson Gallery by Annette Cravens (MSW '68) in 2008. Smaller than 10 cm across and dating back to the early 1900s, this cage would have been used just decades before the communist regime banned cricket fighting and other “bourgeois entertainment.” Today, keeping the little buggers as pets for song and sport is back and bigger than ever.

Tiny ivory tower

Cricket cages come in a variety of shapes and designs, and are constructed from a range of materials, including jade, metal and wood. As with most objects, the material and ornateness of the cage reflect the wealth of the owner. This ivory specimen has two carvings of traditional Chinese motifs: A fisherman scene on top and a seated Buddha on the bottom alongside the artist's signature.



Prize fighters

There are dozens of markets in China today dedicated to the sale of fighting crickets. While most go for around \$2 to \$8—still a lot for a bug you might run over with your lawnmower—others sell for more than \$1,000. Loud chirping supposedly indicates a good fighter, as does originating from the province of Shandong, where crickets are large, noisy and ferocious. But the big money is in gambling (illegal but common), with people laying down tens of thousands of dollars per match.

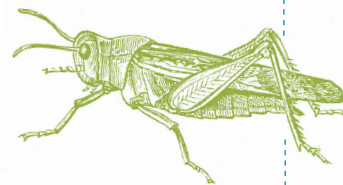
And in this corner...

Before the battle begins, crickets are weighed; they only fight within their weight class, just like human wrestlers. Next, two crickets are put into a ring and their owners poke their antennae to annoy them. After they're riled up, the crickets go at it. Some cower immediately; others spar off, grappling and biting with their enormous mandibles. Fights usually end without “bloodshed,” but occasionally a leg—or six—is lost. Today, fights are so popular that some are shown on huge screens so crowds can catch the teeny yet ferocious action.

Did you know?

Only male crickets “sing.”

One section of each wing, called the file, is covered with between 50 and 300 ridges. Another area—the scraper—is, well, scraped against the file to create the chirping sound we associate with crickets, aka stridulation. Chirps are used to both attract females and repel other males.



Locker Room

- » A man of his word
- » Sprinter's delight
- » Passion players



Globe-trotters

When it comes to internationalism, UB women's hoops leads the MAC

The women's basketball international contingent, clockwise from #15: Mirte Scheper, Ayoleka Sodade, Katherine Ups, Courtney Wilkins, Tamara Brcina, Stephanie Reid, Liisa Ups.

By David J. Hill » Coming to Alumni Arena this winter ... The International Basketball Federation World Tour! Not really, but it might seem that way given the roster of the UB women's basketball team.

With seven players from outside the country, UB has more international players than any other women's basketball team in the MAC. Toledo is second with four players from abroad. By contrast, Central Michigan's roster is composed mostly of athletes from that state, minus one from Indiana. UB's roster also includes players from California, Kansas and Mississippi. Sophomore Cassie Oursler of Grand Island is the lone Western New Yorker.

"We've kind of gone crazy with this overseas thing," laughs sophomore guard Liisa Ups, one of four Australians on the team. "It would be cool to see on a map."

Ups came to Buffalo in 2014 with her twin sister, Katherine, a guard for the Bulls. "I'm so lucky to get to come overseas," Liisa Ups says. "I'm doing stuff that when I was 12, I never would have dreamed of."

Also on the roster are Courtney Wilkins and Stephanie Reid from Australia, Tamara Brcina from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ayoleka Sodade from Canada, and Mirte Scheper from the Netherlands.

How do all these international players end up in Buffalo? UB's reputation for globalism helps. "The whole world is here," says Bulls fourth-year head coach Felisha Legette-Jack, who guided UB to its second-ever MAC Tournament semifinal appearance last season. "It's easy to recruit to Buffalo because our international numbers are among the best in the country."

Bulls assistant coach Cherie Cordoba, a native of Australia and former pro who was Legette-Jack's assistant at Hofstra and Indiana, helped recruit the Ups twins and

CONTINUED

DOUGLAS LEVINE

Locker Room

Scheper, a highly touted 6-foot-4 freshman who played in the Netherlands' national development program.

Scheper arrived in Buffalo at the end of August. "It's all very new," she says. "In the Netherlands, we have different shops for everything. Here, you can pretty much buy everything in one store."

If you're wondering whether the program shies away from mentioning the "s" word to international recruits from warmer climes, look no further than the T-shirts the players wear. They read: "UB women's basketball. It's a different kind of cool," with icicles hanging off the word 'cool.' "We're embracing who we are," Legette-Jack says. "What's not to like about Buffalo? Once you see it, it's like, wow, this is a cool place."

While the Bulls' international flavor provides an intriguing dynamic in the locker room and during team activities, how the team meshes on the court may take some time to develop. That's OK with Legette-Jack.

"What really gets my juices flowing is the rawness, the unknown—not knowing who's going to emerge," she explains. "I like the pieces with this group. They have size. They have swagger. They're mentally tough. If they stay, if they keep believing, this team will be in the Sweet 16 in a few years."

Now that would be something to write home about. ♣

"It's easy to recruit to Buffalo because our international numbers are among the best in the country."

Felisha Legette-Jack

'Bo' Knows

The NFL's Brandon Oliver returned to UB to earn his degree—and send kids a message

By Jonah Bronstein » Brandon Oliver came back to Western New York in fall 2014, carrying the football for the San Diego Chargers in pursuit of a victory over the Buffalo Bills at Ralph Wilson Stadium. It was a proud moment for Oliver, as well as his family, friends and anyone associated with UB athletics. Oliver—or "Bo," as he is known on campus—returned again at the start of the spring semester, this time carrying his textbooks in pursuit of the final credits needed for his bachelor's degree in sociology.

It was an equally proud moment when he walked across the graduation stage in May.

"That was always a goal of mine, to come back and finish when I was done playing football," Oliver says by phone following a Chargers' training camp practice. Speaking to youth groups in the San Diego area last year motivated Oliver to finish his schooling now. "I didn't want to waste any more time," the second-year running back says. "If you get the opportunity to do something great and honor God, you have to do it." The NFL's Continuing Education Program paid Oliver's tuition, and the opportunity to resume training with close friend John Opfer (BA '99) at his Proformance facility near the North Campus only increased Oliver's desire to come back.

"He felt like a hypocrite getting in front of kids and telling them to stay in school when he didn't have a degree himself," says Opfer, who worked with Oliver six days a week during the semester, then had him over for



Brandon Oliver on graduation day with UB running backs coach Matt Simon. With them are Simon's wife Lisa (far right), and stepdaughter Madison Wells-James—"Bo's biggest fans, win or lose," says Simon.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Sunday dinners. "He wanted to tell kids that he walked the walk."

Thus, rather than staying in sunny San Diego or even returning to his hometown of Miami during the off-season, Oliver found himself enduring one of the harshest Western New York winters in recent history. Ever the optimist, he turned the experience into inspiration for a new passion project: When his NFL days are done, he says, he wants to focus on building homeless shelters.

"Brandon is such a great representative of the university," says Matt Simon, Oliver's former position coach (and one of the few assistants retained by new head coach Lance Leipold). "He's the kind of person that I want my daughters to marry. He is a man of his word." ♣

VERY SUPERSTITIOUS

Pregame Rituals of UB's student-athletes

Sprinter and long jumper Ryan Billian is not what you would call a foodie. And he's more than just a picky eater. The senior from Levittown, N.Y., has sworn off entire nutritional categories. "I've never eaten a vegetable," he admits. "The only meat I ate before college was the pepperoni on my pizza." This selectivity plays into his prerace warmup. In high school, he found that strawberries—one of the few foods he will eat—helped him cross the line a bit faster. "Whether the superstition is true or not, the strawberries seemed to be helping me." Indeed, last year, Billian qualified for the NCAA nationals in the 100-meter dash. Keep chomping those berries, Ryan, and we'll look for you on the podium!



TweetaBULL: Senior Matt Weiser garnered national Tight End of the Week honors after catching a program record 10 passes for 131 yards against Nevada.

The Clubhouse

Stats from right, center and left field

Compiled by Michael Flatt

1.5

Benevolent Bull

UB Athletics received a \$1.5 million bequest, its largest ever, from Dr. Burt H. Rubin (BA '74), who played hockey for the Bulls. Thanks a million-plus, Doc!

Taking on the world

Freshman 197-pounder Nate Rose became the first Bull ever to qualify for the World Wrestling Championships. Representing Trinidad and Tobago, the 19-year-old went 1-1—not a bad record against some of the best grapplers on the planet.

197

She's a Beaut!

The Buffalo Beauts, of the newly formed National Women's Hockey League, signed UB architecture graduate student Kimberly Sass, who played goalie at Colgate from 2008 to 2012. Sass was stalwart between the pipes for the Raiders, recording significant playing time all four years.

4

Leading from behind

Sophomore goalie Laura Dougall recorded shut-outs in six of the women's soccer team's first 12 matches this fall, logging a 0.80 save percentage. Is she majoring in civil engineering? Because it sounds like she set up a wall back there!

0.80

"Some of these guys could have played Division I. They chose UB for the academics."

Sal Valvo, head coach



UNDER THE RADAR

The best UB team you've never heard of

UB hockey faces off against some of the best club teams in the country.

By David J. Hill » They don't receive athletic scholarships or any of the other perks of being Division I athletes. Still, they show up for practice several times a week—before the sun rises.

Why? "We really want to be here. We love to play," says Gavin Evancho, a junior forward on the UB men's club hockey team, which last year advanced to the American Collegiate Hockey Association (ACHA) national tournament for the first time in a decade. They played one game, losing to Colorado. "Our goal this year is to win a couple games and make a statement," says Evancho.

UB has a long history of hockey. The first team formed in 1895, according to University Archives. The program continued on and off through 1969, when it became an official varsity sport. In 1987, the university discontinued hockey, relegating it to club status.

UB's regular season runs from September until mid-February, with home games at the Northtown Center, the sports complex just across from UB's North Campus. The team competes in the ACHA Division I's Northeast Collegiate Hockey League and faces some of the best club teams in the country, as well as regional rivals Niagara, Canisius and Syracuse.

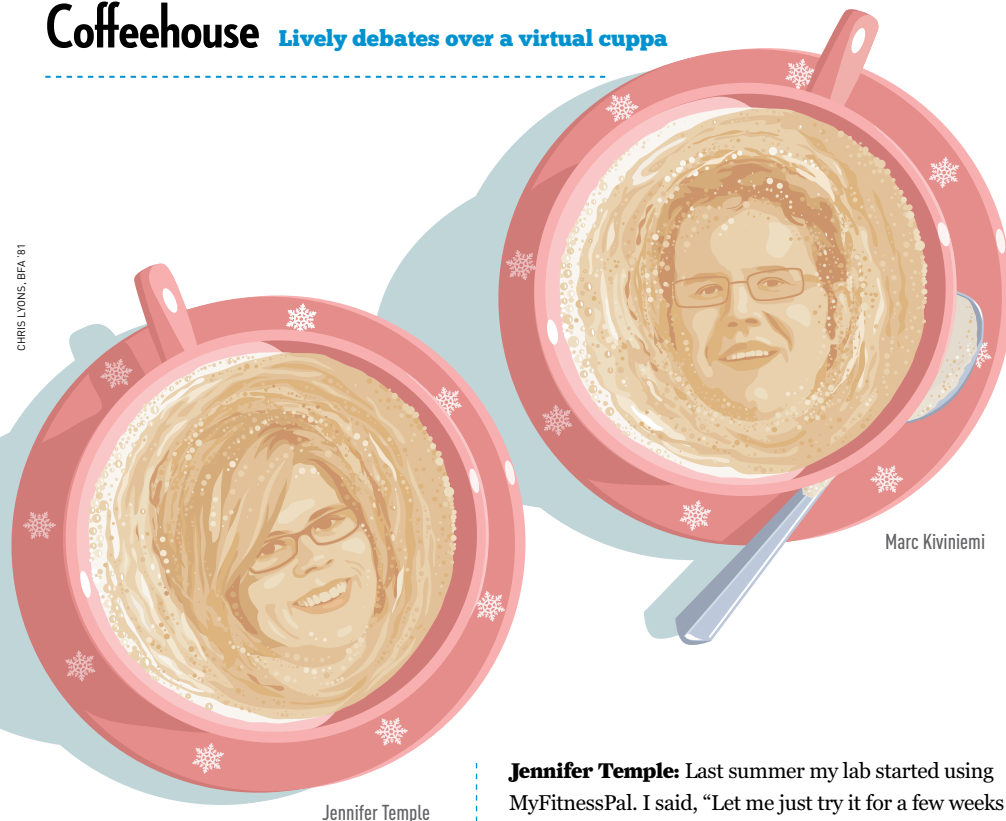
The majority of the players on the current 27-man roster hail from Western New York—and they're pretty tough. "The phrase 'club hockey' is not what people think it is," says head coach Sal Valvo. "Some of these guys could have played Division I. They chose UB for the academics."

"We're gritty and we're fast," adds senior defenseman Sean Dungan. "I think we're in good shape to go to nationals again this March. We play our hearts out every time we're on the ice." ❖

For more photos, visit buffalo.edu/atbuffalo.

DOUGLAS LEVIERE

CHRIS LYONS, BFA '81



Jennifer Temple

The Ups and Downs of Self-Tracking

More and more Americans are using self-tracking devices to monitor their personal health. Is this a positive development, allowing individuals to take responsibility for their well-being? Or is it just the latest fitness fad? We asked Marc Kiviniemi, associate professor in the Department of Community Health and Health Behavior, and Jennifer Temple, associate professor in the Department of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences, to share their perspectives.

Jennifer Temple: Last summer my lab started using MyFitnessPal. I said, “Let me just try it for a few weeks and see how it goes,” and I got crazy obsessed with it. But I lost 12 pounds! So then I became really interested in who’s using this and why—and for how long.

Marc Kiviniemi: That’s similar to my experience with dietary monitoring. I tend to do it for a week or two every six months or so, when I feel myself slipping in portion sizes and stuff like that. And it absolutely works to make me more focused on what I’m eating. The question for me is: Is that kind of monitoring the most optimal way to get to the awareness? Because it involves work, such that I can’t imagine somebody doing that every day for the rest of their lives.

JT: I think that with all of these things, the novelty wears off. We have good empirical data that monitoring what you’re eating, or how active you’re being, helps. But it’s the same thing with the Fitbit or a pedometer. Give people a pedometer and they’re monitoring their steps—for a couple weeks.

MK: Exactly. I also wonder which portion of the population we’re actually reaching. You and I are both relatively active people who are already concerned about health. So is this just another way for the monitoring part of the population—the people who care about their health anyway—to do it? Are we getting the folks who seriously need some data to rein in their diet or increase their exercise?

JT: In the studies we’ve done in the lab, the only population we seem to affect are lean, health-conscious females. I come from a family of people who are sedentary and overweight. And every single family member of mine has a Fitbit. But my mom

gets 2, 3, 4,000 steps a day. I’m like, “You have this \$120 thing on your wrist to monitor your steps, but you’re not trying to get more steps!” I think there is a segment of the population that wants this thing because it’s new and novel, but it’s not really helping them to be healthier.

MK: If people are going to do anything other than waste \$120 and get a lot of data they don’t know what to do with, they’ve got to use the monitoring to set goals.

JT: I don’t know who facilitates that. Whether physicians need to facilitate that, or researchers, but I think it’s something that’s missing for the general population that is not already health-conscious.

MK: When I look at the iPhone and the new health app—there are 80 things that my iPhone purports to be collecting about me. I don’t know what 50 of them are. I really wonder for a lot of folks, do they even have the level of health literacy and knowledge to understand what a tracking number means, and what the realistic goals should be?

JT: It’s really striking how many health apps there are, and how this is the newest way to try and get money from people who are trying to lose weight, maybe spent decades of their life trying to lose weight, and have not been successful. So they’re looking for something novel, and these health apps are about that. But the whole weight loss industry—it’s a billion dollar industry because people are always looking for something that might work because everything else has failed. The reason everything else has failed is because people don’t know how to use it effectively or can’t stick with it for the long term. And that same thing is going to be true with these health apps. I’m sort of conflicted about it from that perspective. I think there’s a lot of utility out there, but I think in some sense the companies that are developing these apps are preying on a vulnerable population.

MK: There’s another side of this too, in that these apps can encourage obsessive behaviors. I think it’s always important to keep in mind that the ultimate goal is quality of life and happiness. Health is definitely a component of that; it lets you live longer, look better, have more energy. But you can get to a point where you’re so obsessed over the health consequences that you’re not actually enjoying the experience anymore. ☘

How do you take your coffee?

Jenn: 100 percent black

Marc: With caffeine and a little bit of milk

Mixed Media

» Willie Nile's musical river » Comic close-up



Terrible Beauty

UB artist Joan Linder finds her muse in Niagara Falls' toxic past

Above: "Ground I," 2014, ink on paper, 46 x 46 inches (detail).
Inset: Joan Linder

our country's worst environmental disasters.

Known for her meticulous realism, Linder creates large-scale panoramas as well as intimate domestic tableaux that tackle such hot-button issues as sexual identity, technology and family. One critically hailed show, "Sink," included sketches of the contents of her own kitchen sink during the years she was home with two children. "Those dirty dishes seemed to echo

By Lauren Newkirk Maynard » Joan Linder is documenting a haunting legacy. The associate professor of art has spent countless hours this past year sketching brownfields and toxic waste sites in and around Love Canal, the location of one of

the 'women's work' I was immersed in at the time," she says.

For her current project, Linder has crisscrossed the area near Love Canal, parking along chain-link fences on crumbling, dead-end streets. She has sat among scrubby weeds and roadside flowers to capture their shape on paper, or taken photos so she can later painstakingly recreate the landscapes in her home studio.

The first batch of sketches appeared in a Buffalo gallery last spring, followed by a larger show in New York City in October. Eventually, she hopes to exhibit the entire body of work locally, but when that will be is unclear. "It's all still surfacing," she says of the environmental damage, but may as well be referring to the project. "You know what they say—an art project is never done, only abandoned." ❖

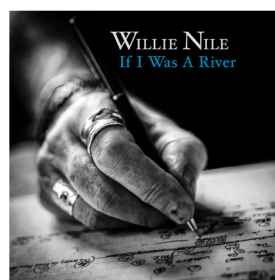




In Record Time

Folk rocker Willie Nile celebrates four decades of making music

By Mark Norris (BA '94) » Willie Nile (BA '71) has seen it all. A lifelong rock 'n' roll troubadour who has donated guitar strings to John Lennon, toured with The Who and jammed with Bruce Springsteen, the Buffalo native is hard to impress. Still, Nile is thrilled to recount the luminaries he met during his college years.



"I used to see [Robert] Creeley and [Allen] Ginsberg read. I saw Frank Zappa, Procol Harum and Janis Joplin play," says Nile somewhat breathlessly after a hometown gig in Buffalo. "I had a really rich time at UB ... I even got gassed!" he adds, recalling the protests that swept campus in 1970.

Inspired by the Beat writers, French poetry and early rock singles, Nile knew he was destined to pursue a career in the arts. After UB, he hitchhiked to New York City determined to record, but was sidelined by pneumonia. When he recovered, he performed as a solo act in the dwindling folk and nascent punk scenes. Years of soaking up the smoky nightclub atmosphere and rubbing shoulders with his idols eventually paid off for the songwriter. His self-titled debut album was released in 1980 to wide acclaim, though little chart success.

Dozens of recordings later, Nile's blend of literate folk and gritty rock remains a critical favorite. His latest album, the quietly introspective "If I Was a River" (2014), has earned some of the highest praise of Nile's long career—in its review, the UK magazine "Uncut" called him "New York City's unofficial poet laureate." Notable fans include songwriting icons like Springsteen, Bono and Paul Simon. Mainstream commercial success, however, has remained elusive and, according to the artist, unwanted.

"Fame is not a path that's going to get you to a place of great meaning," Nile says. "Make no mistake, I'd love to be stinking rich, but the idea of fame just makes me laugh. I'm basically a storyteller—that's what I love to do most."

Yet Nile's profile continues to grow. In the past year he has joined Springsteen and The Who onstage in New York City, and met with activist Malala Yousafzai in Washington, D.C. (Nile's song "This Is Our Time" was used as the theme for a Voice of America event about the Nobel Peace Prize winner.) He is completing a new studio album, planning an autobiography and, from all appearances, having the time of his life.

"I've been so lucky. I'm still learning at my age," says Nile, now 67. One could say that he is teaching, too. His rousing live performances and nonstop tour schedule are enough to inspire any up-and-coming musician. ♣



Tweetable: For @BannedBooksWeek, @UBLibraries hosted a campus Read-Out of beloved, blacklisted works like "Green Eggs and Ham" and "The Great Gatsby."



JACQUELINE TURNER

He's Got Talent

Comic Gary Vider is an overnight sensation seven years in the making

By Sean Cunningham » Asked when he felt like he was going to make it in comedy, Gary Vider (BA '06) jokes, "About a week ago." His big break, in case you missed it, was appearing on ABC's reality show "America's Got Talent" (AGT) last fall and advancing to the finals: "People actually know I'm a stand-up comedian now, even though I've been doing it for close to seven years."

The journey began here at UB, where English professor/former comedian Andrew Stott helped Vider write a spec script for an episode of "The Office" as a work-study program during his senior year. After graduating came the struggle, both to make a living and to establish his act. ("I did a show at a bowling alley. No one was paying attention; they were just bowling—I bombed real hard.") His financial problems inspired some breakthrough material. On "Conan" in June 2014 he recounted getting fired as a receptionist, and on AGT he delivered the line in his typical deadpan fashion: "I make \$11,000 a year, which is not a good amount if you're familiar with money."

Vider persevered with some encouragement from established comics (former "Saturday Night Live" star Rob Schneider liked him so much, he flew him

to LA to do gigs) before coming to national attention on AGT. Vider says simply, "You need to have a sports mentality. You might strike out, but you still have to get back up to the plate again."

How was the AGT experience? Sleepless, apparently, as Vider scrambled to prepare the best possible set for each appearance while getting additional material ready for each successive level. He handled the celebrity judges largely by ignoring them: "I tried not to look at any of the judges when I was performing. It's super weird telling a joke and Heidi Klum is there!" His favorite, though, was shock jock Howard Stern. "He was my number one judge I wanted to make laugh."

With AGT behind him, the New York City-based Vider is now focused on pitching TV show ideas and hitting the road to develop a solid hour of material, while also helping to mentor the next generation of funny people. "With AGT, I should be able to book a good amount of road work and take some younger comics with me," he says.

Will he have to dump the jokes about his struggles? While his act will evolve as he gets older, Vider says, you can expect some punchlines to stay the same: "I am still very much in debt." ♦



David Wedekindt
(MBA '02), director
of marketing, Center
for the Arts (CFA)

Nightstand WHAT WE'RE READING

"One Way Out: The Inside History of the Allman Brothers Band," by Alan Paul

"[The book] compiles hundreds of interviews and documents on how the band endured endless ups and downs in its 45-year history, yet still had an impact on music and the live entertainment industry. I've had the pleasure of speaking with several band members when they played at the CFA with their solo projects, and am enjoying learning more about what has inspired them."

UB Bookshelf

WHAT WE'RE WRITING

Muscle Cars

Stephen G. Eoannou (BA '85)

With Buffalo as a backdrop, "Muscle Cars" redefines the concept of masculinity by exploring the relationships men have with their family members and friends. Tales include an obsessive bodybuilder's budding friendship with his younger neighbor and two longtime friends' scheme to steal Ted Williams' frozen head. (Santa Fe Writer's Project, 2015)

Three Plays

Deborah Meadows (BA '77)

A 2014 Los Angeles Poet Laureate nominee, Meadows interprets the philosophical and linguistic boundaries of a collapsing world while raising profound questions about the inevitable uncertainties of life. (BlazeVOX [books], 2015)

It's Not What You Sell—It's How You Sell It

Michael Saraf (BA '90)

Behind every successful business is a group of loyal customers. In this self-help book for business enthusiasts, Saraf shares business secrets with his readers, including tips on how to appeal to a wide consumer base through sales marketing and customer service. (Lulu, 2014)

George V. Higgins: The Life and Writings

Erwin H. Ford II (PhD '88, MA '84, BA '74)

Ford offers an intimate look into the brilliant yet turbulent life and career of George V.

Higgins, an American crime fiction writer (and one-time writer-in-residence at UB). Higgins' writings contained harsh, realistic dialogue centered on politics and personal redemption. (McFarland, 2014)

Ron's Ramblings

Ron Salmonson (BA '66)

Everyday experiences come to life in Salmonson's first collection of short stories—a compendium of vivid memories of close relatives, intimate conversations in the dentist's office and off-topic musings. (Lulu, 2013)

Calling alumni authors

Send us your latest novel, mystery thriller, memoir, poetry collection, non-fiction or other published work! Last two years only, please. Mail a review copy to At Buffalo, 330 Crofts Hall, Buffalo, N.Y. 14260.



A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing glasses, large hoop earrings, and a tan trench coat, stands in front of a large, weathered concrete building. She has large, dark, feathered wings attached to her back. The building behind her has many windows and some structural damage. The sky is overcast.

Future Imperfect

Story by Elizabeth Hand

THE SPECULATIVE FICTION OF UB ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR NNEDI OKORA

Photographs by Douglas Levere



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read one of Nnedi Okorafor's novels is to be propelled into a near-future, magically enhanced version of our own world, at once immediately recognizable and unutterably strange.

Okorafor herself has spent a lifetime shifting between different worlds. One of four children of Nigerian Igbo immigrants who moved here in the late 1960s, she grew up in the Chicago suburbs, with frequent visits to her parents' home country. Her father, a cardiovascular surgeon who was chief of surgery at several Chicago hospitals, came to the U.S. to attend medical school; her mother, a registered nurse and midwife, went on to earn a PhD in health administration.

"They were both at the top of their class from grade school through high school through college—that's what they grew up with," says Okorafor. "Bring those two together and it's like, wow. My family and all my siblings have the highest degrees. In my family you had no choice."

Her parents were also spectacular athletes—her mother on Nigeria's Olympic javelin team, her father a famous hurdler in Africa.

OKORAFOR IS STEEPED IN A GRITTY REALISM

As teenagers, Nnedi and her sisters were nationally known tennis stars. “Like Venus and Serena Williams before Venus and Serena Williams,” Okorafor laughs. “It was big! Now I’m traveling the world for literature; before I was traveling for tennis.”

Most authors can trace their love of writing back to childhood, but while Okorafor was a precocious reader, she assumed she’d be a professional athlete. She went on to become a track star in high school, despite developing severe scoliosis when she was 13. The summer after her freshman year at the University of Illinois, where she was on the tennis team, she underwent spinal fusion to correct her scoliosis,

A friend suggested she take a creative writing class. “I didn’t even know there was such a thing as ‘creative writing’! The rest is history. I found out I loved it, and I was very good at it.”

She was very, very good indeed: Okorafor is now one of the most highly praised SFF (science fiction and fantasy) writers of her generation. After receiving her undergraduate degree, she got an MA in journalism from Michigan State and a PhD in English from the University of Illinois, Chicago. In 2001, she attended the prestigious Clarion Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers’ Workshop. “I left Clarion with a confidence I didn’t have beforehand. Prior to Clarion, I’d gone

through many years of writing programs where professors told me that science fiction and fantasy were not real literature and this type of writing was below me.”

Her first adult novel, “Who Fears Death,” appeared in 2010 to great acclaim. A frighteningly believable dystopia set in West Africa, the novel confronts rape, genocide, female genital mutilation, gender equality and racial strife, all without sacrificing humor, romantic pas-

sion—or hope. One reviewer called it the “angriest SFF novel to broadside the genre.” Yet the book incorporates science fiction and Igbo folklore into a transcendent tale that’s compulsively readable, despite its emotionally and politically charged subject matter.

Okorafor’s own experiences of racism date to when hers was the first black family to move to the suburban enclave of South Holland Park. The racism was “quite epic,” she says. “We were always running from racist older kids. But racism never deterred me from doing anything. Coming from Nigeria, my parents were aware that the United States had a lot of issues, but they were also aware that it had a lot of opportunities. I was instilled with that attitude—there are issues here but you get over them. Obstacles should not keep you from attaining what you seek.

“My parents were not helicopter parents,” she adds. “But there were times when they had to swoop

in and directly protect us. That helped us deal with it too—we had each other and we were strong.”

Okorafor imparts this strength to her female characters, whose flaws don’t keep them from expanding political and cultural boundaries. “I’ve always been surrounded by powerful, interesting, unique women. My grandmother on my mother’s side was a tiny market woman who nurtured and commanded the family. My auntie, the oldest sibling of my father, was wealthy, independent and free in a very patriarchal Nigerian Igbo culture; she was tall, gregarious and married whomever she wanted. I’m a diasporic Nigerian Igbo woman, meaning I grew up in the presence of a very patriarchal culture within the United States. So I grew up watching powerful and intelligent women navigating their way through—and often suppressed by—this culture. This led to much of what I wrote about in ‘Who Fears Death.’”

The novel also, Okorafor says, “came out of a very dark time for me. My father passed in 2004. A lot of the rage in the novel was that ... a lot of the rage came from me. It was also the result of stories I’d heard from family members throughout my life. It very much is an angry novel, but it’s justifiable rage, a type of rage that brings change.”

Growing up, frequent trips to Nigeria exposed Okorafor to her extended Igbo family and Nigerian culture. “I was born and raised in the U.S., yet from a young age my parents were bringing us back to Nigeria to connect with our heritage and our relatives. So you have the experience of being raised in the U.S., you have the American experience, which as a black person comes with certain spices,” she laughs. “Racism and all the -isms.”

On the other hand, she says, “On those trips, we weren’t tourists—we were family—but my siblings and I were also American Nigerians and treated as such. Sometimes this meant that relatives or other kids treated us as if we were incomplete, other times as if we were different, and still other times, as if we were the same.”

It’s this sense of being both inside and outside of a culture, of being a participant observer in a world where one is not always understood, that gives Okorafor’s fiction its emotional and liminal charge. Her stories are always transcending, sometimes transgressing, the threshold of what it means to be a woman, to be black, to be American, to be African, to be human. She is a 21st-century shaman who conjures the past as well as the future, and is unafraid of confronting the specters of contemporary genocide.

“In my family, the ghosts of the Biafran War hover, as over every Nigerian family in some way. There are always stories that you hear, of families’ experiences with the war. When I was writing about



which doctors said would cripple her within a few years if left untreated.

And this is where Nnedi Okorafor’s own story took a dramatic and potentially tragic turn. A relatively common procedure for athletes, spinal fusion holds a very small risk of causing paralysis—about 1 percent.

“I was 19, and I woke up paralyzed. Turns out I was in that 1 percent. My surgeon was crying—I had just been named Athlete of the Year in Illinois. I went from being the super athlete to being paralyzed within 24 hours. I could either have gone mad in that hospital bed, or found some way to keep myself from going mad. The only way I could stop myself from going mad was by writing stories.”

During the course of that fateful summer, sensation slowly returned to Okorafor’s body. She learned to walk again, using first a wheelchair, then a walker. “By the time I went back to school I was using a cane. And I was writing.”

genocide in 'Who Fears Death,' I mined from my own family background as well. Also, I listen—when things are reported on the news, the human part is missing, and I can hear the part that's missing. And I'm aware of that and I purposely fill that part in. Just because I'm happy and comfortable, that doesn't mean everyone else is. And that concerns me."

"Who Fears Death" received numerous honors, including the World Fantasy Award and France's Le Prix Imaginales, and gave birth to a prequel, "The Book of Phoenix." Her other works have received the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa, the CBS Parallax Award and the Macmillan Writer's Prize for Africa. And while her adult novels can deal unflinchingly with highly charged issues, she has also written two books for younger readers, "Long Juju Man" and "Iridessa and the Secret of the Never Mine," as well as the young adult novels "Zahrah the Windseeker," "The Shadow Speaker" and "Akata Witch," all steeped in Afrocentric culture and lives.

"Kabu Kabu," a collection of short stories, appeared in 2013, and her most recent book, "Lagoon," is a "first contact" novel set in the kaleidoscopic metropolis of contemporary Lagos. "Every time I've been there, I've had some—or several—moments of terror and joy," she says. "It's a fascinating city. And because of my insider/outsider dual point of view, I'm able to write about it with blunt honesty and strange detail."

In scarcely more than a dozen years, Okorafor has published a dozen books, along with numerous short stories and essays. She remains almost supernaturally busy, dividing her time between Buffalo and the Chicago suburbs, where her family still lives, and continuing to produce (she's currently at work on "Breaking Kola," a sequel to "Akata Witch"). Several of her works, including "Who Fears Death," have been optioned for films. She is also parenting a 12-year-old daughter and, of course, teaching and mentoring her students at UB—a job she feels as passionately about as she does her writing.

"I have students who write horror, comedic fiction, fantasy, science fiction, magical realism, suspense, slipstream, a bit of everything," she says. "And that's perfect for me because I love variety. I also love the fact that I've gone from being a student in English departments where science fiction and fantasy were deeply frowned upon, to teaching it within a really dynamic and innovative English department with students hungry to write it. That's what I call progress."✦

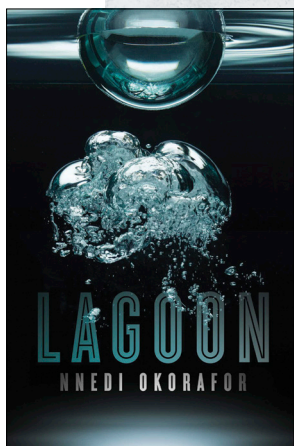
Elizabeth Hand is an award-winning writer and critic who divides her time between the Maine coast and London. Her 14th novel, "Hard Light," will be published in early 2016.

Lagoon By Nnedi Okorafor

AN EXCERPT

Chapter 2 The Boy and the Lady

Only two people on the beach witnessed the watery abduction of Adaora and the two men from Nigeria's Bar Beach. One was a young boy. Just before the boom, his guardian had been standing several feet away having a heated discussion with the owner of one of the shacks selling mineral, mainly orange Fanta and Coca-Cola. The boy was staring at something else. His stomach was growling, but he forgot about his hunger for the moment.



In the moonlight, he couldn't clearly see the creature, but as it walked out of the water even he knew it was not human. All his mind would register was the word "smoke." At least until the creature walked up the quiet beach and stepped into the flickering light from one of the restaurants. By then it had become a naked dark-skinned African woman with long black braids. She reminded the boy of a woman whose purse he'd once stolen.

She'd stood there for several moments, watching the three people who came from three different directions and ended up standing before each other. Then the strange woman creature silently ran back to the water and dove in like Mami Wata.

Rubbing his itchy head, the boy decided that he was seeing things, as he often did when he grew confused. He flared his nostrils and breathed through his mouth as he tried to focus back on reality. The great booming sound rattled his brain even more. Then came the wave that looked like the hand of a powerful water spirit. The boy saw it take the three people, one who was a woman and two who were men. And just before it did, he saw one of those people throw a black bird into the air that caught itself and flew into the night.

Nevertheless, he could not speak or even process any of this information for he was both mute and mentally handicapped. He stared at

where the three people had been and now were not. Then he smiled, saliva glistening in the left corner of his mouth, because somewhere deep in his restrained brain, he had a profound understanding that things around him were about to change forever and he liked this idea very much.

The other witness of the abduction was a young woman named Fisayo. She was a hard-working, book-reading secretary by day and a prostitute by night. She, too, noticed the creature woman who emerged from the water. And she, too, thought the word "smoke," but she also thought "shape-shifter."

"I am seeing the devil," she whispered to herself. She turned away and dropped to her knees. She was wearing a short tight skirt and the sand was warm and soft on her shins and kneecaps.

She prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive her for all her sins and take her to heaven, for surely the rapture was here. When the boom came, she shut her eyes and tried to pray harder. The pain of death would be her atonement. But deep down she knew she was a sinner and there was nothing that would ever wipe that away. She got to her feet and turned around just in time to see the woman and two men snatched up by a huge fist of water. Just before it happened, one of them had released something black and evil into the air like a poison.

She stood there, staring at the spot where they had been and no longer were. She waited for the water to take her, too. The fist had to be the hand of Satan, and she was one of the biggest sinners on earth. Oh the things she'd done, so many, many times. Sometimes it was just to fill her empty belly. She trembled and started sweating. Her armpits prickled. She hated her tiny skirt, tight tank top, red pumps, the itchy straight-haired brown wig on her head. When nothing else happened, she went to the nearest bar and ordered a cranberry and vodka. She would anxiously tell her next john, a businessman from the United States, what she had seen. But he wasn't interested in anything she had to say. He was more interested in filling her mouth than watching it flap with useless dumb words.

But she wouldn't forget. And when it all started, she would become one of the loudest prophets of doom in Lagos.

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A photograph of a modern building at dusk. The building features a prominent wooden facade on the left and a glass-enclosed section on the right. The interior lights are on, and the sky is a deep blue. The text 'The GRoW H' is overlaid at the bottom, with 'GRoW' in green and 'The' and 'H' in white.

The GRoW H

More than two years in the making, UB's solar-powered



Home!

ed masterpiece gains national recognition

Story by Julie Wesolowski

The GRow Home on display at the U.S. Department of Energy's 2015 Solar Decathlon in Irvine, Calif.

With its sleek lines

and minimalist design, the GRow Home looks like any contemporary house you'd see in a modern architecture magazine.

But this isn't just any house. Designed to appeal to Buffalo's burgeoning urban gardening population, the solar-powered home incorporates spaces where residents can garden, relax or work (GRow); includes a greenhouse and kitchen for growing, processing, cooking and storing food; and generates 30 percent more energy than it consumes in Buffalo's challenging climate. For these cutting-edge features and more, it took second place in the prestigious U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Decathlon competition.

The 1,100-square-foot house, one of 14 finalists in the biennial contest (20 were chosen from the original pool, but six dropped out along the way), went up against other collegiate teams in a multi-challenge competition based in Irvine, Calif., in October. In addition to coming in second overall, UB placed in the top five in all 10 sub-contests.

For two years, more than 200 students from 14 different departments, under the faculty direction of Assistant Professor of Architecture Martha Bohm, worked to design, create and build the GRow Home—first in the classroom and then in a Tonawanda, N.Y.-based warehouse donated by a corporate sponsor. From this past June until mid-September, UB students worked 12 hours a day, six days a week, to build the house. In mid-September, it was disassembled piece-by-piece in a matter of weeks, packed onto two flatbed tractor trailers and shipped 2,500 miles to be reassembled at the competition site.

ALL PHOTOS, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, BY THOMAS KELSEY AND CAROL LAUREN/US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY SOLAR DECATHLON



The Three Zones

1

The Garden Zone

This 290-square-foot GRoWlarium (greenhouse/solarium) provides ample room for the home gardener to grow vegetables in any weather. The sun heats the space in colder months, creating conditions to extend the growing season beyond what it would be outdoors. In summer, the space opens up into a pleasantly shaded outdoor living space.



2

The Relax Zone

This small, super-insulated zone includes a bedroom and living space opening on to a private patio area. It's perfect for Buffalo: cozy in the winter, but with easy access to the outdoors in summer. When the weather is temperate, high-performance folding glass doors connect the interior conditioned space to the GRoWlarium and exterior deck, making the house almost 50 percent larger while also minimizing the need to heat or air-condition the space.



3

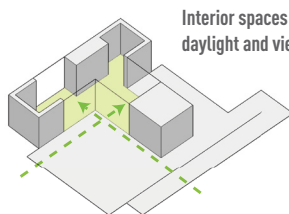
The Work Zone

Connected to the Garden Zone, the Work Zone is a substantial kitchen/eating area where home gardeners can wash, can and store food. Rooftop solar panels and a system for catching and storing rain provide energy and water.

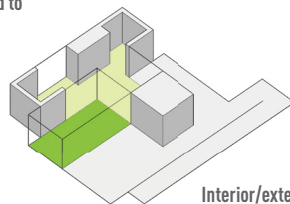
Insets: (Top) UB student Stephanie Acquario cares for plants using repurposed water from a morning hot water draw. (Bottom) Students Joshua Dillin (left) and Joe Tuberdyck work on their ramp railing on Day 9 of the competition.



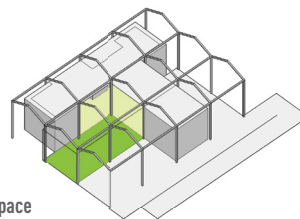
The GRowlarium and the canopy create an environment that blends an indoor and outdoor experience, and integrates urban living and gardening.



Interior spaces exposed to daylight and views



Interior/exterior space



- A** Living space
- B** Bedroom
- C** Kitchen/dining area
- D** Bathroom/mudroom
- E** GRowlarium

RENDERINGS COURTESY OF THE SOLAR DECATHLON TEAM, 2015

GRow Home Features

Nested in a T-shape is a cozy interior living space of 770 square feet, consisting of a living space, bedroom, kitchen and bathroom that doubles as a mudroom.

- » A 24-panel photovoltaic system allows the house to produce more energy than it consumes.
- » A canopy covers the enclosed portion of the house and helps obscure the line between inside and outside space.
- » An energy-monitoring system enables the homeowner to track energy consumption for an optimum balance of efficiency and comfort. Sensors strategically placed throughout the house monitor temperature, humidity and electricity use—information that can be accessed on an online portal via a mobile device.
- » Operable ventilators are strategically located high in the spaces to encourage natural ventilation and reduce energy needed for cooling.



CARL BURDICK

"The house was designed for a four-season climate here [in Buffalo]. It was a happy coincidence that conditions in the competition period [in California] are equivalent to our peak summers here in Buffalo."

—Assistant Professor of Architecture Martha Bohm



Cross-section showing the canopy

Old World Meets New

The GRow Home's insect-resistant and water-resistant larch wood exterior came from an Amish homestead in the town of Belfast, N.Y., 90 minutes outside of Buffalo.

What's a Home Without Furniture?

Photographs by Douglas Levere

Teams were not asked to build their own furniture as part of the challenge, but that didn't stop UB's team from seizing an opportunity to show off a little. Seventeen students in a graduate seminar led by Nicholas Rajkovich, an assistant professor of architecture in UB's School of Architecture and Planning, crafted six ultra-efficient pieces of furniture to complement the GRoW Home.



Canning Table 🌱

The urban gardener has a practical place to can and store fruits and vegetables. This 3-foot-tall cabinet includes space for a pressure canner; below that are four wooden shelves sized for storing mason jars.

"We thought it would be really interesting if we built some unique furniture that had the potential to improve the overall performance of the house."

—Assistant Professor of Architecture Nicholas Rajkovich



Multipurpose Nesting Boxes 🌱

Depending on how they're configured, these simple wooden nesting boxes can serve as end tables, stools or storage cubes, or can be combined to form a coffee table.



Heat-Trapping Planters 🌱

The GRoWlarium can house 10 of these 6-foot-long rolling tables, designed to hold soil and seedlings. Because dirt and water are great at absorbing heat, the table helps to keep the home cool. At night the device can be wheeled outside to remove some of the day's warmth from the premises.



Two-Faced Tables 🌱

Double the functionality with dual table surfaces. On one side of these two 6-foot-long tables are textured metal kitchen working surfaces. When flipped over, they turn into sleek wood surfaces for entertaining.



Twirling TV Stand 🌱

Standing between the bedroom and the open concept living space, this 8-foot-tall shelf serves as an informal boundary. It's also a floor-to-ceiling storage unit containing a TV that can be rotated between areas of the house.



Solar Dryer, Sitting Bench 🌱

This 6-foot-long device serves double duty as a dryer and, when laid on its side, a bench. It also helped with one of the Decathlon's challenges: washing and drying six towels using as little energy as possible. "The dryer works by pulling cool air in through a grate at the bottom and venting hot air out through a grate at the top," says Rajkovich. "To heat the whole thing up, we have the entire interior painted black."





UB students celebrate after taking second place overall in the Decathlon. Insets: (Top) Nate Heckman gives a tour of the GRowLarium. (Bottom) Deck and greenhouse installation on Day 6 of construction.

The Solar Decathlon

In the 10-day competition, the houses went head-to-head in 10 categories (five juried contests and five measured contests), with the overall winner determined by total number of points. The UB team finished with 941.191 points out of a possible 1,000. The first-place winner, Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, N.J., scored 950.685 points.

UB did particularly well in the five measured contests, as below:

Comfort Zone: 1st

Points were earned for maintaining narrow temperature and relative humidity ranges during specified periods of time.

Appliances Contest: 2nd

Points were earned for ability to maintain temperature within a set range while running appliances such as the refrigerator, freezer, washer, dryer and dishwasher.

Home Life Contest: 4th

This contest measured a house's hominess, using such measures as its ability to produce a hot shower on demand. Part of the contest involved hosting two dinner parties (for which UB had its own secret weapon—see right) and a movie night for neighbors.

Commuting Contest: Tied for 1st

Teams had to drive an electric vehicle charged from their house electric system several times during the competition. Full points were awarded for driving 25 miles or more in two hours or less at eight different times.

Energy Balance Contest: Tied for 1st

This contest was divided into energy production and energy consumption. For production, a team received full points for achieving a net positive energy balance. For consumption, a team received full points for using 175 kWh of energy or less over the competition. UB was the only team to stay under this threshold and perform all required competition tasks.

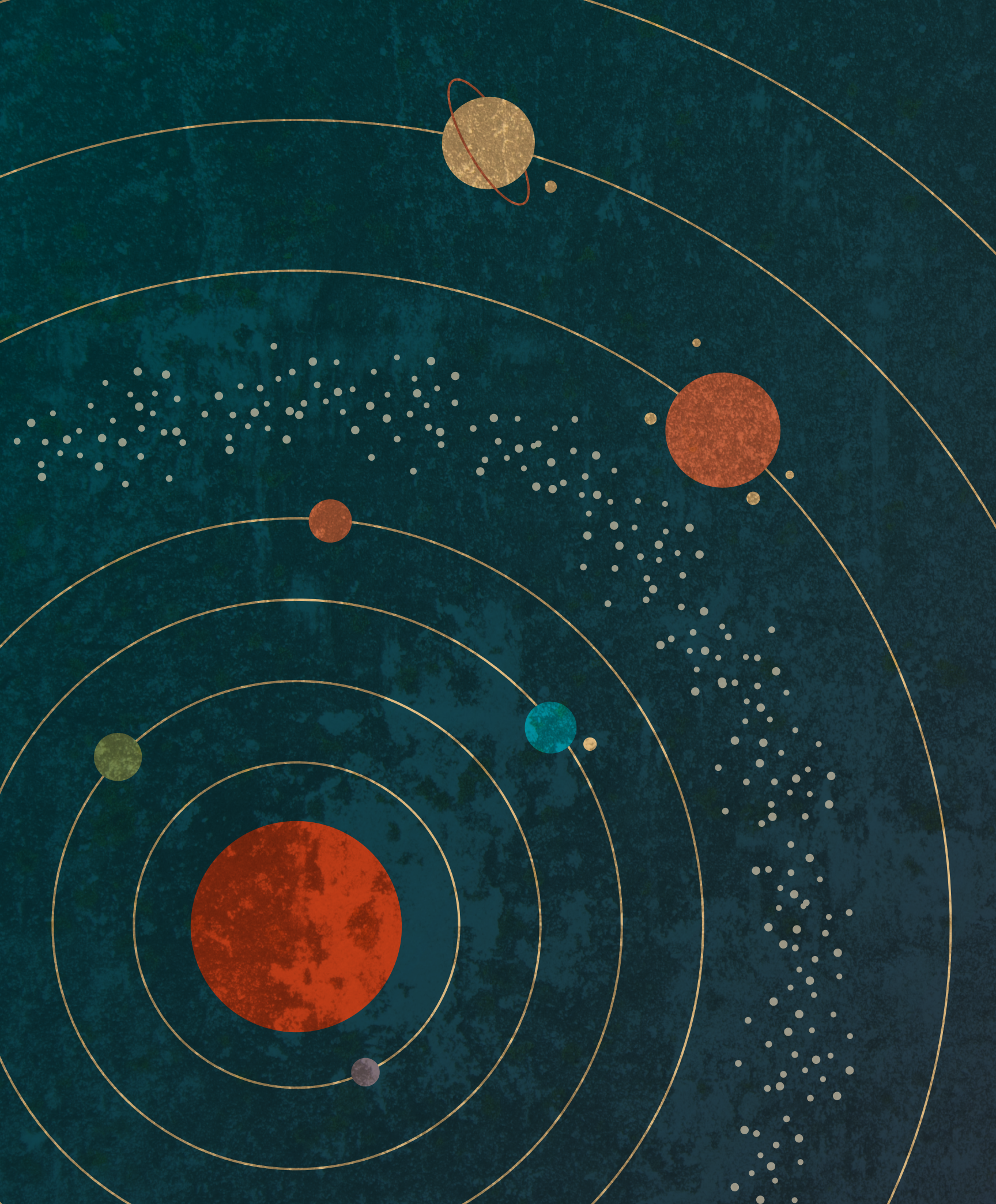


Advantage UB: *One of the UB engineering students who contributed to the Solar Decathlon was a professionally trained chef. Her menus for the GRow dinner parties featured jerk pork tenderloin with mango salsa and snow peas, lacquered salmon with micro greens and Asian vinaigrette, and lemongrass-infused herbed couscous.*

Julie Wesolowski is a Buffalo-based writer and digital communications professional.



What Now? The GRow House has a bright future back in Buffalo. The plan is to locate it on UB's South Campus, behind Wende Hall, to be used temporarily as a public exhibition house—"so that the public in Buffalo has a chance to tour," says Bohm. Then it will be modified slightly to serve in the longer term as a research and education center. Tentatively titled the "Multi-Scalar Energy Research and Education Center," it will function as a locus for faculty research and community and professional outreach related to issues of energy use in the built environment.



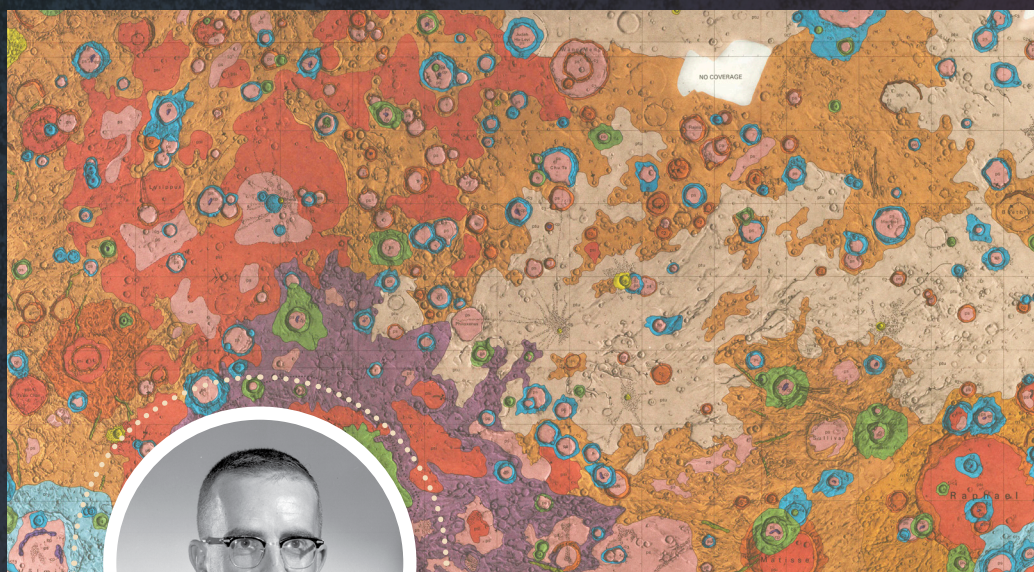
THE RIGHT STUFF

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT WILDER, BFA '02
By
Rebecca
Rudell

UB has served as a launchpad for dozens of careers in the space industry—and new stars are forming every day

Whether through alumni, faculty or the next generation of students who promise to take us where no one has gone before, UB's ties to NASA are sundry and deep. Some individuals are well known—like Greg Jarvis (BS '67), crew member on the Space Shuttle Challenger, which exploded after launch in 1986. Others, like the late John S. King (MA '57, BA '55)—a geology professor who ran a NASA intern program at UB for 20 years and mapped Mars and Mercury from satellite pictures—made significant advances working under the radar. But each person has played an important role in unlocking the complex mysteries of the cosmos.

Following are profiles of alumni whose work has deepened our understanding of worlds beyond our own. And because the quest is ongoing, we also highlight a number of current students who are well on their way to making discoveries that may change how we see our planet, our universe and, ultimately, ourselves.



John S. King and his map of Mercury.

STELLAR ALUMNI

Ellen Shulman Baker, BS '74

Former NASA astronaut, currently works as a consulting physician with MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas

A geology major at UB, Ellen Shulman Baker subsequently received a master's in public health from the University of Texas and an MD from Cornell University Medical College before joining NASA as a physician in 1981. In 1984, she was chosen for the astronaut program and, over the next 11 years, completed three space missions, logging 686 hours and 11.6 million miles orbiting the Earth. She even brought a UB geology flag on the space shuttle!

On gravity: We've learned about the physiologic effects of flying in space. For example, about two-thirds of astronauts feel space motion sickness for one to two days after getting to orbit. There's also a fluid shift in the near absence of gravity. When you take gravity away, fluids redistribute from the lower extremities to the upper torso and head, and some astronauts experience elevated intracranial pressure, which can cause changes in vision.

On why we do it: Space exploration is a very important human endeavor for many reasons. Humans have always been explorers; we seek to understand our surroundings and our "place" in the universe. On a more practical note, designing, building and operating spaceships has resulted in new technologies in fields like communications, aviation, electronics and robotics. An indirect benefit people don't generally consider is how space travel inspires young children to study science and math.

Dexter Johnson, PhD '95, MS '89, BS '87

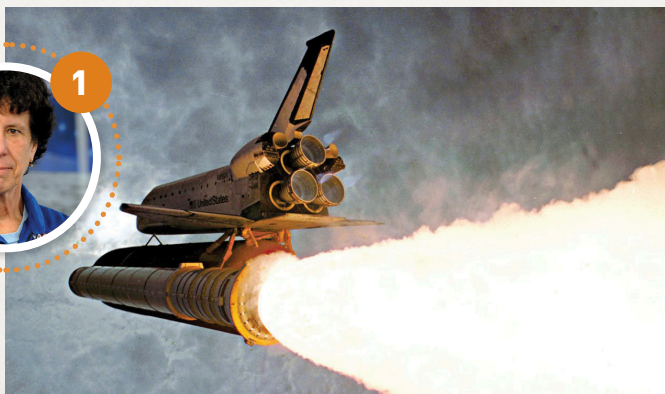
Chief, Structural Dynamics Branch, NASA Glenn Research Center

Flight, astronomy and planets have always fascinated Dexter Johnson, even though he didn't set foot on a plane until he was 20. At NASA, he ensures that structures used for spacecraft can withstand the powerful forces associated with space flight. In 2014, he helped launch the Orion spacecraft, built to take humans deeper into space than ever before, on its first

test flight. Now he's prepping for Exploration Mission 1, which will send Orion around the moon in 2017.

On choosing a path: During the summer between my sophomore and junior years in high school, I was in a program for underrepresented students at UB [which became UB's BEAM (Buffalo-area Engineering Awareness for Minorities) program in 1982]. I took two courses: Introduction to Engineering and Introduction to Computers and Engineering. By the time I finished those classes, I was 100 percent sure I wanted to study aerospace engineering.

On the future of space travel: We're experiencing an emergence of commercial space travel. People are already signing up—and willing to give their lives—for a one-way trip to Mars. I think we're going to see a lot more of those types of things, where ordinary citizens have the opportunity to go into space. Who knows, some day people may be able to take a trip to a space station resort!



1

Dave Mitchell, BS '84

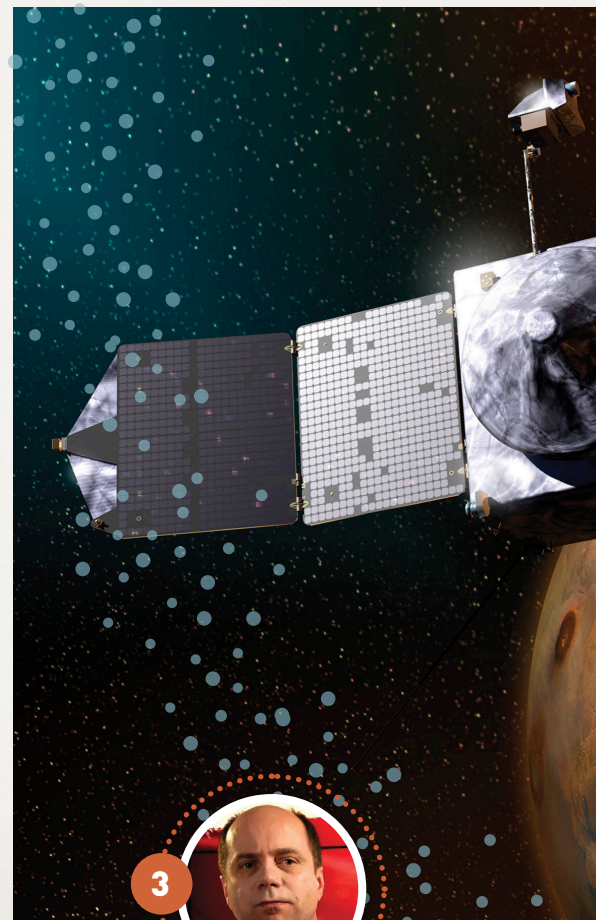
Director of Flight Projects, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center

From testing rockets with the U.S. Navy to directing flight projects at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, Dave Mitchell has experienced some thrilling (and nerve-wracking) events, including getting the MAVEN (Mars Atmosphere and Volatile EvolutionN) spacecraft safely into Mars orbit in September 2014—his proudest moment.

On MAVEN: MAVEN is the first mission to Mars going after upper-atmosphere research. When you hear about climate change on Earth, there was also climate change on Mars, but it was over a period of 4 billion years. Scientists believe that Mars was once much more like Earth in terms of oceans, a lot



2



3





- 1 Ellen Shulman Baker and the STS-50 Columbia
- 2 Dexter Johnson and the Orion spacecraft
- 3 Dave Mitchell and MAVEN
- 4 Chris Scolese and the James Webb Space Telescope
- 5 Jeff Umland and the Curiosity rover's Sky Crane touchdown system

of water, a thick atmosphere—but something happened to change all that. It's MAVEN's mission to better understand what changed and why.

On his Earthly activities: I'm a strong advocate for reaching the next generation of space explorers. I volunteer judge at middle-school science fairs and present the NASA mission to science classes. I also work with a local Boy Scout troop. I've been a math tutor at a community college, a teacher of English as a Second Language and vice president of the Northern Virginia Council for Big Brothers. But most of my time these days revolves around family activities with my wife and two kids.



5



Chris Scolese, BS '78

Center Director, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center

From drawing pictures of rockets in kindergarten to leading the entire NASA agency as an interim acting administrator, Chris Scolese has always had space in his blood. Now, as the center director at Goddard—which he insists is the best job in the agency—he's responsible for more than 40 active projects, including the James Webb Space Telescope, the largest telescope ever to be launched into space.

On his hopes and dreams: I'd like to be a part of achieving three things. Developing a good model of the Earth so we can be the best stewards possible. Detecting life—I don't care if it's microbial life or

sentient beings, whether it's in our solar system or on an exoplanet. And I'd like to see humans leave our planet and thrive on another celestial body, whether it's the moon or Mars or ... well, those are probably the only two likely ones right now.

On what he's reading: You can probably guess I like reading science fiction. I read "The Martian," which is a little weak on the physics, but a really fun story. My only critique is that Mars doesn't work like that—and we would never leave an astronaut behind! I also enjoy reading how other people accomplished significant things—like how they built the Brooklyn Bridge, the Transcontinental Railway, the Panama Canal. They were leading the challenges of their times and there are parallels to what we do today.

Jeff Umland, PhD '91, BS '85

Chief Mechanical Engineer and Instrument Deployment Phase Lead for InSight, Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) Fellow

Jeff Umland knows a thing or two about the Red Planet. His InSight mission will study Mars' interior to help us understand how rocky planets in our solar system were formed. Previously, he was chief mechanical engineer for the Curiosity rover, which landed on Mars in 2012, thanks to the incredibly innovative Sky Crane touchdown system Umland helped invent. (Google "Seven Minutes of Terror" to see the anxiety-inducing landing of the Sky Crane.)

On Curiosity: The Mars Curiosity rover is big—roughly 2,000 pounds, about the weight of a car and the height of Shaquille O'Neal—but the power source puts out only about 100 watts, the same as a lightbulb. It's an incredibly capable lab instrument with a robotic arm that can drill into rocks and collect material. It also has a laser beam that can zap a rock without touching it to determine what kind of minerals are within. Basically, we carried our own laser beam to Mars.

On the next big thing: Some of the CubeSats [small cube-shaped satellites with 10cm sides] that a lot of universities are taking on—and the miniaturization of different technologies—are like the revolution that happened in the late '70s and '80s when we went from big mainframe computers to PCs. CubeSats are easy to launch, relatively small, relatively inexpensive—they're going to open up all kinds of opportunities in the future.

CLUBS AND COMPETITIONS

UB students pursue a plethora of space-related projects, from designing rovers for NASA to helping the Air Force protect U.S. satellites. Here's a closer look at our various clubs, teams and activities—and a few of the students and professors who make them soar.

UB AIAA

Student organization

UB CHAPTER ADVISER: Manoranjan Majji, assistant professor, mechanical and aerospace engineering

For the love of aerospace

With 5,000+ student members worldwide—and 30,000 members overall—the American Institute of Aeronautics & Astronautics (AIAA) is the mother-ship of organizations devoted to space. UB's chapter is led by Manoranjan Majji, who coaches students in AIAA competitions like Design/Build/Fly, aimed at creating a remote-controlled aircraft to address specific missions.

Manoranjan Majji on working with UB

students: "I'm constantly surprised by what they bring to the table. They're go-getters—you give them a problem and they deliver. That's why I come to work. That's what makes me smile."

UB-SEDS

Student club

PRESIDENT: Daniel Miller, senior majoring in aerospace engineering

Students running the show

Students for the Exploration and Development of Space (SEDS) is the largest student-run space club in the world. The organization helps high school and college students get involved in national projects, network with contemporaries and experts from around the world, and participate in the highly anticipated SpaceVision conference. UB's chapter recently launched its own rockets with the Upstate Research Rocketry Group.

GLADOS

Engineering intramurals program

ADVISER: John Crassidis, PhD '93, MS '91, BS '89, CUBRC Professor in Space Situational Awareness
PROJECT LEAD: Mara Boardman, senior majoring in aerospace engineering

Big ideas, little packages

There are hundreds of thousands of objects orbiting our planet, collectively known as space junk. Any one of these objects could collide with a weather

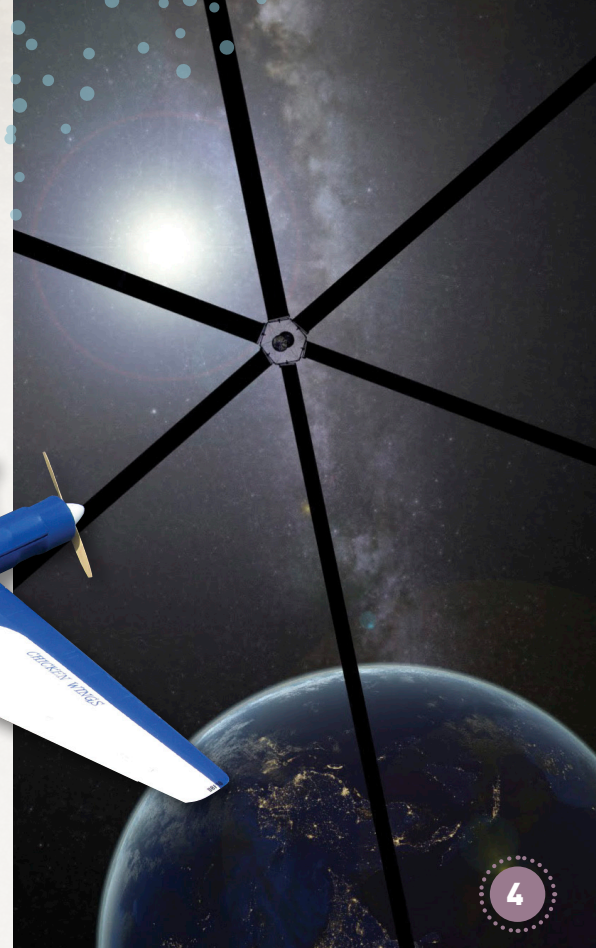
or communications satellite—or even a human-occupied spacecraft—with devastating results, and yet the U.S. Air Force and NASA are currently tracking only about 22,000 of them. It's clear they could use some help.

Enter GLADOS (Glint Analyzing Data Observation Satellite), a UB project that's part of the Air Force's University Nanosatellite Program competition. About 60 undergraduate and graduate students are designing and building GLADOS, a microsatellite roughly the size of a shoebox with cameras designed to observe "glint" events, which indicate where a piece of space junk is located, how large it is, etc. The Air Force takes this information and reorients satellites and crafts to avoid collision. GLADOS is expected to launch in 2017.

UB also won a competition to build a microsatellite for the NASA CubeSat Launch Initiative. The team spent the past summer developing and testing the microsatellite for NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, which is expected to launch in 2018.

Mara Boardman on building GLADOS:

"Space is a very difficult environment to design for. There's a lot of late-night researching, testing ideas we come up with to see if they work and, if they don't, finding alternate solutions."



HELIOS

NASA internship

STUDENT: Adonis Pimienta-Peñalver, MS '13, BS '11, PhD student in aerospace engineering

Cool concept

NASA's HELIOS (High-Performance Enabling Low-Cost Innovative Operational Heliogyro SolarSail) is a concept that proposes the use of solar energy to create thrust, eliminating the need for on-board fuel. When the six blades—which are thinner than a human hair—are fully deployed, the solar sail is more than a quarter mile across. Possible missions include imaging the Sun's poles and other celestial bodies outside our solar system.

5



Micro-g NExT NASA student competition

ADVISER: Manoranjan Majji

PROJECT LEADS: Ifechukwu Ononye, senior majoring in aerospace engineering, and Seamus Lombardo, junior majoring in aerospace engineering

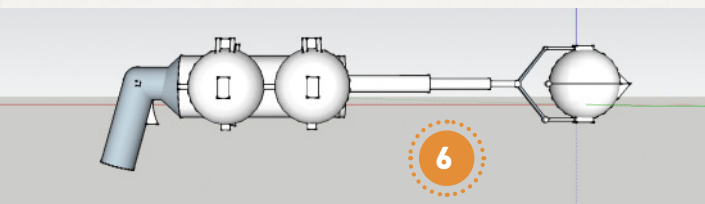
The NExT generation

NASA's Microgravity Neutral Buoyancy Experiment Design Teams (Micro-g NExT) competition challenges undergrads to come up with solutions to real NASA issues. The most recent request was a tool to help astronauts grab float samples from an asteroid. UB students used 3-D printers and laser cutters to design a "quad claw," which uses a trigger system to operate the claw mechanism and can hold up to four objects.

Ifechukwu Ononye on his NASA

experience: "I was one of seven UB students who went to Houston to watch NASA divers test our team's prototype in their Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory. We got a lot of feedback from the divers and it felt great knowing that the quad claw performed successfully."

6



7

Space Bulls NASA student competition

ADVISERS: Kevin Burke, PhD '10, MS '04, BS '97, teaching assistant professor, electrical engineering; Jennifer Zirnheld, PhD '04, MS '97, BS '93, associate professor, electrical engineering

Life on Mars

The Revolutionary Aerospace Systems Concepts Academic Linkage (RASC-AL) Exploration Robo-Ops Competition is an annual event sponsored by NASA and the National Institute of Aerospace. Students from across the country design and build their own Mars rovers, which then compete in a series of challenges at NASA Johnson Space Center's Rockyard (which simulates Mars' surface). UB's team—the Space Bulls—took third place in the 2015 competition with its rover, Astraeus II, and the team is going back in 2016. Go Bulls!

NASA Robotics Academy NASA internship

STUDENT: Kristina Monakhova, senior majoring in electrical engineering

Space camp

NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center offers a robotics internship program each summer. Teams of students work together on assigned projects, network with space industry leaders, attend lectures and go on field trips to other NASA centers. At the end of the summer, students create posters explaining their projects in hopes of winning prizes, as well as the attention of NASA managers and staff. Monakhova's team came in first place in the poster contest.

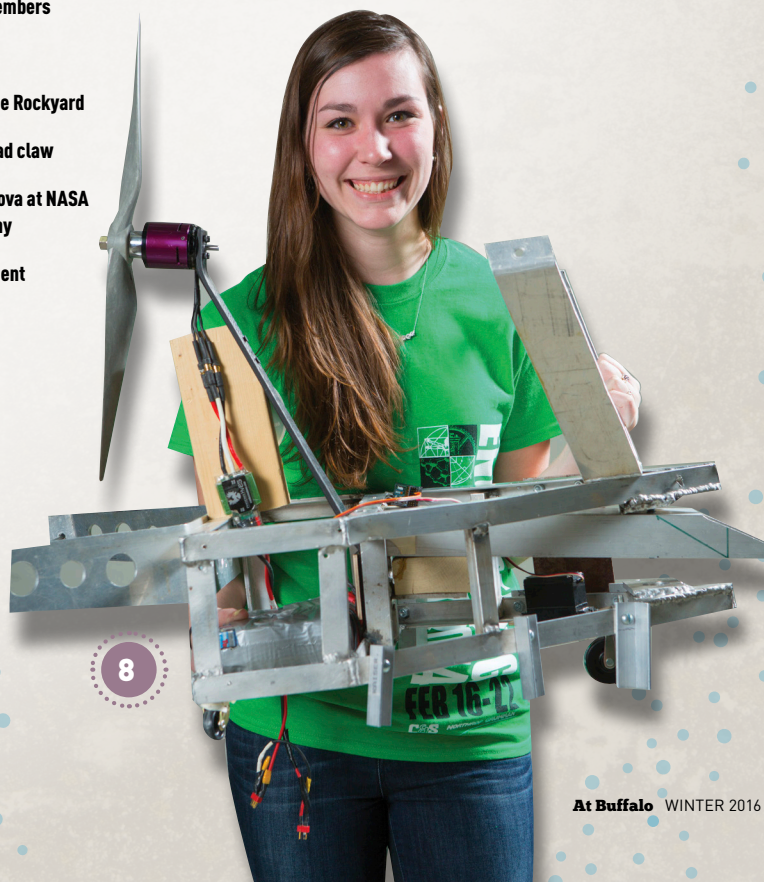
UB Robotics Student club

Rock 'em sock 'em

Founded in 2001, UB Robotics is an undergraduate club that focuses, logically, on the engineering of robots. From Bot Wars (where student-built robots spar to the death) to Rescue-Bot (all-terrain robots designed to help with search and rescue), UB's bots can do anything but students' homework—for now. ♣

Rebecca Rudell is a contributing writer for *At Buffalo*. Her father, Dave Rudell (BS '64), is an electrical engineer who worked for NASA's Apollo program in the late '60s.

- 1 UB's entry in AIAA's Design/Build/Fly competition
- 2 UB-SEDS rocketry launch
- 3 GLADOS team members
- 4 HELIOS concept
- 5 Space Bulls at the Rockyard
- 6 Micro-g NExT quad claw
- 7 Kristina Monakhova at NASA Robotics Academy
- 8 UB Robotics student with robot



8

A VERY SHORT HISTORY OF

UB IN SPACE

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER AND CONGRESS
ESTABLISH THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS
AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION (NASA)

1958

1964

UB OPENS ITS AEROSPACE
INSTRUCTION AND
RESEARCH LABORATORY

JOHN S. KING'S MAPS OF
MARS AND MERCURY ARE
PUBLISHED

1990

JOHN S. KING DEVELOPS HIS NASA
INTERN PROGRAM, WHICH STILL
EXISTS TODAY

1970s

1968

UB CREATES ITS AEROSPACE
ENGINEERING PROGRAM

1995

ELLEN SHULMAN BAKER
TAKES HER THIRD SPACE-
FLIGHT, WHICH IS THE FIRST
SPACE SHUTTLE MISSION TO
DOCK WITH RUSSIA'S MIR
SPACE STATION

1986

1984

ELLEN SHULMAN BAKER IS
SELECTED BY NASA FOR THE
ASTRONAUT PROGRAM

NASA SPACE SHUTTLE CHALLENGER BREAKS APART 73 SECONDS
INTO ITS FLIGHT, CLAIMING THE LIVES OF GREGORY JARVIS AND
SIX OTHER CREW MEMBERS

CHRIS SCOLESE BEGINS SERVING
AS NASA'S ACTING ADMINISTRATOR,
THE AGENCY'S HIGHEST-RANKING
CIVIL SERVANT POSITION

2009

JEFF UMLAND'S TEAM
SUCCESSFULLY LANDS
THE CURIOSITY ROVER
ON MARS

2012

2015

UB SPACE BULLS
TAKE THIRD PLACE IN
NASA'S MARS ROVER
COMPETITION

2011

U.S. AIR FORCE SELECTS A TEAM OF
UB STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN ITS
UNIVERSITY NANOSATELLITE PROGRAM

2012

UB-SEDS HOSTS SPACEVISION, THE
NATION'S LARGEST STUDENT-RUN
SPACE CONFERENCE

2014

MAVEN SPACECRAFT ENTERS MARS'
ORBIT, THANKS TO DAVE MITCHELL'S
CREW; ORION, WHICH DEXTER JOHNSON
HELPED DEVELOP, UNDERGOES FIRST
TEST FLIGHT

Alumni Life



ALEX
CENTER,
BA '06

Sporting a Brand

You may not know Alex Center, but you know his work

By Michael Flatt » For most people, browsing the shelves of a 7-Eleven is not a particularly enlightening activity. But for Alex Center (BA '06), lead designer for The Coca-Cola Company, overseeing global brands including Glacéau Vitaminwater, Glacéau Smartwater and Powerade, it's a litmus test of his success as a brand developer.

"I will just go to the back of the store and drift past the coolers to see how they're shelving Vitaminwater," the Brooklyn-based Center says. "Where is Powerade in comparison to Gatorade? How many different products are there? How many different lines?"

Center has made a name for himself—in 2011, Lürzer's Archive named him among the 200 Best Packaging Designers in the world—focused on the part of a product most people tend to take for granted.

For the 31-year-old designer, the old maxim is true: First impressions matter. So in 2008, when he was asked to redesign Powerade, Coca-Cola's popular sports drink, the first thing he did was give the logo an overhaul.

"At the time, Powerade had this very '90s design, like something from 'The Matrix,'" he says. "It was dated, to say the least." Center's design looks at home on the sidelines of NBA and World Cup games, in the company of brands like Nike and Adidas. When the logo is on a towel draped over an athlete's back, it seems to belong there—and that's the crux of successful branding.

"There are a million ways a brand can reach out to you," Center says, "but in that moment when you continued

Alumni Life

walk into a bodega or a supermarket and you are staring at the shelf with 16 different options, the packaging needs to draw you in and talk to you in a way that is relatable. It needs to tell a story.”

Center’s passion for sports has made him a natural fit for products aimed at athletes and fans. A lifetime devotee of the New York Knicks, he interned for the team while still at UB, choosing the gig over more prestigious opportunities, including an internship with world-famous designer Milton Glaser (of the “I Love NY” campaign, among others).

“I was curious why one brand would make you feel amazing, and another less-than.”

Alex Center

Center’s love of sports also helped him land his first job, with Vitaminwater, only a few months after graduation. The company had just hired 25 professional athletes to promote Vitaminwater, and the creative team needed someone who knew the difference between basketball star Ray Allen and NFL linebacker Brian Urlacher. Enter Alex Center.

Of course, not just any sports fan could help a brand popular in New York and Los Angeles—as Vitaminwater was when Center started the job in 2006—become recognizable worldwide. Ultimately, branding is Center’s first love.

“It started in middle school,” he says. “At that point, if you were wearing a Tommy Hilfiger jacket and some cool Nike sneakers, I think you felt something. I was always curious about why one brand of jacket would make you feel amazing, and another would make you feel like you were less-than. That connection between brands and people is something I’ve always been into. I wanted to be a part of it.”

Even in his spare time, when not rooting for his favorite teams or doing improv at New York’s Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre, Center finds ways to continue branding. In the last few years, he has branched out into speaking engagements and freelance design ventures, including, most notably, the ESPN “30 for 30” documentary “When the Garden Was Eden,” which celebrates his beloved Knicks.

Some of this outside work has included collaborations with his wife, Jacquelyn De Jesu (BA ’08), who works as a freelance advertising creative director. The couple met in the computer labs in the Center for the Arts at UB.

“She’s definitely someone that I bounce ideas off of. Here and there we collaborate. She tends to represent the agencies, and I represent the client,” Center says, laughing. “That makes for a lot of fun conversations at home!” ❖



“Picnic,” 2013, wood, 20 x 16 x 13 feet.

You Must Be This Weird to Ride

“Picnic,” a loop-the-loop bench sculpture, was one of two pieces by artist **Michael Beitz (MFA ’09)** included in a twisted art-installation-cum-theme-park called Dismaland. The brainchild of British graffiti artist and activist Banksy, the “b amusement park,” open for just five weeks last August in the seaside town of Weston-super-Mare, England, attracted long lines and global media attention. Its warped sense of humor mocked Disney’s cultural mix of make-believe and consumerism through the surreal work of more than 50 international artists, a decidedly “Grimm” Cinderella castle and creepily morose staffers.

Beitz, who spent a good part of his teenage years miserably working at an amusement park, tells At Buffalo, “I thought [Dismaland] was a great idea. There were a lot of serious works in the show that powerfully respond to current atrocities. Even the more humorous works touched on difficult subjects and problems.” Case in point: Banksy commissioned Beitz to create “Roll,” a scatological sculpture—half picnic table, half toilet paper—which comments on the UK’s sewage pollution problem.



“Roll,” 2015, wood.



Bulls on Ice

Alumni Night shows off one of Buffalo's coolest attractions

For more photos, visit buffalo.edu/atbuffalo.

Seven stories above Canalside, in Buffalo's shiny new \$200 million HarborCenter ice hockey entertainment complex, the UB women's hockey team showed off its skating skills, while hundreds of alumni and friends watched from an observation deck above. Afterward, the alums and friends showed off their own skills (or, at least, enthusiasm) during an open skate.

The occasion was the annual WNY All-Alumni Celebration. Grads from classes as far back as the '60s gathered to reconnect with old friends—and to marvel at one of Buffalo's most ambitious projects to date.



Mary's Winter Picks

A selection of campus events, open to all alumni

Mary Garlick Roll (MS '88, BS '84) is our Alumni Association president.

January

Career Conversations Rochester

01.07.16

George Eastman House

Career Conversations NYC

01.13.16

Union League Club

UB Young Alumni Night

01.14.16

Hamburg Brewing Co., Hamburg, N.Y.

The Band of the Royal Marines and the Pipes & Drums of the Scots Guards

01.28.16

North Campus

February

Young Alumni Open Skate

02.06.16

RiverWorks, Buffalo, N.Y.

Career Conversations Buffalo

02.10.15

North Campus

Charles J. Ogletree Jr.

Distinguished Speakers Series' 40th Annual MLK Jr. Commemoration Speaker

02.11.16

North Campus

March

Fiesta Mexico-Americana: Los Lobos with Ballet Folklorico Mexicano

03.03.16

North Campus

Rudresh Mahanthappa's Bird Calls: Celebrating Charlie Parker

03.19.16

North Campus

At Buffalo goes to press before many event dates are set, so please make sure to check buffalo.edu/alumni/events for updates.

Mary says: "Meet other young UB alums, grab a craft beer and cozy up by the fireplace!"

THE YEAR THAT WAS

1902



UB Varsity Football team, 1901-1902 season.

In 1902, the University of Buffalo, as it was then known, was a private institution with four departments—medical, dental, pharmacy and law—and fewer than 600 students, of whom about 20 were women. It was a new century, Buffalo was booming (the Pan-American Exposition had taken place the previous year) and judging by “The Iris” yearbook, U. of B. students were having a jolly old time.

Everybody sing!

Chorus of the original Alma Mater

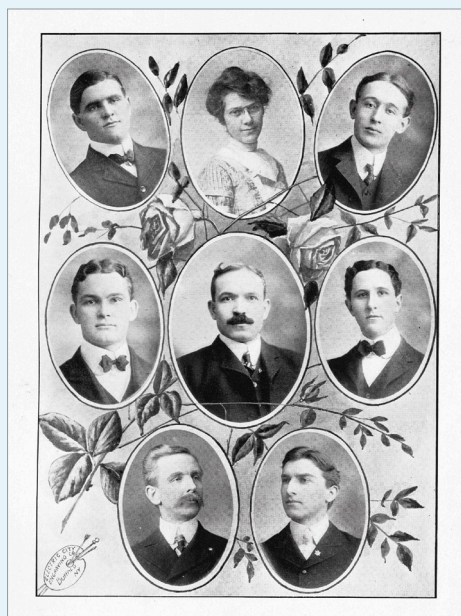
Brothers tonight we sing the chorus free,
Pledging the health of our University,
To U. of B., to U. of B.
Our Alma Mater by the inland sea.

The class yell of the UB Dentistry Class of 1902

Ala-ka-nute, ka-not, ka-nit,
Ala-ka-nute, ka-not, ka-nit,
Flippity flop, Hallabaloo
U.B. Dents of 1902!



A toast to U of B!



Some of the Department of Medicine's “Freshmen Freaks” (The Iris’s words, not ours).

What we were reading

“The Story of My Life”—Helen Keller
“The Hound of the Baskervilles”—Arthur Conan Doyle
“Heart of Darkness”—Joseph Conrad

What we were dancing to

“The Entertainer”—Scott Joplin
“Bill Bailey, Won’t You Please Come Home?”
—Arthur Collins
“Please, Mamma, Buy Me a Baby”—Byron G. Harlan

What we were snacking on

Animal crackers were officially named “Barnum’s Animals” and sold in fun and fabulous circus wagon packaging, which included a string for Christmas-tree hanging. A box went for 5 cents.



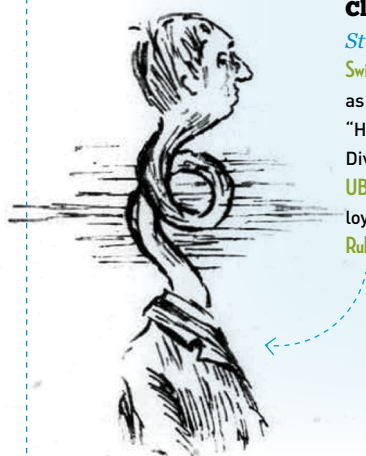
Club kids

Student life back then was certainly ... different.

Switzer Klub We assume this was a wine/beer and cheese club, as students were dubbed “Chief Boozer,” “Foam Slinger,” “Head Cork Puller,” “Assistant Mug Cleaner” and “Sectional Divider of Cheese.”

UB Mandolin & Glee Club This club, apparently, did *not* have a loyal following. It lasted only until 1907.

Rubber-Neck-Klub Your guess is as good as ours.



Goings-on around town

Leading the way

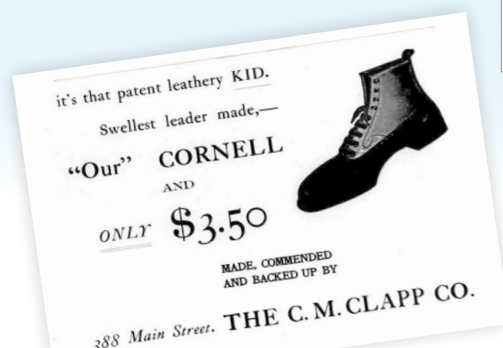
The National Association of Colored Women (NACW), a group founded in 1896 by African-American leaders including Harriet Tubman, Rosetta Douglass Sprague and Frances Harper, held its annual convention in Buffalo.

Is it hot in here?

Willis Carrier, an engineer at Buffalo Forge, invented the air conditioner in a city known for its record snowfall.

Lookin’ swell

An ad that helped fund The Iris.



ClassNotes

» **Brew a perfect pot**

» **Life 101**

» **'80: Dinder reaches Point B**



Got a Gripe?

Management grad Mike Klanac turns his own poor customer service experience into a business opportunity

MIKE
KLANAC,
BS '04

By David J. Hill » The story of how Mike Klanac (BS '04) started his company begins with a frozen pizza and a German knife.

Anticipating a quick and easy meal after a long day, Klanac took the pie out of the oven, set it on the counter and cut into it. Then ... snap.

The knife, supposedly of premium quality, broke in half. So began a two-month odyssey of navigating through the company's customer service black hole to obtain a replacement.

"It was a nightmare," Klanac says, "and it highlighted a problem a lot of people can identify with." He thought there had to be a better way. Thus, GripeO was born.

GripeO is a website and mobile app that allows consumers who sign up for a free account to file a complaint against a company, whether for poor customer service or for a lackluster product. Klanac formed the company in 2012, bringing along several co-workers from a previous startup. It is housed in Z80 Labs, a Buffalo-based Internet startup incubator co-founded by UB alumnus Jordan Levy (BA '77).

Here's how GripeO works: When a grievance is lodged, the GripeO team notifies the business and gives it an opportunity to respond to the consumer. If the gripe goes unanswered after two weeks and three notifications, it moves into the "complaint marketplace," where competitors can purchase the complaint and offer incentives to woo the aggrieved consumer.

Businesses are encouraged to sign up for a paid account, which provides access to a bunch of services along with their complaints. In addition to paid accounts, GripeO now has more than 10,000 users. The company also maintains a strong social media presence, with more than 170,000 followers on Twitter.

"Several major brands have responded to 100 percent of the complaints filed through GripeO," says Klanac, who grew up in Buffalo but relocated to Houston to be closer to his

CONTINUED

ROBERT STALE

wife's family (he now splits his time between the two cities). "Most businesses don't even know their customer service is that bad," he adds. "I use the analogy, 'Would you want someone to tell you if you have spinach in your teeth?' For businesses, it's 'Would you rather ignore the problem, or know about it and be part of the conversation?'"

The company got a boost over the summer when it became one of seven startups—from a pool of 1,227 applicants—selected for Seed Sumo, a "100-day boot camp for startups" that takes place near Texas A&M University. In addition to \$50,000 in financing, participants in the business accelerator program receive guidance from a network

of more than 90 mentors. At the conclusion of the three-month program, Klanac pitched his company to potential investors during Seed Sumo Demo Day. "The program was very intense. They really questioned

everything," he says.

At this point, he can't say whether he'll get investors out of the program, but Seed Sumo did help the GripeO team develop one of the more promising features for the service: the ability for businesses to aggregate customer reviews from a range of sites like Google Places, Yelp and Foursquare. "It's kind of like Mint for customer service," Klanac says, referring to the Web-based tool that tracks all of a user's financial transactions in one place.

GripeO staffers have compiled profiles on some 300 businesses, creating a directory that identifies each company's customer service social media channels and other contact information. Users can submit their gripe, and include a photo, right from each company's directory page. They can even create a meme to help draw further attention to the issue.

Though a businessman himself, Klanac feels no remorse for publicly shaming corporations that let their customers down. "Negative feedback provides companies an opportunity to learn and get better," he says. ☘

"Several major brands have responded to 100 percent of the complaints filed through GripeO."

Mike Klanac

CLASS NOTES BY DECADE

Person to Person

70

Susan Lederer, BS 1971, is an orientation and mobility specialist with the New York State Commission for the Blind. She lives in Rochester, N.Y.

David Brick, BA 1974, is safety manager for DeKalb County Department of Watershed Management. He resides in Covington, Ga.

Robert Doren, JD 1975 & BS 1972, was included in Buffalo Business First and Buffalo Law Journal's 2015 Legal Elite. Doren is a labor and employment law attorney at Bond, Schoeneck & King PLLC. He lives in Buffalo, N.Y.

Dennis Kelleher, BS 1978, was presented with the 2015 Engineer of the Year award by the New York State Society of Professional Engineers. Kelleher is the president of H2M architects + engineers. He resides in Centereach, N.Y.

Leonard Feld, MD 1979 & PhD 1976, was appointed president of Pediatric Specialists of America, which represents the more than 200 employed physicians of Miami Children's Health System. He lives in Miami, Fla.

80

Leonard Dinder, BA 1980, retired from his position as a cartographer for the Federal Aviation Administration. He resides in Silver Spring, Md.

Eric Kramer, BS 1982, a partner at the law firm of Farrell Fritz, was selected to the 2015 New York Super

Lawyers and New York Metro Rising Stars lists for estate and probate law. He resides in Dix Hills, N.Y.

Richard Dye, MBA 1985 & BS 1978, joined Kei Advisors, a Buffalo-based investor relations and business advisory consulting firm, as vice president. He lives in Buffalo, N.Y.

90

Gail Orffeo, BS 1990, created and developed Face Fun, a kit for video chatting with infants and toddlers. Orffeo resides in Orchard Park, N.Y.

Timothy Lambrecht, BA 1991, was named to the 2015 New York Super Lawyers list for environmental litigation. Lambrecht is an attorney at Wladis Law Firm. He lives in Syracuse, N.Y.

Howard Podolsky, MD 1991, is chief executive of Cambridge Medical & Rehabilitation Center, which operates two health care centers in Abu Dhabi. He resides in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Timothy Robertson, MA 1991, was named director of the Royal Society of Literature, a British charity organization that supports authors. He lives in London, England.

Mark Smith, MLS 1992, associate dean of libraries and director of Scholes Library at Alfred University, was named chairman-elect of the State University of New York Council of Library Directors. He resides in Hornell, N.Y.

John Senall, BA 1993, is the principal and founder of Mobile First Media LLC and Digital Healthcom Group, its health care division. He lives in Amherst, N.Y.

Ram Kumar Krishnamurthy, MS 1995, was appointed as 2015-16 distinguished lecturer of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Solid-State Circuits Society. Krishnamurthy is a senior principal engineer at Intel Labs, directing the high-performance and low-voltage circuits research group. He lives in Portland, Ore.

Craig Forgette, MS 1996 & BS 1992, was named chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Buffalo District Planning Management Team. He resides in Buffalo, N.Y.

Sarah Viana, BA 1998, joined Chiampon Travis Besaw & Kershner LLP as the director of organizational development. She lives in Buffalo, N.Y.

David Schwartz, PhD 1999, MS 1994 & BS 1990, was named director of the Rochester Institute of Technology's School of Interactive Games and Media. He previously served as assistant professor, associate professor and undergraduate program coordinator for the school. He resides in Rochester, N.Y.

00

Melissa Francowiak, MD 2003, BA 1999 & BS 1998, was awarded a \$7,500 National Grid grant and a \$40,000 University at Buffalo Center for Advanced Biomedical and Bioengineering Technology grant to develop PneumaGlide, her patented invention that assists in intubation. Francowiak is a partner of Anesthesia Consultant Associates in Kenmore, N.Y. She resides in Grand Island, N.Y.



STAY CONNECTED!
Share your news, photos and stories on UB Connect, the online community for alumni. Or, follow us: facebook.com/buffalolumni or @ubalumni on Twitter.

Kevin Lopez, MA 2006 & BA 2002, is founder and executive producer at LPZ Media. Lopez is currently producing his second feature film, "The Hudson Tribes." He lives in Spring Valley, N.Y.

Cuong Nguyen, BA 2006, is an objects conservator at the Henry Ford Museum. He received his master of arts in principles of conservation and a master of science in conservation for archaeology and museums through the University College London Institute of Archaeology. Nguyen resides in Dearborn, Mich.

Rodney Haring, PhD 2007 & MSW 2002, was appointed as an at-large delegate to the American Indian and Alaska Native Health Research Advisory Council. An assistant professor at Roswell Park Cancer Institute in the Cancer Prevention and Populations Sciences Division, Haring is also adjunct faculty at the Native American Research and Training Center at the University of Arizona. He lives in Gowanda, N.Y.

Matthew Burwick, BS 2008, a financial adviser with L&M Financial, received his Series 7 license, also known as the general securities representative license. He resides in East Amherst, N.Y.

W. Seth Calleri, BA 2008, joined Hodgson Russ as an associate attorney in the Buffalo office. Calleri was previously a law clerk in the narcotics and violent crimes division at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of New York and for New York State Supreme Court Justice Paula L. Feroletto. He lives in Buffalo, N.Y.

CONTINUED

Roseane Santos, PhD '05

Associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences, South University School of Pharmacy



TOP FIVE

Your morning cup of joe does more than jolt you into consciousness. It's chock full of benefits, says Roseane Santos, and she should know. She's spent more than two decades researching the potential health effects of coffee, which include improved memory, a boost in exercise endurance, and reduced risk of diseases such as Type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer.

Santos began studying how natural products affect the human body as a master's student at Federal University of Rio de Janeiro in the late 1980s. After receiving her PhD from UB in pharmaceutical sciences, she decided to focus exclusively on coffee research. "After all," she says, "Brazil is the first world producer of coffee and America is the No. 1 consumer."

Santos currently runs a research laboratory at South University in Savannah, Ga., dedicated to the study of coffee and health. Based on her findings, she advocates drinking three to four cups a day. As an avid java drinker herself, she knows how to make a cup that packs in both the benefits and the taste. We asked her for the top five things not to do when brewing a pot of coffee.



MICHAEL KORFHAGE

Five ways to ruin a pot of coffee:

1. Tap in

Save the sink water for your hands and dishes. The high content of chlorine and other chemicals in tap water can produce off flavors in your coffee.

2. Heat and repeat

Freshly brewed coffee is best. Don't allow it to cool and reheat it. Doing so will kill the flavor and degrade the healthy compounds in it.

3. Double dip

Similarly, if you reuse coffee grounds, you will lose both the health properties and the flavor. On the plus side, spent grounds can be used for other purposes, such as biofuel.

4. Resist change

Every type of coffee has a different water-to-coffee proportion. For example, if you're using a new brand that's a dark roast, you should increase the amount of water. Experiment until you get the ratio right.

5. Sweeten the deal

Coffee should be plain. At most, you can add a little sugar or cream. But really, good coffee is just coffee.

Melissa Doyle, BS 2008, was promoted to in-charge senior at the accounting firm of Brock, Schechter & Polakoff LLP. She specializes in non-profit auditing and tax preparation. Doyle resides in West Seneca, N.Y.

Gregory Stein, MBA 2008 & JD 2008, an intellectual property lawyer at Ulmer & Berne, was elected to the board of directors for the Thea Bowman Center, which serves the Mt. Pleasant community of Cleveland. He lives in Moreland Hills, Ohio.

Victor Vacanti, MD 2008, MA 2004 & BA 2002, joined Buffalo Medical Group's Cardiology Department as a clinical and noninvasive cardiologist. He resides in Clarence Center, N.Y.

Jennifer Carroll, MSW 2009, recently opened a private clinical therapy practice. She previously worked as a mental health therapist in an outpatient clinic. Carroll lives in Buffalo, N.Y.

Teresa Lawrence, PhD 2009, Cert 2003, EdM 1993 & BA 1991, was named one of Buffalo Business First's 2015 Women of Influence. Lawrence is superintendent of the Grand Island Central School District. She resides in Clarence Center, N.Y.

10

Deepak Janardhanan Nair, MS 2011, joined digital analytics company Nabler as a Web strategist. He lives in Bangalore, India.

Patrick Murray, MS 2012, joined Chiampou Travis Besaw & Kershner LLP as a staff accountant. He resides in Hamburg, N.Y.

Lauren Paone, MS 2012 & BS 2011, was promoted to audit senior at Dannible & McKee LLP. She lives in Baldwinsville, N.Y.

Scott Archambault, MArch 2014 & BS 2011, joined Foit-Albert Associates as an architectural technician. Archambault resides in Buffalo, N.Y.

Graham Lyon, BA 2015, was named a Woodrow Wilson Indiana Teaching Fellow by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. He will attend Purdue University. Lyon lives in West Lafayette, Ind.

Brian Orzechowski, BS 2015, joined Gelia, a marketing communications agency, as an account service coordinator. He resides in Buffalo, N.Y.

Pauline Riemer, MSW '57

Retired psychiatric social worker



HOW-TO

Pauline Riemer has spent a good deal of her 92 (and counting) years on Earth helping others. As a clinical social worker for almost 50 years, she devoted herself to assisting both clients and doctors through various roles, including director of the social work and outpatient clinics at Syracuse University medical school (now SUNY Upstate Medical University) and director of the social service department at the Cayuga Home for Children.

A fierce advocate for her clientele, she often took on public service agencies, including Medicaid and the welfare department, and never lost a case in court. Even in retirement, she has stayed active working for others, mentoring students from UB's School of Social Work, helping city planners to beautify the landscape in Naples, Fla., where she now lives, and organizing benefit events for the Naples Philharmonic. We asked her for tips on leading a life well-lived.

How to live a full life:

Help anyone and everyone you can

One of the best healers of a mind that's upset is to go find somebody that you can help. Just go find anybody, a person on the street who needs directions—I don't care what it is. It can be very small, but find other people who need help and your own life gets fulfilled. What you give to other people comes back to you.

Make use of all your life experiences

My two life partners were not successes. My first husband was bisexual, something I did not know when I married him. My second husband was an alcoholic. If someone at our clinic needed to talk about alcoholism, I could tell them how an alcoholic behaves in the home, how he breaks every single glass in the

house. I went through it. That was a help when someone would come to me at the clinic and say, "You can't help. You wouldn't understand," and I'd say, "Yes, I can."

Don't dismiss the little things

Here's a classic. Lion's Club gave me carte blanche to pick out eyeglasses for anyone I wanted in the university teaching hospital. This one lady wanted desperately to

have "cat eyes," glasses with rhinestones around the edges. She said, "Oh, if I had these cat eyes, I'd be so happy." She had started going to a place called the Carriage House, for senior citizens. She'd met a man, and she said, "I just know he'd like me if I had the glasses." I got her the glasses, and later she told me, "We play cards together all the time now. I'm so happy!" It was all I ever did for the lady, but it was enough.

AT BUFFALO'S CAREFUL READER

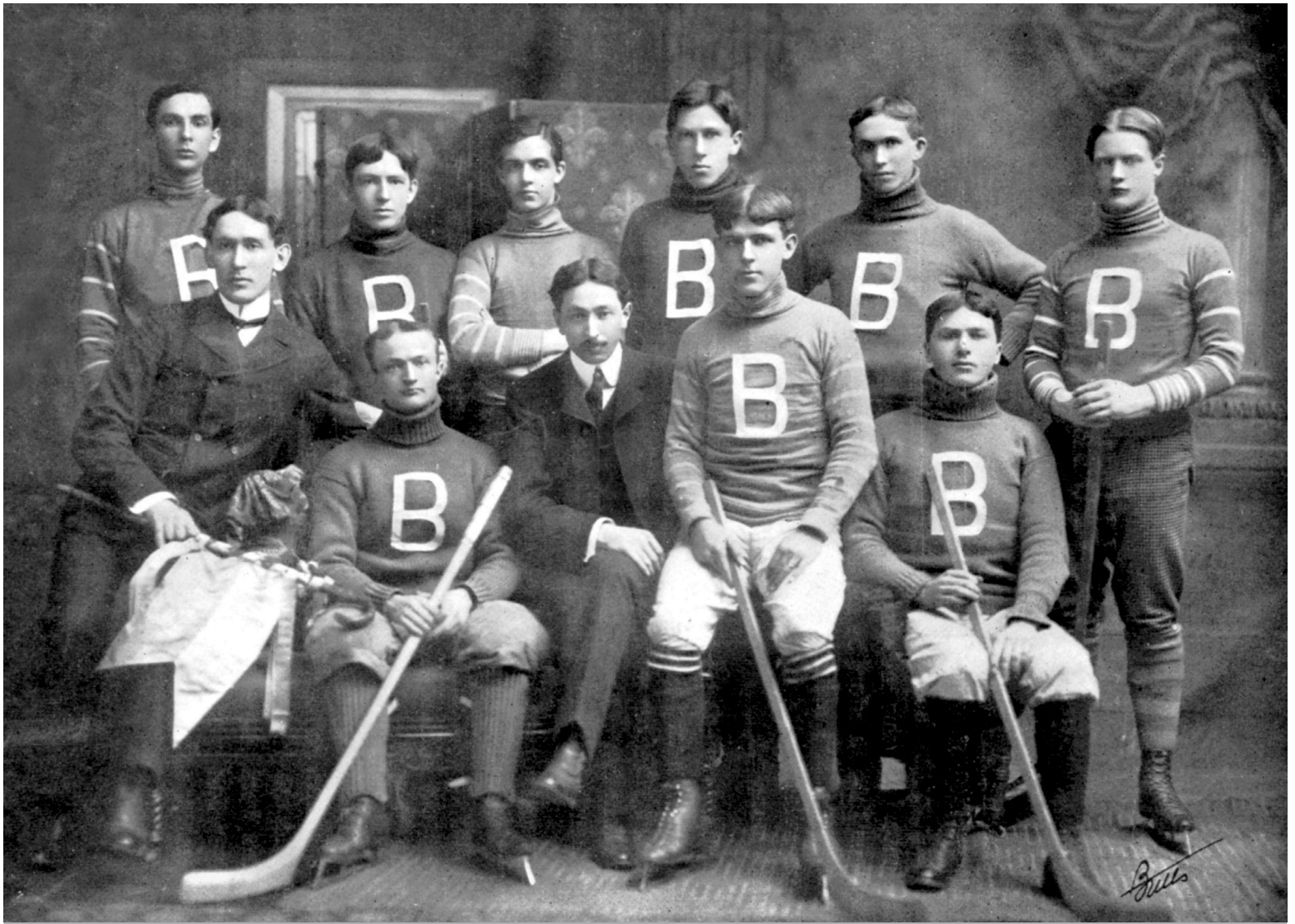
Quiz

What weighs 2,000 pounds and is roughly as tall as Shaquille O'Neal?

Submit answers to atbuffalomagazine@buffalo.edu. The winner, to be drawn randomly from correct responses, will receive an At Buffalo mug.



JACKIE BESTEMAN



1902 UB ice hockey team.

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Robert De Niro Sr., "House on Ellicott Creek, Buffalo, NY," 1967-79, oil on gessoed panel, 24 x 30 inches.

UB YESTERDAY

1967

Robert De Niro Sr. paints Buffalo

Irving Feldman (left) and Robert De Niro Sr. in Washington Square Park, New York City, May 1954.

In 1967, UB was settling into its fifth year as part of SUNY, and what many say was the golden era for the humanities at the "Berkeley of the East." Benefiting from the state's largesse, UB had been hiring a who's who of star faculty: painters, writers, poets, musicians and other innovative artists. Among them was award-winning poet Irving Feldman, who taught at UB from 1964 to 2004.

In his third year in Buffalo, the National Book Award finalist and eventual MacArthur Fellow invited a friend from New York, Robert De Niro Sr. (1922-1993) to teach the first of six summer residencies at UB. Yes, that De Niro—father of the movie star. But the senior De Niro was more than that. Once a teenage protégé of the abstract expres-

sionist Hans Hofmann, De Niro became a master in his own right, dabbling in poetry but known for his striking, figurative oil paintings.

At UB, he created a series of works that captured the light and shadow of Buffalo's summer landscapes. Many were on view, along with samples of Feldman's poetry and the two men's shared correspondence, at the UB Anderson Gallery last fall in a show celebrating their friendship. The paintings, such as "House on Ellicott Creek, Buffalo, NY" (above), exemplified De Niro's signature bold brush and saturated, multilayered use of color. The exhibition also brought Feldman out from retirement to read from his work and, for an evening, relive those bur-nished years spent with his good friend Bob.



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DOUGLAS LEVERIE

LAST LOOK

The Art of Learning If you walk past Ketter Hall on the North Campus, you'll see what appears to be a modern sculpture, painted in UB blue. But this is no art installation, or at least not intentionally. It's a teaching aid, courtesy of the American Institute of Steel Construction (AISC). The "AISC Steel Sculpture," based on a set of detailed drawings that can be downloaded from the AISC's website, helps budding engineers understand how steel beams and bolts fit together. Today, more than 170 campuses around the world have a version of this not-so-abstract art.