

# Marshall

Thundering Herd Fall Football Preview 2015



## A Life's Journey

*ChannelNet CEO & founder  
Paula George Tompkins*



See page 37 for ALUMNI NEWS and more

Summer 2015

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SUMMER 2015

# Marshall

m a g a z i n e

The official magazine of Marshall University

Summer 2015

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Paula George Tompkins reflects on her career, her Huntington upbringing and her time at Marshall. Photo by Rick Lee.



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Contributing Photographers  
Rick Haye, Rick Lee

Contributing Writers  
James E. Casto  
Jack Houvouras  
Molly McClennen  
Keith Morehouse  
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Pat Dickson

Editorial Advisory Board  
William "Tootie" Carter,  
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# Spring with President White



President White congratulates Beth Wolfe, director of recruitment at Marshall, on earning her Doctor of Education degree at the second commencement ceremony May 9.



President White is recognized for his service thus far as interim president at the Alumni Banquet April 25 by Matt Hayes, executive director of the Marshall University Alumni Association.



President White speaks with Del. Sean Hornbuckle (left) and Huntington Mayor Steve Williams (center) at Marshall Day at the Capitol Feb. 18.



President White and his wife, Jo Ann, spoke to Dr. Wael Zatar, dean of the College of Information Technology and Engineering and hundreds of others at the first of several "meet and greet" events Jan. 16.



President White presents the Charles E. Hedrick Outstanding Faculty Award April 28 to Dr. Andrew P. Nichols, associate professor of engineering.

President White speaks at the first of two commencement ceremonies May 9.





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Tompkins, a 1974 Marshall graduate, is the visionary behind ChannelNet, a digital marketing company that recently celebrated its 30th year.

By Rebecca Stephens

# A Life's JOURNEY

After 30 years in the digital marketing business, ChannelNet CEO and founder Paula George Tompkins looks back at the road to her success.

**P**aula George Tompkins was homesick for Huntington when she moved to New York City after graduating from Marshall in 1974. The adjustment was difficult and she wasn't quite sure just where her life was taking her. But today, 41 years later, Tompkins remembers the moment she realized her future was up to her, and she fully embraced her life's journey.

"I was in Central Park on July 4, 1975. My girlfriends and I had a picnic and the New York Philharmonic was playing," Tompkins said. "And there we were in the middle of the park with this marvelous city all around us. Fireworks were going off all around us and I thought to myself, 'The world is full of possibilities.' And I never looked back."

Tompkins, a Huntington native, is the visionary behind ChannelNet, a digital marketing company that combines the innovation of an ad agency with a patented software platform to deliver digital customer acquisition, retention and conquest services. The company specializes in marketing automation and sales solutions for corporations with retail outlets. ChannelNet's clients include an array of companies ranging from General Motors to Ally Financial Inc. to Fiserv Inc.

ChannelNet, which Tompkins started in 1985 as The SoftAd Group, turned 30 this year. Tompkins said she attributes the company's longevity to its intellectual capital and perseverance. Tompkins has several sales and marketing technology patents.

"All the things we've learned over the years are institutionalized and, even though the technology has changed, it keeps the company's mission and concepts consistent," Tompkins said.

A.J. Wagner, president and CEO of A.J. Wagner & Associates LLC and former president of FordCredit, has served on ChannelNet's advisory board for the past three years and said what



ChannelNet has grown to have more than 100 employees with offices in Detroit and California, and is looking to expand to New York and Texas.

impresses him most about Tompkins is her knowledge of her product and its value to her customers.

"She's tireless in her efforts to do whatever it takes to move the company forward, and therefore she becomes a good role model for people to be persistent and hard working and just get the job done," Wagner said. "She has a drive-for-results mentality. I think that's somewhat contagious with her employees. She leads by example. She walks the walk."

Tompkins said when she started her career she had no idea she would one day own a company. She credits her mother, Helen Hensley George, with always pushing her to excel. Even making Tompkins take a job at a local Dairy Queen when she was just 16 years old.

"My mother wanted me to be independent," Tompkins said. "That was her charge to me throughout my whole life. I was never going to depend on anyone and I was going to make it on my own. That was engrained in me."

After graduating from Marshall with a degree in business administration, Tompkins headed to New York City to take a job as a commercial banking trainee at The Bank of New York - a self-proclaimed country girl among the Ivy Leaguers.

"It was very intimidating in the beginning," Tompkins said. "But, we were in it together. I've always been a hard worker and persistent."

However, life on Wall Street soon proved not to be the path Tompkins wanted to follow, so she switched gears and joined 3M Company. She was the first female sales engineer (out of 136 men in the nation) in 3M's industrial abrasives division.

Her territory included the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan and Long Island - no easy feat for a 23-year-old woman, but in just two years Tompkins was awarded top salesperson of the year.

After a few years with 3M, Tompkins made a decision that drastically changed the course of her career. She decided to leave New York for San Francisco and found herself in the heart of Silicon Valley during the birth of the personal computers, before the digital era and the Internet as we know them today.

She first worked for General Electric before being lured away by startup companies. However, when the startups failed, Tompkins decided enough was enough. It was time to start her own company.

Tompkins put her education and experience to the test and started SoftAd Group (renamed ChannelNet

**“ My mother wanted me to be independent. That was her charge to me throughout my whole life. I was never going to depend on anyone and I was going to make it on my own. That was engrained in me. ”**



in 2004), a business centered on the personal computer, of which there were only 10 million in the world at the time.

“The computer represented to me the ability to do what a salesperson had always done, and that’s to help the customer meet their needs,” Tompkins said.

Over the last 30 years, Tompkins has watched her company grow from its humble beginnings at her kitchen table to exploding to more than 100 employees and offices in Detroit; Irving, California; and Sausalito, California. She skillfully survived the “dotcom meltdown” and is opening field offices this year in the New York metropolitan area and Texas.

Renee Triemstra, ChannelNet’s vice president of strategy and customer experience, has worked for Tompkins for 18 years, first starting in account management and working her way through the ranks. Triemstra said Tompkins has allowed her to wear a lot of different hats in the organization and pushed her to get out of her comfort zone.

“I think she has the ability to see things in people even when they can’t see it in themselves,” Triemstra said. “She’s incredibly driven. She has amazing fortitude and perseverance. She is able to set goals for herself and goes after them relentlessly. She doesn’t let things stand in her way. I think that’s remarkable. I’ve also appreciated the ability to work for a really strong female leader, especially with the male-dominated industries that we serve.”

Tompkins said, even in 2015, it’s not uncommon for her to be the only female in a room full of executives. However, true to form, Tompkins always perseveres and works tirelessly for her company and her clients.

“You have to prove yourself,” Tompkins said. “You’ve got to be willing to make sacrifices and scratch and claw your way to the top. You’ve got to keep fighting.”

Despite her busy lifestyle, Tompkins has always made time for her alma mater, serving on both the Yeager Scholars’ board, as well as the board of directors for the Marshall University Foundation.

Ed Morrison of CI Thornburg Co. Inc. served with Tompkins on the Foundation board. Morrison said Tompkins worked relentlessly to update the Foundation’s computer software for the 21st century, as well as rebrand its image.

“She’s just a delightful person to be around and work with, and her enthusiasm is contagious,” Morrison said. “She’s passionate about her work, and she’s passionate about Marshall and her hometown. I’m honored to call her a friend and to have served on the board with her.”

While it’s rare to find Tompkins not working, when she does have spare time she enjoys spending it with her husband, Tom, and getting back to nature by doing yard work and tending to her plants.

“I love orchids,” she said. “Someday I want to have my own greenhouse with my orchids in it.”

Tompkins’ journey may not be what she originally thought, but she said she considers her life a success because she is, in one word, “happy.”

“I’m happily married, I have a beautiful home, I love my company and my employees, and giving back to Marshall and Huntington,” Tompkins said. “I’ve survived 30 years in the business and have lived a wonderful and exciting life. I’ve been the master of my own destiny.” □

**Rebecca Stephens** is the managing editor of *Marshall Magazine*. She graduated from Marshall in the spring of 2014 with a bachelor’s degree in public relations.

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS:

# “Take Your Shot”

Each spring, Marshall’s seniors work feverishly to complete term papers, projects, internships and tests to earn their degrees. It’s a bittersweet time as the students say goodbye to classmates and professors, but embark on new journeys toward bright futures.

Tompkins, much to her honor, delivered the commencement address for Marshall’s 178th commencement ceremony on May 9 at the Big Sandy Superstore Arena to the graduates and their family and friends.

“It’s hard for me to believe, but 41 years ago I was sitting right where you are today, with no real idea of the direction my life would take after college,” Tompkins said.

Marshall graduated 1,642 total students during its undergraduate and graduate ceremonies. This included 1,077 undergraduate students, 476 graduate students, 64 School of Medicine students and 25 from the School of Physical Therapy’s inaugural class.

Tompkins encouraged the graduates to take advantage of the time they are given while young and seize every opportunity. Even if they don’t get it right the first time, they can bounce back and learn from their experiences.

“Take your shot, get out of your comfort zone while you are young and resilient,” she said. “Living in New York City was like living in another world. I did not want to leave Huntington, but my mother insisted. She wanted me to be financially independent and experience life beyond West Virginia.”

Tompkins also used her time to teach the new graduates that life is a journey, and while that journey isn’t always what they think it’s going to be, it’s important to stay strong and remember the future is in their hands.

“Nothing is standing in your way. You can do anything you want to do and be anyone you want to be,” she said. “It is completely up to you. The diploma you will receive today is one small step in your life’s journey. The real work begins for you when you walk out these doors. Keep in mind nothing replaces hard work and perseverance.”

Amidst the cheers of the graduates, Tompkins ended with an enthusiastic “Go Herd!” and wished them well in all their endeavors, closing the book on another commencement speech and great school year.

*The diploma you will receive today is one small step in your life’s journey. The real work begins for you when you walk out these doors. Keep in mind nothing replaces hard work and perseverance.”*





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By Carter Seaton Taylor

# OUT OF A JAM

After recently winning a Grammy Award for his design of a Pearl Jam album cover, freelance artist Don Pendleton is earning the recognition he so richly deserves.

**W**hen the band Pearl Jam won the Grammy Award for “Best Recording Package” for their album “Lightning Bolt” Feb. 8, the artist responsible for the designs – Ravenswood, West Virginia, native Don Pendleton – wasn’t there to bask in the limelight. He was back home in Dayton, Ohio, working under deadline for another project. That’s the life of the freelance artist who graduated with his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Marshall University in 1994, and he wouldn’t have it any other way.

Pendleton’s association with Pearl Jam developed after the band’s bassist, Jeff Ament, bought some of his paintings at an art show in 2009. They began to chat. One thing led to another, and soon Pendleton was working with Pearl Jam’s design team to create an entire package of art for the album.

“We wanted to hearken back to the days of the classic LPs when you related the band through the imagery, the music and the lyrics,” Pendleton explained.

That translated into an album cover, art to illustrate each song, and a design painted on Ament’s bass.

Pendleton’s passion for art began at an early age.

“I remember watching my father, who was also an artist, paint at their kitchen table when I was 10 years old. A year later, while on vacation in Virginia Beach, I picked up the other passion in my life – skateboarding. Years later, I naturally blended the two.”



Pendleton's two passions in life - art and skateboarding - have blended together through his work.

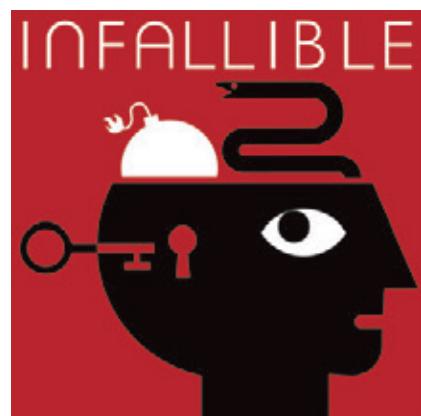
Pendleton took home a Grammy Award for "Best Recording Package" for his album artwork on Pearl Jam's "Lightning Bolt."



At Ravenswood High School, his art teacher – Marshall graduate Pat Anderson – saw his potential and implemented an advanced art course specifically to allow him to explore art more fully than the regular curriculum allowed.

"She focused on the principles of art: shape, contrast, form, balance, weight," Pendleton said. "So there was a solid approach to composition. It's hard to tell what I would've ended up doing if it wasn't for having her for four years in high school."

These design principles held him in good stead when he arrived at Marshall. Taught by the late Stan Sporny and Michael Cornfeld to always push a little bit further, he credits them with never being really satisfied with his work. He's constantly trying something new. This push bled over into his work in graphic arts as well. His instructor was Mary Grassell, who is now the program director and professor in the School of Art and Design.



After meeting Pearl Jam's bassist, Jeff Ament, Pendleton was brought on to design the album cover and art to illustrate each song, as well as create a design to be painted on Ament's bass.

"Don had a natural gift for design, especially editorial design," Grassell recalled. "His design solutions were always advanced in the use of typography and imagery. He had a natural feel for page design, which is not so natural for most students. He also had an interest in illustration and in the creation of characters."

While at Marshall, Pendleton also served on *The Parthenon* staff doing illustrations. He says having to meet deadlines may have influenced his design style.

"It was mostly a time constraint," he explained. "I was trying to create something in a really short period of time, so that's why my work was very stylized instead of really specific in detail."



For four years, Pendleton worked with California's Element Skateboards before striking out on his own as a freelancer. Today, his client list includes Oakley sunglasses, Gatorade, LG Electronics and Nike.

After graduating with his degree in graphic design, Pendleton continued working for newspapers, including the Beckley Register-Herald. But, in 1998, he finally blended his art and his passion for action sports – specifically skateboarding – when he moved to Dayton to work for Alien Workshop doing skateboard design work. He said he felt right at home when he was hired by Chris Carter, the Barboursville, West Virginia, native who owned Alien Workshop. He was inspired to make the bold move to Dayton by Huntington native



Brian Ridgeway, a local skater who had made it big in the industry. Ridgeway was a professional competitor and writer for some of the world's best skateboard magazines who later became the manager for pro skating icon Tony Hawk.

He stayed with Alien Workshop until 2005, but by then he'd begun to make a name for himself and was having success in art shows and exhibits. When other skateboard companies came calling, he signed on with California's Element Skateboards for another four years, then struck out as a freelancer. Soon he was taking projects as they came to him while continuing to exhibit in shows, charity events and fundraisers. People got to know and recognize his cubist, expressionist style.

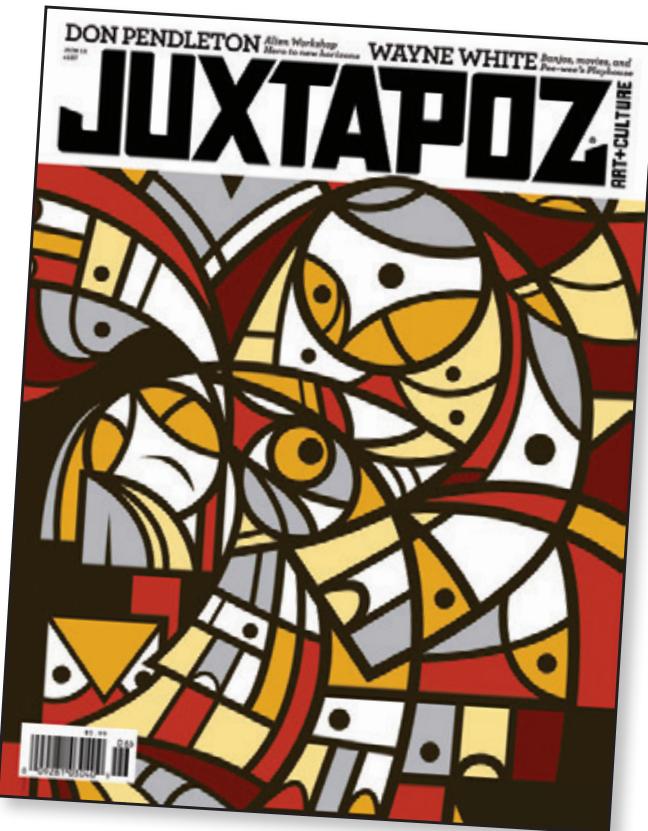
Grassell will never forget the first time she saw his work on display.

"I was walking through Times Square in New York City when I spotted one of his skateboards on display in a store window," she said. "It was such a thrill and a rush."

Skateboards eventually brought Pendleton back to Huntington in 2014, when the Huntington Museum of Art honored him as a Gropius Master Artist. During the weekend he held workshops, put up a retrospective show, and did a free skate day in the museum parking lot.

Now he's known for more than skateboards. His client list includes Oakley sunglasses, Gatorade, LG Electronics, Nike and other companies in the United States and Canada. While he still does skateboard designs once in a while, he's now more into the music scene.

He has an upcoming solo painting show in Laguna Beach, California, but the music industry is really where he wants to be for now. He recently completed work for a big-name band, but can't talk about it until it is released. Maybe by then he will have cleared his schedule



Pendleton's artwork graces the cover of the June 2012 issue of *Juxtapoz*, an art and culture magazine.

and can attend the Grammys for what just might be another award. □

**Carter Taylor Seaton** is a freelance writer living in Huntington, West Virginia. She graduated from Marshall University in 1982. The author of two novels, *Father's Troubles* and *amo, amas, amat...an unconventional love story*, her nonfiction work about West Virginia's back-to-the-land artisans, *Hippie Homesteaders*, recently was honored by the College of Liberal Arts with their 2015 Award of Distinction.

# A Promising Partnership

*A new agreement between Marshall University and St George's University of London promises to advance education and research at both medical schools.*

Since it was founded in 1977, the mission of the Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine has been to train physicians to meet the health care needs of West Virginia and Central Appalachia.

Today, to continue to support that mission, the school has a new partner that at first might seem unexpected: St George's University of London Medical School. This alliance will give students from each of the two schools the opportunity to study at the partner institution. It also paves the way for the two institutions to collaborate on research that has the potential to address some of West Virginia's most pressing health care needs.

The relationship between Marshall and St George's has its roots in the agreement Marshall signed with INTO University Partnerships, a United Kingdom-based company that assists in recruiting international students to universities. As part of the effort to internationalize Marshall, President Stephen J. Kopp thought

it would be valuable to develop a relationship with an international medical school. Because INTO University Partnerships operate at both St George's and Marshall, the door was open for the two medical schools to collaborate.

Beginning in August 2015, up to 30 medical students from St George's will spend part of their clinical years at Marshall. Marshall medical students also have the opportunity to do research or take elective classes at St George's, though classes required for graduation may only be taken at Marshall.

Two students from St George's did their clinical rotations at Marshall last year. According to Bobby Miller, M.D., vice dean of medical education at Marshall, they returned home praising their experience. Marshall students and faculty were equally impressed with the students from St George's.

Joseph I. Shapiro, M.D., dean of the Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine, said the partnership meets different needs for each school.

**By Molly McClennen**



Marshall's new partnership with St George's University of London will allow both schools the chance to expand their education and research opportunities.



Marshall University Joan C. Edwards faculty and administrators meet with Professor Peter Kopelman, principal of St George's, during a visit to London in April. Pictured from left: Amy Smith, B.S.N., M.Ed., assistant dean for student affairs; Eric Hardin, M.A., program coordinator; Kopelman; Bobby Miller, M.D., vice dean for medical education; and Tracy LeGrow, Psy.D., associate dean for academic affairs.



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*“This partnership brings in a diverse group of students. In medicine, the ability to understand and appreciate cultural differences and the beliefs of other cultures is very important”*

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“This initiative paves the way for amazing education and cultural benefits for both our students and those at St George’s as it opens up doors to experiences previously unavailable,” Shapiro said.

Professor Peter Kopelman, principal of St George’s, University of London, said, “As the UK’s only university dedicated to medicine and health care, we are absolutely committed to ensuring tomorrow’s doctors are fully equipped to deliver health care internationally. We welcome this agreement with Marshall, which provides students from both universities with a unique transatlantic opportunity to gain greater understanding of global health issues.”

Miller said accepting the St George’s students will help Marshall better train doctors to understand the diverse patients they serve.

“This partnership brings in a diverse group of students. In medicine, the ability to understand and appreciate cultural differences and the beliefs of other cultures is very important,” Miller explained. “Bringing in people from other cultures is an opportunity to improve our understanding of diversity. We talk about how the world is getting smaller with the Internet and the removal of so many things that put distance between people. With this partnership, we have been able to see that happen in real time.”

The partnership also allows Marshall faculty the opportunity to learn about the British models of medical care and medical education. Faculty from Marshall have traveled to London to tour St George’s facilities. St George’s will be sending a team to Huntington to conduct three days of training to help Marshall faculty understand the British medical education system.

“There are some differences in pedagogy between medical schools in the U.S. and the UK,” Shapiro noted. “This is an opportunity to borrow what is best from both systems. Then we do a better job teaching our students and they do a better job teaching their students. We can use this experience to further elevate our teaching.”

In addition to the opportunity to learn about how medical education and medical services are delivered in another country, Shapiro said the Marshall faculty is enthusiastic about the opportunities for research this partnership presents.

“A big reason this is attractive to us is the University of London is almost without parallel in the quality of research and scholarship produced there,” Shapiro said. “One of our goals at Marshall is to continue to shore up our focus on research. This partnership will help us build connections to do that. We are especially interested in partnering on research that addresses the health care needs and disparities we find in our region – things like health care economics, health care delivery and health conditions like diabetes, obesity and drug addiction.”

Shapiro stressed that great care went into both entering into and setting up the partnership. The faculty wanted to maintain the personal attention students at Marshall receive during their clinical experiences. They evaluated both programs to be sure the quality of education was comparable and considered how accepting the additional students from St George’s would affect the education Marshall offers. They concluded the benefits of the partnership outweigh any challenges.

“We get something different from this relationship than we would get from accepting more students from the U.S. This is a revolutionary change in our scholarship, research and pedagogy,” Shapiro asserted. “This is a way to be ahead of our competition by learning from a partner that can provide us with unique insights and opportunities.” □

**Molly McClennen** is a freelance writer and teacher who has lived in the Huntington area for most of her life. She currently divides her time between West Virginia and Chicago, where she attends graduate school at the University of Illinois.

By James E. Casto • Photos by Rick Lee



# LOCAL IMPACT

In part one of a series, we profile four Marshall graduates turned entrepreneurs who have had a strong impact on the Huntington economy.

An entrepreneur is defined as “One who organizes, manages and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise.” The following entrepreneurs are Marshall graduates who took the plunge in starting their own businesses, and have endured years of success in the Huntington

community – and beyond. From food to service to manufacturing, these four entrepreneurs have a combined 107 years in business and currently employ 190 people. Though their industries may differ, they share one common trait – these entrepreneurs are all proud sons and daughters of Marshall.

## ALLEN MAYO RUBBERLITE

Allen Mayo started working at American National Rubber in Ceredo, West Virginia, straight out of high school and continued there while he was going to Marshall University.

"I worked there for 10 years," Mayo said, "and then took a job in Cleveland, Ohio, where I was general manager for a small startup company. After a couple of years I got homesick, so I moved my family back home. I had built up the company in Cleveland and thought I could do the same for a company of my own. My hometown seemed a good place to do it."

Mayo likes to note that his new company, which he christened Rubberlite Inc., "started out in 1986 with two employees and no customers."

Today, Rubberlite has more than 170 employees and the products from its Huntington plant are sold around the world – to 1,500 customers in dozens of countries. Last year the company did \$60 million in sales.

Rubberlite makes no finished products. Rather, it makes engineered rubber and foam materials that go into products created by other companies in a lengthy list of industries, including automotive, electronics, footwear, medical, sporting goods, aviation and aerospace.

When he started out, Mayo put a business plan together and obtained a Small Business Administration loan. Then, with help from the city's Community Development Block Grant program, he set up shop in a former garment factory in East Huntington. The original Rubberlite operation occupied 8,000 square feet. Today, the company's seven-building campus occupies 300,000 square feet.

"Some people questioned why I would set up my business in Huntington," Mayo said. "They failed to realize that we were just a day's drive or less from most of the markets we served at the time. Today, of course, much of our business is international."

Mayo is proud that, while China has flooded the U.S. market with many products, Rubberlite has been able to buck that trend and do a steady business selling its products in China.

"I think we're a real asset to the community," Mayo said. "We're owned by Huntingtonians, we're managed by Huntingtonians and our workforce – other than a handful of professionals we've recruited nationally – is drawn from the Tri-State area."

Currently, Rubberlite is working with the City of Huntington, Marshall University and other partners in an effort to develop 80 acres of former industrial property in its East Huntington neighborhood.



# AVA GIBSON BICKNELL SAVANNAH'S

A nurse by profession, Ava Gibson Bicknell had always wanted to own a restaurant. When she turned 50, she decided it was "now or never." And so, in 1996, she took the plunge.

When Bicknell was growing up, her mother operated a small diner on 10th Street in downtown Huntington. As a girl, she regularly helped her mother at the restaurant. Later, she took a job at the dress factory next door. It didn't take her long there at the factory before she decided she had to do something more with her life.

She became a nurse and with a friend opened a business, Pro Nursing and Health Services that was hugely successful. But still she felt the restaurant dream calling. She had a vision of an upscale establishment, where patrons could enjoy gourmet food and the finest of wines. But it had to be located in just the right place. Searching, she found that place - a century-old house at 1208 Sixth Ave. She named her new venture Savannah's, a name inspired by the Georgia city that's home to many fine restaurants located in old houses.

Today, nearly two decades after it welcomed its first patrons, Savannah's is widely recognized as one of West Virginia's finest dining spots.

Bicknell said her husband, retired attorney John Bicknell, has helped out a lot over the years to the point that he often reminds her that the restaurant is "her" venture, and not his. Nevertheless, he does relish the role of picking all the wines for the restaurant.

Savannah's has earned a reputation for serving fine wines at affordable prices. It's won *Wine Spectator* magazine's annual Award of Excellence each year since 1999.

The food has earned rave reviews from loyal customers who come back again and again. The North American Restaurant Association has awarded Savannah's its coveted Five Diamonds of Excellence.

Savannah's has a staff of 13 employees, many of whom have been with the restaurant for years. Bicknell gives much of the credit for the restaurant's success to her employees and loyal customers. Ten years ago, Bicknell bought the building next door and expanded into it, providing space for additional seating and a wine bar. The expansion also provided room to enlarge the cramped original kitchen in the old house.

Savannah's had special celebrations when it marked its fifth, 10th and 15th anniversaries. "And," said Bicknell, "we're getting ready to celebrate in a big way next year when we turn 20."



## JOSEPH L. WILLIAMS JR. BASIC SUPPLY INC.



For more than 38 years, Basic Supply Company Inc. of Huntington has marketed a variety of supplies to businesses and industries in the region.

Basic Supply was founded in 1977 by Joseph L. Williams Jr. and a half dozen other investors. At first, the company sold pipe and plumbing supplies and it struggled to stay afloat. One by one the other investors dropped out, leaving Joe Williams and his family as the company's sole owners.

Ultimately, Williams changed direction for the company. As he explains, he had worked at a janitorial service "and I knew a little bit about cleaning products." So, the company switched to that line of business. It's not always been an easy course for the company, Williams said.

"At one time, we did lots of business with many of the chemical plants in the Kanawha Valley. Now they're gone or vastly scaled back from what they were. That's cut deeply into our business."

Today, Basic Supply's has an array of customers including industry, hotels, churches, nonprofits housing authorities and more.

The company operates a large warehouse distribution center and in-house delivery operation from its facility at 628 Eighth Ave. in Huntington.

Today, Williams is the company's chairman and CEO, and his son, Joseph P. Williams, is president and sales manager. "I've been extremely fortunate to work with talented and loyal team members who have been integral to our success," Williams said.

Something the senior Williams takes pride in is the availability of the company to customers at any time of the day or night. After business hours and on weekends, the company's phone is switched to either father or son should a customer need emergency help.

Active in the community, Williams is a former member of the Marshall University Board of Governors. He was one of the organizers and is a director of Huntington's First Sentry Bank. He was chairman, president and CEO of Consolidated Bank & Trust Co. in Richmond, Virginia, from 2007 until it was purchased by Premier Financial Bancorp in 2009.

In the 1980s, he was a member of Huntington City Council under the old council-manager form of government, which saw various council members serve a year as the city's ceremonial mayor. In 1984-85, Williams made history by becoming Huntington's first African American mayor.

## RICK HOUVOURAS STAR TECHNOLOGIES



The Huntington plant of Adel Precision Products Corp. played an important role in World War II, when America's output of warplanes dramatically multiplied. Hundreds of skilled workers at the Adel plant worked seven days a week, 24 hours a day to meet the urgent demand for the company's precision aviation fasteners.

But in 1993, the company's out-of-town owners ordered the Huntington plant closed and its jobs moved to the West Coast. That left many of Adel's veteran employees jobless. Some saw the closing of the Adel plant as simply another sad obituary for a once-proud Huntington manufacturer. But Rick Houvouras saw it as an opportunity.

Houvouras and other local investors teamed up to raise \$800,000 to start a new company, Star Technologies Inc. From the start, their idea was to pick up where Adel had left off. The new venture began operation by hiring a half-dozen former Adel employees – and pledging to them that, once the company reached a given level of profitability, they could become partners in it.

Today, the Star Technologies plant, located in the 2400 block of Fourth Avenue in East Huntington, produces millions of parts each year for the transportation industry. Many of the parts are sold to international customers in countries around the world.

The company's precision clamping devices, brackets and metal stampings are primarily used in the aircraft industry. If you've flown on a commercial airliner recently, then chances are the plane's engines include parts made by the Huntington factory located just four blocks down the street from Marshall University.

To fashion its parts, the company uses the latest production laser systems and advanced water jet technology. The parts are made from a variety of metals, including aluminum, titanium, stainless steel and Inconel, a high-performance nickel-chromium super alloy known for its corrosion resistance at high temperatures.

Houvouras said the former Adel employees were the key to the company's success.

"They had the skills that were needed – purchasing, quality control, tool and die making, production expertise and engineering skills."

The reason Star Technologies is successful, said Houvouras, "is because of the people who work here and the knowledge they brought to this company. The original employees are all retired and now we have a brand new generation that I'm training to take over." □

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# FALL FOOTBALL



The Thundering Herd was nearly perfect last season, but what will 2015 bring? The answer may lie in a towering, redheaded quarterback known as “Bird” and a powerful running back called “Rockhead.”

By Keith Morehouse

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARSHALL UNIVERSITY AND BRAD HELTON

# 2015

# PREVIEW



Marshall's chase for perfection in 2014 ended on black Friday in a head-shaking 67-66 loss to Western Kentucky at Joan C. Edwards Stadium. The defense that had only allowed an average of 16 points per game in 11 straight wins surrendered the most points in a game since the 1923 season. Marshall lost more than a game that day—the Herd lost its mojo. Gone with the loss were hopes of a

New Year's Day bowl bid and a chance at an undefeated season. But teams can respond to a demoralizing loss in one of two ways: let it ruin the rest of the season, or get back to winning football again. Still in plain sight was a conference championship, which fans around here hadn't experienced since 2002.

A week later on a miserably cold, rainy December day, the Herd sealed the deal with a come-from-behind

**“Expectations are going to be the same as last year. They’re going to be high. We’re expected to win most of our games – all of our games pretty much – and repeat for a championship. It’s going to be fun.”**

– Jarquez Samuel

26-23 win over Louisiana Tech. Rakeem Cato marched his offense down the field and connected with Deontay McManus for the go-ahead touchdown. Conference USA defensive player of the year Neville Hewitt put an exclamation point on the win with an interception in the waning moments. The Herd had won its first Conference USA football championship.

Marshall’s reward was a trip to sunny Boca Raton, Florida, where the Herd dismantled Mid-American Conference champion Northern Illinois 52-23 in the Boca Raton Bowl. That wrapped up a 13-1 season and a No. 22 national ranking in the USA Today Coaches’ Poll and No. 23 in the Associated Press Top 25.

What’s ahead for 2015? At least one preseason poll has Western Kentucky favored to win the East Division. It’s more a knock on what Marshall lost than an indictment on who’s coming back. The Herd lost 12 starters from the 2014 team, including record-setting quarterback Rakeem Cato and wide receiver Tommy Shuler. Center Chris Jasperse ran the offensive line like a drill sergeant for four straight years and never missed a game. Gone from the defense are New England Patriots seventh round draft choice Darryl Roberts, linebackers Neville Hewitt and Jermaine Holmes, and defensive ends James Rouse and Arnold Blackmon. There’s some definite star power missing.

“I think everyone’s going to look down on us, and you can never replace No. 12 (Cato),” senior running back Devon Johnson said. “He’s a once-in-a-lifetime quarterback, but I think we’ve got some quarterbacks who are going to step up.”

Quarterback Michael Birdsong was in the on-deck circle for all of the 2014 season. The 6-foot-5, 240-pound transfer from James Madison had to sit out but practiced with the scout team, and now has earned the starter’s job for Marshall. Affectionately called “Bird” by his teammates, the big redhead could make headlines if the Herd offense takes flight under his direction.

“We’ll get plenty of work in,” Birdsong said after the Green and White game. “We’ll become more of a team, develop more leaders. That’s the biggest thing – becoming a team. We lost a lot of identity with all the seniors who left. We have to develop a new one and carry it into September.”

Doc Holliday saw plenty of things in spring practice that makes him think new players can fill the void.

“Anytime you go into spring,” Holliday said, “you’ve got certain areas you’re trying to develop. I thought Justin Hunt (wide receiver) had a tremendous spring and got better. Some of the young defensive backs like Antavis Rowe and Chris Williams Hall showed up and proved they can play. It’s important we have a good summer. Games are won not by what happens in the spring, but by what happens from now until August when we report.”

The responsibility of bringing this team together will fall on the shoulders of a guy strong enough to carry the load. Senior Devon Johnson was nothing short of spectacular his junior season. The player teammates nicknamed “Rockhead” for his powerful and bruising running style put together a season for the ages, rushing for 1,767 yards (sixth nationally) and 17 touchdowns. He averaged 135.9 yards per game (fifth nationally). His 8.6 yards per carry led the nation. He broke Marshall’s record for most rushing yards in a game when he amassed 272 yards against Florida Atlantic.

This year, instead of leading by example, he plans to go the extra step.

“I want to be a vocal leader,” Johnson said. “If somebody’s slacking or not doing something right, I want to say, ‘Come on, let’s go.’ I’m a laid-back type of football player but I can do that if needed. That’s my number one goal – to be a leader on this team.”

Marshall’s players seem to understand the task. The expectations have been set. Can the team handle the hype?

"Expectations are going to be the same as last year," defensive tackle Jarquez Samuel said. "They're going to be high. We're expected to win most of our games - all of our games pretty much - and repeat for a championship. It's going to be fun."

The Herd opens the season Sept. 6 at home against Purdue. It will be Marshall's first-ever home game against a team from the Big Ten. Sounds like a perfect place to start. □

**Keith Morehouse** is the Sports Director at WSAZ NewsChannel 3 in Huntington, West Virginia. He graduated from Marshall in 1983 with a bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism.

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i n m e m o r y

A. Michael Perry tirelessly devoted himself to Marshall during his presidency as a way to give back to his alma mater.



PHOTO BY RICK LEE

# A Life Well Lived

**Former Marshall President A. Michael Perry dedicated his life not only to education, but to an array of civic causes designed to lead Huntington into the 21st century.**

**O**n Feb. 25, the Marshall community lost yet another one of its own when former President A. Michael Perry passed away after a long and courageous battle with cancer. He was 78 years old.

Mike, as friends knew him, played a pivotal role in nearly every progressive stride Huntington made in the last 30 years. Whether it was education, economic development, health care or culture, Perry was a driving force. A born leader, his career saw several incarnations. He began as a highly respected attorney; from there he went into banking when he agreed to run The First Huntington National Bank, which, under his stewardship, grew to become the largest holding company in the state; in later years he built a museum of history – literally timber by timber and stone by stone.

The impetus behind Perry's numerous contributions to the region can be traced back to his childhood when, at an early age, he realized Huntington was a very special place.

"What's always driven me is the realization that home is fantastic," Perry recalled in a 2012 interview. "But as I grew older, more and more of my friends were forced to leave Huntington to find work, and that troubled me. I made the decision that I wanted to make sure every child in this community had the opportunity to make a life in Huntington."

He was born Audy Michael Perry on May 31, 1936. He studied at Miller Elementary, West Junior High and Huntington High School before enrolling at Marshall University. In doing so, he became the first member of his family to go to college.

**By Jack Houavouras**

"The most important thing in the world to my parents was for their children to have an education, and they sacrificed tremendously for us. I was fortunate to be surrounded by dedicated teachers who loved to teach. There were so many people in my life committed to the American concept that each generation should help the next do even better."

At Marshall, Perry began dating Henriella Mylar – a girl he had a crush on since the fifth grade. After graduating magna cum laude 1958, the couple married and packed their bags for Morgantown, where Perry had enrolled at the West Virginia University College of Law.

After graduating as the top law student in his class, Perry was the recipient of numerous enticing offers, some from as far away as Florida. But, he opted to go another route.

"I realized the importance of where you want to raise children. I didn't have to go away very long to appreciate how much we have going for us right here in Huntington."

He ultimately chose to work for Huntington's oldest law firm – Huddleston Bolen. Perry soon distinguished himself as a bright and respected attorney in the area. He and Henriella moved to a comfortable home on the Southside and started a family.

In 1973, Mike and Henriella Perry made a decision that would forever alter their lives when they sold their comfortable Southside home and moved to a cabin in the country. Situated on 150 acres in rural Wayne County, it was a small, dilapidated log building damaged by a recent fire. Many of his neighbors and law partners thought he had lost his mind. The family worked to remodel the old structure and began growing food and raising livestock. Years later, that experience of carving out a new life for his family in a rural hollow would plant a seed in Perry's mind that would

lead to the formation of a museum of Appalachian history.

Based on his business and legal acumen, he was approached in 1981 by the board at First Huntington National Bank and asked to take over as chairman. He accepted the offer and went to work with a small group of bankers overhauling the state's antiquated laws. This led to reforms that paved the way for branch banking, multibank holding companies and interstate banking. Under the new holding name of Key Centurion Bancshares, Perry and

the board acquired 21 banks across the region. At its peak, Key Centurion had 2,000 employees, 400 of whom worked in Huntington.

Perry's vision for how to reverse the trend of young people leaving the region was through job creation, including the recruitment of companies to the Huntington region.

"Nobody is going to bring a company here unless we have at least five things – a good education system, top-notch medical facilities, recreational opportunities, cultural amenities and a solid infrastructure. I began focusing on those five areas," he explained.

Over the last 30 years Huntington has made significant strides. Dozens of new state-of-the-art schools have been built. Marshall University has seen tremendous growth in such areas as medicine, forensic science, biotechnology and engineering. Dramatic expansion at Huntington's two major hospitals has transformed health care in the region. And infrastructure improvements have been seen along roads, rivers, railroads and airports.

When his alma mater needed his help following the departure of President J. Wade Gilley, Perry answered the call and served as Marshall's interim president in 1999. He counted his time at the university as one of the most exciting chapters in his life.

**In 2000, the state  
Board of Trustees voted  
to remove the word  
“interim” from his  
title – an honor Perry  
described as one of the  
proudest in his life.**



Perry took over as interim president in 1999, and in 2000 the Board of Trustees voted to remove "interim" from his title - a moment Perry described as one of the proudest in his life.

"You're looking at the only undefeated president in Marshall history," he joked. "Under my watch we won 13 football games and finished the season ranked 10th in the nation. And when I stepped down, the basketball team had won its first 10 games."

In 2000, the state Board of Trustees voted to remove the word "interim" from his title - an honor Perry described as one of the proudest in his life.

It was during this time that he began to focus on a lifelong dream - building a museum of history on his Wayne County farm. What began in the mid-1980s as a small barn filled with old relics that he showed family and friends soon developed into a mission. The couple began buying old log cabins and buildings, tearing them down and reassembling them on their property. Today, there are 30 buildings on the old Perry farm, now known as Heritage Farm Museum and Village. They include museums on heritage, progress, transportation, industry and more.

"We want to show schoolchildren and visitors why we should be immensely proud of our Appalachian heritage," Perry explained. "The remarkable men and women who settled this part of America came over the mountains with little more than their two hands and built their own homes, raised their own food and made their own clothes. They were ingenious, creative, industrious people, and their story needs to be told. We believe a lot can be learned from them."

When you look back at the life and career of A. Michael Perry, you see a common thread that weaves through everything he did - giving back. It was his way of repaying debts to the people and community that helped shape his life. □

**Jack Houvaras** is the publisher of the *Marshall Magazine* and a 1988 graduate of the W. Page Pitt School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

# Breaking Down The Walls

The consolidation of the schools of journalism, music and art is opening a world of possibilities for students with creative aspirations.

**By James E. Casto**

Photos by Rick Lee



**A**lthough virtually blind, W. Page Pitt had extraordinary vision – the kind of vision that enables one to see the exciting possibilities the future can hold.

In 1926, when Pitt arrived in Huntington to join the faculty of what was then Marshall College, he found one journalism class with five students. In his 45-year career at Marshall, he built its journalism program into one with dozens of classes, hundreds of students and a national reputation for excellence. In the decades since, the W. Page Pitt School of Journalism and Mass Communications has added new luster to its reputation.

Today, however, journalism is undergoing historic change. Newspaper circulation is plummeting. Magazines that once sold millions of copies are vanishing from newsstands. The audience for TV newscasts is steadily shrinking. Meanwhile, new online sources for news seem to pop up almost daily, ready to be accessed by your laptop, tablet or smartphone.

Just as journalism is changing, the way future journalists are educated must also change. Marshall has responded to that challenge in dramatic fashion.

In mid-2013, the W. Page Pitt School of Journalism and Mass Communications, the School of Art and Design and the School of Music and Theatre were consolidated into a new academic entity – the College of Arts and Media.

“Our schools offer students the chance to perform, exhibit, broadcast, publish and more, as what and just how we communicate continues to transform,” said Don Van Horn, dean of the new college.

“We offer the opportunity to place emphasis on your particular area of interest,” he said. “You may also pursue a Bachelor of Arts with a concentration in art education, journalism education or music education through the College of Education and Professional Development. Minors in advertising, art, dance, journalism, music, public relations or theater are also possible.”



**Students in the College of Arts and Media collaborate on a number of different projects and disciplines, including television and radio production, advertising and design.**





Alec Hildebeidel, a senior from Bel Air, Maryland, works a shift as a disc jockey for Marshall's student-run radio station, WMUL-FM.

The consolidation of the schools has prompted a misconception in the minds of some people that the School of Journalism and Mass Communications no longer exists or is being forced to take a back seat to the university's arts programs.

Not so, said Janet Dooley, director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications and associate dean of the new College of Arts and Media.

"We're still very present," Dooley said. "We still focus on writing, reporting, message generation, web content creation, strategic communication, publishing and broadcasting. *The Parthenon* editors aren't required to take figure drawing, though they certainly could if they were interested. Ceramicists aren't shooting video packages for MU Report but they could if they were interested."

Bringing together journalism and the arts opens all manner of doors for today's students, said Van Horn.

Something students in journalism and the arts have in common, Van Horn said, is creativity.

"The consolidation of programs offers a world of opportunity for students from different disciplines to work together. We've got to break out of the kind of 'silo thinking' that too often has prevented that kind of cooperation in the past. If we don't, I'm convinced we will wither on the vine."

Professor of Journalism Dan Hollis echoed that view: "Take, for example, MU Report, our award-winning, student-produced television newscast. How cool would it be to have students in music write and perform the music for the newscast's opening? WMUL-FM is one of the best college radio stations in America. It would have all kinds of opportunities for students interested in music to get involved. Our public relations and advertising students could help art and music students get the word out about shows and performances. Animation, special effects and acting would enhance some of the video programming we do. Graphic design and advertising majors have long worked together on projects. The possibilities now are endless and exciting."

Hollis also sees a benefit in exposing students in one discipline to professors in another.

"There are great professors all across the College of Arts and Media," he said. "This association will allow us in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications to get to know and work with colleagues who in many cases were just down the hall but we didn't know well. In just the short time we have been a college, I have worked on numerous occasions with faculty in both the other schools and have been very impressed with their professionalism and dedication to their students. Getting to know them really

opens up exciting opportunities to work together for the benefit of all our students."

At first blush, students in journalism and the arts might seem to be very different from each other. But look closer, said Van Horn, and you'll see they have much in common.

"They're thinkers, they're problem solvers. They know how to ask important questions. These are ideal traits for collaboration – and traits that potential employers value highly."

As director of the Mass Communications Division of the School of Journalism, Associate Professor Allyson Goodman is responsible for coursework in advertising, public relations, strategic communications and radio-TV production. All these areas, Goodman said, offer possibilities for working with other disciplines in the new college.

The increasing use of film and video, especially by businesses, is prompting the School of Journalism to think about how it can prepare its students for that field.

"We're not talking about film in the traditional sense," Van Horn said. "We're not going to be a Hollywood movie school. What we're thinking about is a program that would prepare students to serve industry's need for film and video. We've got everything we

need; we just have to figure out how to configure it. I think this is a program that would attract students who might otherwise not come to Marshall."

Such a program, said Goodman, "would offer obvious opportunities for theater and music students to get involved."

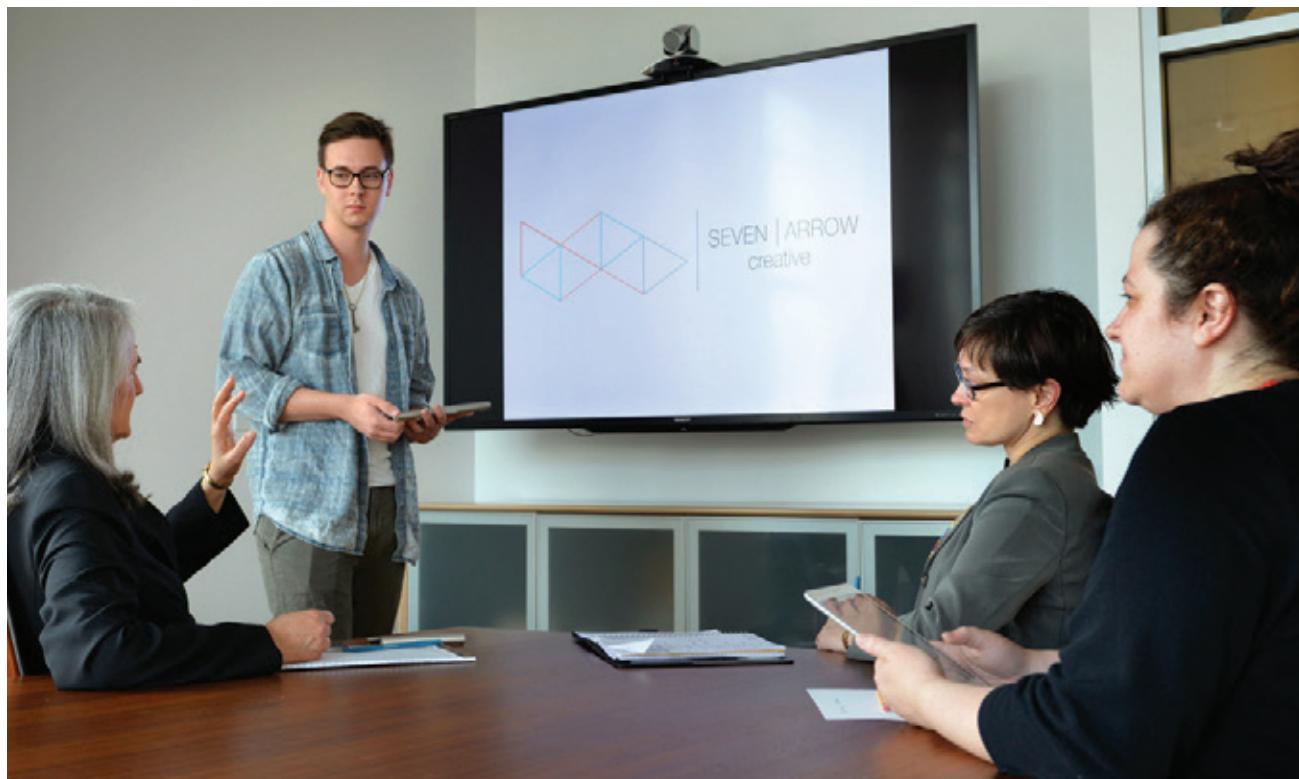
"We're already working closely with students in graphic design and we anticipate doing far more of such cooperative ventures in the future," she noted.

Professor of Music Dr. Vicki Stroehner sees exciting new opportunities ahead for Marshall music students to work with those in the School of Journalism. Music students could perform in film/video productions "or even compose original compositions for them. The time in music for soundtracks has to be absolutely precise, down to the second. This clearly gives a budding composer something new to think about."

The great thing about the new college, Stroehner said, is that it's "breaking down the walls that for too long have kept us apart." □

**James E. Casto** is the retired associate editor of *The Herald-Dispatch* and the author of a number of books on local and regional history.

**A.J. Wendel, a senior advertising major and graphic design minor, serves as creative director for Seven Arrow Creative, a student-run strategic communications agency within the College of Arts and Media.**



# GIVING 110%





## A MESSAGE FROM BERNARD "BERNIE" COSTON

MUAA National President, Class of '79



Greetings Alumni & Friends,

Over the last three years that I have served as your president I have witnessed achievement in all areas of our great institution. As I transition out of the position I do so in knowing that the Marshall University Alumni Association (MUAA) will continue to grow and be a major part of the Marshall University legacy.

Over the past years MUAA has been there to listen to your concerns and take action to improve your alumni experience. Our membership has steadily increased and the products we have invested in have help to ensure you are informed and educated about what is happening in Herd Nation.

I have been so blessed and honored to serve as your president and my emotions showed at our Spring Commencement. The event featured over 1,600 students receiving degrees, and our inaugural class of graduates receiving doctorates in physical therapy. The Big Sandy Superstore Arena was filled to capacity and if this is an indication of future graduations, Marshall may have to look at alternate venues. While some schools are faced with declining enrollment, consolidation and even school closures, MU is having record graduations.

In the coming years, MUAA is poised for success. Our incoming president, Ben Sandy, brings youth, excitement and vision to the table. He and Executive Director Matt Hayes are committed to lead by example and move us forward as an alumni association. We need each of you as we push to grow our active alumni numbers. As I have said on numerous occasions, we need your time, your talent and your treasures. We need all alumni on board; nothing is too small when you are planting seeds of hope in our leaders of tomorrow. Please take time to give to the university that gave so much to you. We need each of you to be involved and engaged. God bless each of you.

We are Strong. We are Growing. We are Proud. We are MARSHALL!

Bernie Coston '79  
President  
Marshall University Alumni Association

## ALUMNI RELATIONS STAFF

**MATT HAYES**, Executive Director

**LARRY CRUM**, Assistant Director

**ROB ELLIS**, Assistant Director

**SAM WORTHY** and **SHESHANK GUNNALA**, Graduate Assistants

# 2014

# Homecoming Recap

Rain could not dampen the spirit of Homecoming 2014! Marco and other superheroes were on hand to make it a great weekend!

Marshall University Alumni Association along with Student Government, Black Alumni Association, Campus Activities and the Student Affairs office worked together for a great Homecoming. There was something for everyone. We hope you did not miss this exciting weekend at Marshall University.



Ms. Marshall, Morgan Wright, and Mr. Marshall, Cameron Lyons right after being crowned.



The Homecoming parade was in full swing as students passed the judges stand.



Marco welcomes everyone to the Picnic on the Plaza kicking off Homecoming. The event took place indoors due to rain.



The Homecoming float competition was a battle between student groups. Alpha Xi and Pi Kappa Alpha won first place in the competition.



The Herd had a convincing win over Middle Tennessee 49-24. GO HERD!

# Alumni *Weekend* 2015

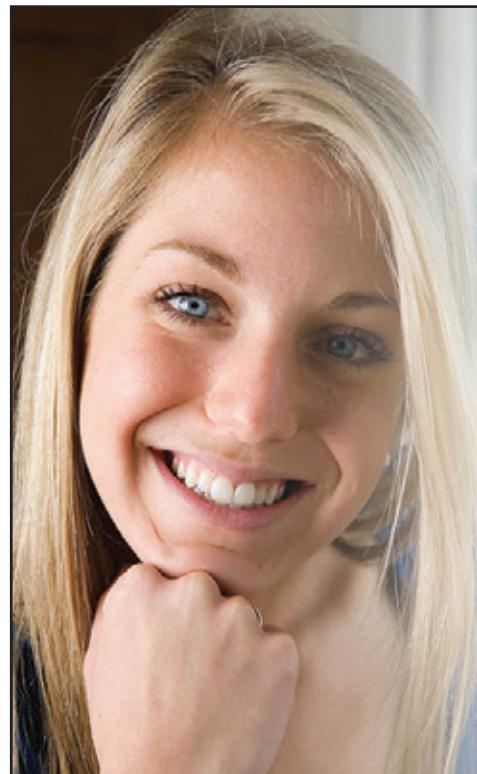
Marshall University's annual Alumni Weekend was once again the talk of the town during the month of April, as hundreds of Marshall alumni, friends and family returned to the Huntington campus for a weekend chock-full of fun activities. Alumni Weekend was capped off with the 78th annual Alumni Awards Banquet on Saturday, April 25. In all, 17 individuals and one club were honored during the lavish ceremony inside the Don Morris Room.

Highlighting the list of more than a dozen honorees was Lt. Gen. Anthony Crutchfield, deputy commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, who was named recipient of the Marshall University Distinguished Alumnus Award, MUAA's highest honor. Other award recipients included Dr. Elizabeth Murray, recipient of the Distinguished Service to Marshall Award, Missy Browning, recipient of the Community Achievement Award, and a number of additional honorees including MUAA Club of the Year, scholarship awards and awards from several of Marshall University's colleges.

Receiving special recognition during the ceremony was Marshall University Interim President Gary G. White, who received a special letter of commendation for his service to the university.

The two-day weekend included a dinner theatre performance of Marshall Theatre's production of "Clybourne Park," the annual Class Breakfast honoring the 50-year reunion class of the Class of 1965 and the Grand Class, the Fountain Ceremony, the Green and White spring football game and the Alumni Awards Banquet.

Check out some of the highlights from Marshall University's 2015 Alumni Weekend!



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# 78TH ANNUAL Alumni Awards

Seventeen individuals and one club were honored at the Marshall University Alumni Association's 78th annual Alumni Awards Banquet, Saturday, April 25. The awards banquet is always a highlight of Marshall's Alumni Weekend, which took place April 24-25 this year. Following is a complete list of the distinguished alumni award winners for 2015.



## Distinguished Alumnus Award

### Lt. Gen. Anthony Crutchfield

Lt. Gen. Anthony Crutchfield, a 1982 graduate of Marshall, is the Deputy Commander in Hawaii. The three-star general has remained an avid supporter

of The Thundering Herd and thoroughly enjoyed his return trip to Huntington.

Crutchfield was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, where his father, Joseph, was serving in the Air Force. General Crutchfield also spent time in Roanoke, Virginia, and eventually Fayetteville, North Carolina, where he would meet his wife, Kim. Her father, Donald Adkins, an Army helicopter pilot and Vietnam veteran, was stationed at nearby Fort Bragg. When Kim enrolled at Marshall University, Anthony followed his future wife to Huntington.

While at Marshall, Crutchfield worked as a DJ at the campus radio station, WMUL, while pursuing a broadcast journalism degree. He also spent quite a bit of time with the ROTC instructors at Marshall and credits them with seeing something in him that he did not see in himself.

After graduating from Marshall, Anthony successfully completed flight school at the Army Aviation Center of Excellence in Fort Rucker, the largest helicopter training installation in the world. Through his experiences at Fort Rucker, he trained in Apache, Blackhawk and Cobra helicopters and flew missions in Operation Desert Storm and, later, in Korea.

Crutchfield graduated from the Command and General Staff College in 1993. He then attended the U.S. Army War College and eventually assumed command of the 10th Aviation Brigade, immediately being deployed to Afghanistan. Crutchfield proudly flew dozens of missions, never losing a single aircraft to enemy fire in more than 10 months overseas.

In recent years, Crutchfield has maintained close ties with Marshall and Huntington. In 2011, he served as grand marshal of Marshall's homecoming parade and gave the Oath of Enlistment to more than 40 new recruits.



## Distinguished Service to Marshall Award

### Dr. Elizabeth Murray

Dr. Elizabeth Murray is a busy woman. In addition to serving as professor of integrated science and technology at Marshall, she also is involved in dozens of community service and

educational outreach programs, helping hundreds of students every year.

She holds degrees from three different universities throughout the Midwest, the most recent being a Ph.D. in genetics from the University of Kansas in 1986. A member of the Marshall faculty since 1999, her outstanding service to the university is primarily shown through her ongoing dedication toward fostering student career development and research.

That dedication is demonstrated through the mentoring of students in her research lab and through significant financial means, including scholarship programs and research grants. One of her many achievements includes acting as Principal Investigator on the Trailblazer Scholars, a grant program awarding scholarships to nontraditional students with dependents, at Marshall University. As head of the leadership team, Elizabeth helps recruit and select new scholars, mentor students and helps arrange tutoring and enrichment activities, including a weekend retreat for students and their families. Through this program, she has had a profound impact on the lives of individual non-traditional students, including the awarding of 31 scholarships with 21 awarded degrees.

Murray is also responsible for helping establish other educational grants and scholarships, including the ADVANCE Grant, which helps attract and retain women faculty members; Project Math, helping establish middle school and high school curricula in forensics; the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation, and many more.

She has been actively engaging and mentoring student entrepreneurship and academic excellence for more than 15 years, helping lead the way for growth and development right here at Marshall.

And she is not finished yet! Just this year, she helped establish the first-ever Marshall University DNA Day, with DNA-themed educational activities for all ages.

***MUAA Club  
of the Year*****Greater Cincinnati/  
Northern Kentucky Club*****Community  
Service Award***  
**Missy Browning**

Missy Clagg Browning was born and raised in Huntington. She is a two-time graduate of Marshall, having earned degrees in 1989 and 1998. She married her high school

sweetheart, Jimmy, soon after graduation and welcomed her daughter, Lexi, in 1995. Soon after, Missy found her calling.

Looking to instill the very values of compassion and service in her daughter that she herself grew up with, Missy began volunteering her time and dedicating herself to community service. One project turned into two, two turned into four, and before long, Missy found herself as a pillar of service to those in need in the Tri-State area.

During her daughter's high school career, Missy helped establish perhaps her most important contribution to the area, Marshall Medical Outreach, in 2011. A medical student-led, free, mobile health clinic, Marshall Medical Outreach has grown, with Browning's help, from little more than a clinic to measure blood pressure and heart rates to one that includes mammogram screenings, assistance for out-of-work residents, clothing and vaccinations.

From there, Missy took on additional roles in the community, including acting as a "homeroom mom" at the Healing Place, an addiction recovery center for men, and organizing support drives for food banks, military care packages, multiple ministry outreaches and other organizations in the area that lend a helping hand.

And all of her work has been done with her daughter by her side. Browning has said that her life's greatest investment of time and love is in seeing her daughter, currently a sophomore at Marshall, follow in her footsteps. And every day, she sees that return on investment.

Through her volunteer efforts, Browning has helped shine a light on the homeless and those struggling with addiction; people who often become invisible in today's society. "Serving them means seeing them," she is quick to point out.

Currently a program coordinator for the Psychiatric Residency Program at the Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine, Browning never fails to find time to support those in need. That dedication has led to a number of special recognitions, including the Award for Community Service by *The Herald-Dispatch* earlier this year.

***Carolyn B. Hunter  
Faculty Service  
Award*****Dr. David Cusick*****Nancy Pelpfrey-Herd  
Village Scholarship*****Emily Hall &  
Tyler Freeman*****Cam Henderson  
Award*****Austin Loop &  
Samantha Bane*****College of Arts  
and Media  
Award of Distinction*****William "Bill" Bissett*****College of Business  
Award of Distinction*****David Helmer**



*College of Education  
Award of Distinction*

**Dr. Danny Fulks  
(In Memoriam)**



*College of Health  
Professions  
Award of Distinction*

**Joy Pelfrey**



*College of  
Information  
Technology and  
Engineering  
Award of Distinction*

**Dewey Bocook**



*College of Liberal  
Arts Award of  
Distinction*

**Carter Seaton**



*College of Science  
Award of Distinction*

**George White, M.D.**



*Marshall University  
School of Medicine  
Award of Distinction*

**Charles Clements, M.D.**



Former Marshall University star and current Philadelphia Eagles defensive player Vinny Curry speaks during the Spring Fountain Ceremony.



The Marshall University Grand and Golden Reunion classes celebrate a return to the Huntington campus during Alumni Weekend 2015.



Dr. Elizabeth Murray, winner of the Distinguished Service to Marshall University award, discusses her recent efforts here in the community, including bringing DNA Day to Huntington.



Lt. Gen. Anthony Crutchfield, winner of Marshall's Distinguished Alumni award, speaks during the Alumni Weekend awards ceremony.



# Mark Your Calendar!

## Homecoming 2015 is October 24

Mark your calendar and plan on joining the Marshall University Alumni Association for Homecoming 2015 with a full week of Homecoming festivities, culminating with Homecoming Weekend Oct. 23-24.

Join us for the famous Picnic on the Plaza on Friday, Oct. 23, on the Memorial Student Center Plaza and take in a full day of activities on Saturday, Oct. 24, including the annual Homecoming Parade, MUAA Tailgate and much more, all leading up to the Marshall Homecoming game against North Texas beginning at 3 p.m.

Join us for Homecoming 2015! For more information, visit us at [www.herdalum.com](http://www.herdalum.com) for complete details.



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Friend us on Facebook, like us on Twitter and follow us on Instagram for up-to-date news, photos and live updates from all of the major alumni events and happenings on campus and around the country as the MUAA brings Marshall University to you!



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## School Spirit Showdown

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Thundering Herd fans, listen up!

Your alma mater needs your help to win the School Spirit Showdown this September! We'll be taking on the Ohio Bobcats in the showdown, presented by Nationwide Insurance.

In the two weeks leading up to the Marshall football game against the Bobcats on Saturday, Sept. 12, Marshall fans will have an opportunity to help the Herd win the School Spirit Showdown by uploading their fan photos online in a head-to-head contest against Ohio University to determine who has the best fans!

Beginning in September, fans can upload their fan photos and vote on other Marshall fan images. For every picture uploaded, that respective school will receive a point. Schools can earn additional points when fans vote on their favorite images. The school that receives the most points will be announced as the winner during the Marshall-Ohio game.

As a bonus, the photo that receives the most votes from the winning school will win a special prize package from Marshall University and Nationwide Insurance!

For more information on the contest and to help do your part to achieve victory for the Herd, visit [www.heraldum.com](http://www.heraldum.com) for complete details.



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## Larry Crum joins Marshall as assistant director of alumni relations

Larry Crum, a 2005 graduate of Marshall University with a degree in public relations, has been named the new assistant director of alumni relations at Marshall.

Crum joins the Marshall University Alumni Association after more than six years as the media and public relations manager for the International Hot Rod Association (IHRA) in Norwalk, Ohio, where he oversaw the daily media and PR functions for one of the largest motorsports sanctioning bodies in the United States.

Prior to that, from 2004 to 2009, Crum worked as sports editor at Ohio Valley Publishing, which included newspapers in Gallipolis, Ohio, Pomeroy, Ohio, and Point Pleasant, W.Va. Crum is a native of Point Pleasant.

"I am thrilled to have this wonderful opportunity to return home and give back to Marshall University. Marshall has been a big part of my life and I look forward to supporting the many wonderful programs, events and opportunities that the Marshall University Alumni Association affords to Herd alumni around the globe," Crum said. "Right now is a very exciting time to be here and I truly look forward to working with the university, students and MU alumni in promoting this great institution."



### MU Alumni Association

The MU Alumni Association serves more than 120,000 alumni living in all states and in more than 59 countries. The MUAA is the organization dedicated to serving past, present and future students from around the globe.

To become an active member of the alumni association, simply make a yearly gift of your choice to the Marshall University Foundation and/or the Marshall University Alumni Association. This gift will make your membership active for 12 months from the date of your gift.

#### MUAA active members receive the following benefits and opportunities:

- Network with MU grads in your area or in your field of work
- Become a mentor to current students
- Maintain contact with friends, former classmates and professors
- Access career guidance and services available at Marshall
- Assist the university in student recruitment
- Attend pre-game events and receptions in conjunction with the university
- Have access to affinity program and alumni discounts
- Attend reunions and homecoming
- The opportunity to join a giving society
- Discounts on Choice Hotels and several rental car companies
- Discounts on home and auto insurance with Nationwide Insurance
- Access to Marshall University Libraries
- Discounts at the Marshall University Bookstore (excluding textbooks)
- Discount at the Hall of Fame Café in Huntington



## 1970s



**Dr. Roger Weis** (B.A. '71, M.A. '75), professor of nonprofit leadership studies at Murray State University, has just had his 13th book published. "Sea Change," a book of poetry, is now available at barnsandnoble.com and amazon.com. He says he began writing poetry and fell in love with the ocean at the age of 14. When he was drafted from college in the 60s to become a reporter, editor and community service coordinator for the U.S. Army, he continued to write about the sea when he was stationed at Nha Trang Beach in Vietnam. Upon returning to Marshall, some of his work was published in the university's poetry journal, Etc. After completing his degrees from Marshall, he earned a doctorate from the University of Kentucky in 1995.

## 1980s

**Hossein Mohebbian** (M.A. '83) has received the 2015 Gussler Fellow Award in Mathematics and Science for 2015 at Ashland Community and

Please share your news with us by sending it to the Marshall University Alumni Association; One John Marshall Drive, Huntington, W.Va. 25755. Preference will be given to active alumni; other news will be printed as space allows and should be received within six months of the event.

For more Class Notes, go to [www.marshall.edu/alumni](http://www.marshall.edu/alumni).

Technical College. Dr. C. Gordon Gussler and his wife, Dixie, established the award in 2007 to reward outstanding math and science faculty who motivate students to exceed their own expectations. Recipients receive a financial stipend for two years.

Mohebbian taught at Marshall and the West Virginia Institute of Technology before starting at ACTC in 1991. He serves on several college committees and has received numerous teaching excellence awards.

**Paula Wells** (B.A. '82) was married to James R. Luck Jr. on January 15, 2015. Currently she practices law with Connors Morgan in Greensboro, North Carolina, and was recently ordained into ministry with the United Church of Christ.

## 1990s

**Kerri O'Rourke-Robinson** (B.B.A.'91) has been appointed vice president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond's Supervision, Regulation and Credit department, with oversight responsibility for supervisory programs for large banking organizations. The appointment was effective April 1. O'Rourke-Robinson returned to the Richmond Fed after

two years working at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, where she was an assistant vice president and the central point of contact for SunTrust. In her previous 12 years in Richmond, she held a number of positions in

banking supervision, including as a central point of contact for BB&T. Before joining the Fed, O'Rourke-Robinson worked for the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency in the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

## Free graduation video available at HerdAlum.com

For the first time, the Marshall University Alumni Association is making a copy of the complete 2015 commencement ceremony available for free!

Recent graduates and their friends and family can relive all of the memories of the 2015 commencement ceremony with their free video copy of the ceremony, available now exclusively at [www.herdalum.com](http://www.herdalum.com).

Both the undergraduate and graduate ceremonies can be viewed in their entirety and saved to a computer, smartphone or tablet. It's our way of saying congratulations on a job well done!

Visit [www.herdalum.com](http://www.herdalum.com) today to learn more.



## Maurice Cooley (B.A. 1970)

Maurice Cooley (B.A.'70, M.A.'75), Marshall's associate vice president for intercultural affairs, has been named one of 13 recipients of the 2015 West Virginia State Journal "Who's Who in West Virginia Business" award.

The annual award honors people who bring strength and vitality to communities across the state through their leadership.

Cooley has worked at Marshall for nearly 12 years—for the first 11 as director of the Center for African American Students and since January 2014 in his current position.

During his time at the university, he has been instrumental in designing a number of signature programs for minority and underrepresented students, including the Marshall University Society of Black Scholars, the Health Science and Technology Academy Summer Institute, the Donning of Kente celebration, the annual Diversity Breakfast, the Unity Walk and the Black Alumni Connections Network.

He also is responsible for creating and leading the programs and individualized interventions that led to

Marshall being nationally recognized in a 2010 report published by The Education Trust. The study found Marshall is among the most successful universities in the country at graduating African American students at the same rate as white students.



Before joining Marshall, Cooley worked in social services for 25 years as a clinician, psychotherapist and program director with the Prestera Center. He also served as a divorce custody mediator with the local family law court.

A Lewisburg native, Cooley served in the U.S. Army for three years. He and his wife, Deborah, who also is a Marshall graduate, have two children, McKenzie and Luke. McKenzie graduated from Marshall in 2014 and recently completed her first year of law school. Luke is a sophomore at Marshall.

## Ashley Clark (B.A. 2013)

Ashley Clark, (B.A. 2013) has been awarded a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship grant to work in the Slovak Republic for 2015-16.

Clark taught in a middle school in Jacksonville, Florida, as part of the Teach for America program. A native of Ona, West Virginia, she graduated from Marshall with a triple major in political science, international affairs and Spanish. Her Fulbright assignment will take her to the ancient city of Spišská Nová Ves, where she will be assisting in a high school that has an English foreign language class. As part of the cultural exchange she will also be doing a community project. She has chosen to work with Romani children, a small minority population in that country.

"I'll be assisting a teacher providing knowledge about native English and U.S. Culture," Clark said. "The Fulbright program is actually a cultural exchange program, so I'll be learning their language and learning as much about their culture as they will about ours."

For her assignment it wasn't required that she be proficient in the Slovak language, but she's been teaching herself through books and phone apps. And she believes that some introductory basic language instruction will be provided before she travels to Spišská Nová Ves.

Clark feels the two years she spent in the Teach For America program has given her valuable experience for her coming venture. "I felt right now was the time to make this move because I can take my teaching experience with me to the Slovak Republic," she said.

She's particularly excited about carrying out her proposed community project, working with the small minority population of Romani—or Gypsy, as they are also characterized—children. "Their education isn't necessarily as good as the Slovak children. This will be in addition to my regular duties. The town in which I'll be working is known to have a larger pool of Romani children than in some other places so I'll be spending time with them. I'm really looking forward to that."

And, she said, "I'm happy for Marshall's support for everything I've done. I'm really thankful for all the support I received from both faculty and staff, not only during my student days but also, now that I'm an alumna, I especially want to thank Dr. [Jess] Morrissette and Dr. [Jamie] Warner from the Political Science department, who were two of my recommenders; Dr. [Ronald] Bieniek, who serves as Marshall's Fulbright Program Adviser, the rest of the Fulbright committee at Marshall, and the staff of the Honors College for their support and feedback during the process."

# REMEMBERING

## Virginia Maxwell Fogg

A true daughter of Marshall has passed away. Virginia Maxwell Fogg, 95, a 1941 graduate, died April 26, 2014, the day of the alumni luncheon she had hoped to attend. She was laid to rest three days later in the green Marshall jacket she had worn so proudly in life.

She was ahead of her time in many respects, her family says, an independent woman who joined the WAVES during World War II. After graduating from Marshall, she married, continued her education, and became a teacher. She did all this while taking care of her five children, often on her own, as her husband's work frequently took him away from home.

Born in Hinton, West Virginia, to parents who were both teachers, Fogg graduated from Sissonville High School in 1935 at age 16. Considered too young to attend Marshall, she sat out two years until 1937 when she and her mother, who was working on an undergraduate degree, became roommates one summer on the third floor of Old Main, which was then a dormitory. Her mother earned her B.A. in 1943, then later went on to get a master's degree. It was the start of a Marshall legacy.

According to Fogg's daughter, Carolyn Fogg Souther, her father, Edmund Johnson Fogg, who had come to Marshall from Massachusetts, met Virginia his very first day on campus. He went on to earn both a B.A. and a M.A. in education from Marshall.

The Fogg family's alliance to Marshall has extended to the present day. Souther graduated in 1978 with a degree in accounting. Her sister, Stephanie Fogg Fowbie, earned an elementary education degree in 1971. Sister Patty Fogg Lawson's daughter, Pam Hager, has a degree in elementary education. Fowbie's two daughters Amy and Julie, are both graduates. Souther's daughter, Emily, has two Marshall degrees, having received her M.A. in Communication disorders last August. Stephanie's husband, Bob, is also a MU alumnus.

The Marshall ties aren't all that surprising, considering that the Fogg sisters virtually grew up on the Huntington



MUAA president Bernie Coston surprised Virginia with a bouquet of flowers at the 2013 Alumni Banquet.

campus. When she was a young teenager, Souther says, the family rented a house that sat on the corner lot now occupied by Career Services, literally just a stone's throw from the campus. "I rode my bicycle all over the grounds. The campus was my playground, I grew up there. It was what I knew since we were practically living on campus," Souther says.

Growing up, she says the Fogg household was rife with fond Marshall memories. Virginia Fogg made the most of her time on campus, joining Theta Rho sorority, living for a time in the old Laidley Hall dormitory before moving into her sorority house. After joining the WAVES, Fogg remained stateside, where she was assigned first to meteorology school and then later transferred to Washington, D.C., where she worked in communications for the U.S. Navy. Throughout her long career, Fogg taught reading in Ohio, principally in Chesapeake, and then for many years at West Elementary in Huntington where she was part of the Title 1 Reading program. She taught until she was 77, and then although retired, continued to work with children from time to time.

She lived a quiet life after retirement, but still drove herself around town in Huntington. And one of her favorite events was the annual alumni banquet held each spring during Alumni Weekend, which she attended regularly. She was delighted in 2013 when the Alumni Association surprised her with a bouquet of flowers and special recognition to honor her both as the oldest alum and for her faithful attendance.

She had planned to attend last year's luncheon but became ill just shortly before it took place, according to her daughter. "She always looked forward to them and had such a good time," said Souther. But Virginia Maxwell Fogg left a rich Marshall legacy that looks to extend well into the future. "I can see my grandchildren and great grandchildren going to Marshall," Souther said. And that, she says, would please her mother very much.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Dr. Danny G. Fulks,** (M.A. '61) author and professor emeritus at Marshall University, where he taught in the College of Education from 1968 to 1998, passed away December 24, 2014, in Huntington. Born on a farm in Gallia County, Ohio, he graduated from Mercerville High School, earned a B.S. degree from Rio Grande College, an M.A. from Marshall University, and a doctorate from the University of Tennessee. He was also a veteran of the United States Air Force.



Loved by his students, he affected many with his passion for education and sense of humor. Author of two collections of essays, "Tragedy on Greasy Ridge" and "Tick Ridge Faces the South," Fulks wrote about people, places and events in the central Appalachian region. His essays on the history and happenings of this region were characterized as evoking both the melancholy and the humor that he saw as a part of life. His essays in Timeline and other magazines often focused on bluegrass musicians and the music they make. Whether he was writing about children's games, one-room schoolhouses, "white whiskey," Clyde Beatty's lion-taming act, the Waterloo Wonders basketball team or a grisly murder in 1914 in Lawrence County, Ohio, he was credited with making local history come to life.

He is survived by two daughters, six grandchildren and a brother. In lieu of flowers, donations were suggested to go to The Jesse Stuart Foundation, 4440 13th St., Ashland, KY 41105.

Fulks was honored posthumously this year with the College of Education and Professional Development's Award of Distinction during Alumni Weekend.

**Rachel White** (B.A. '69 ) of Moundsville, West Virginia, passed away February 22, 2014. She was a 1965 graduate of Moundsville High School and went on to receive a B.A. degree in education from Marshall and a M.A. in English education from West Virginia University. She later attended classes at Marshall, Georgetown University and the West Virginia College of Graduate Studies. She was a teacher at Glen Dale Elementary School in 1969-70 and taught at John Marshall High School from 1970 to 2006, where she was the chair of the English department from 1976-2006. After her retirement from John Marshall she taught at West Virginia Northern Community College from 2006-08 in the College 101 high school transition program.

She was a member and past elder of Moundsville First Christian Church and a member of Delta Kappa Gamma. Memorial contributions may be made to the American Heart Association, P.O. Box 15120, Chicago, IL 60693.

**Jeffrey Clayton Rockwell** (B.A. '05), of South Charleston, West Virginia, passed away unexpectedly at his home on September 17, 2014. A graduate of South Charleston High School, and Marshall University, he was near completion of a master's degree in history from Marshall. His many creative interests led him to positions that included traveling with and catering for the Vans Warped Tour during summers.

After living and working in Chicago for several years, he returned to South Charleston, where he engaged in e-commerce, eagerly embracing fast-paced technology. Known for his creative mind and droll wit, his talents spanned media, art, music and cooking. He is survived by his parents, a brother and a special nephew, in addition to several aunts, uncles and cousins, and his beloved Corgi.

He was a member of St. John's Episcopal Church in Charleston, West Virginia. Donations in his memory may be made to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, or to Manna Meal at St. John's Episcopal Church.

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**SPOTLIGHT**

# John Merical

*Marshall graduate John Merical stumbles upon exciting career as a featured extra.*

**L**ook closely. He seems to be everywhere, popping up in TV shows, movies and commercials—that tall man with the crop of silvery hair, never very far from a legion of A-list stars. In fact, he's been on set with luminaries such as Anthony Hopkins, Susan Sarandon, Jim Carrey, Jeff Daniels, Melissa McCarthy, and Queen Latifah, to name just a few.

John Merical is what's known in the film trade as a featured extra, someone with a script title who appears on screen for a few seconds, often in close proximity to the star. He's a recognizable face, not merely a dim figure seen at a distance or part of an indistinguishable crowd. And sometimes he even has lines.

Name a professional or businessman and he's probably played him. He's been a mob boss; a student pilot; a hospital administrator; a reporter in 1965 Selma, Alabama; a wealthy bigot; and all manner of creepy characters or hapless victims when he's ventured to the dark side for episodes of Investigation Discovery channel's *Homicide Hunter* and *Killer Couples*.

For this 1975 Marshall graduate, who has appeared in over 200 productions in just the last two years, this unanticipated career has turned out to be a lark—the ultimate retirement gig. And it started as a fluke. One day Merical accompanied his 13-year-old daughter, Paige, a model, to her agency where an employee urged him to sign up for film work. She said he had three things going for him: He's tall (6-foot-2), has his own hair and doesn't sport a beard. His first casting call came within a week. He played a person sitting in a cancer center's waiting room. He read a magazine for four hours and was handed a check for \$60.



Next he did a Fiat commercial playing an astounded villager in 18th century France who sees an automobile for the first time. He got \$400 for that one. And was hooked.

Merical lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, with his wife, Suzi Jarrell Merical, also an MU alum, and Paige. Raleigh is fairly close to Atlanta, which has become the Hollywood of the East, he says. "If I lived in Atlanta I could work five days a week, now I just do what I want to do. I have never felt like I've worked one day; it's such a pleasure."

Blessed with a face that can age gracefully from 40 through early 60s, he only works when he chooses. He was a nursing home visitor in "Tammy," starring Melissa McCarthy; a street worker in "Sponge Bob 2;" and a neighbor in "Dumb and Dumber To," where he regularly talked baseball on the set with Jeff Daniels. They're both knowledgeable baseball fans and Merical says Daniels felt comfortable talking with him because he recognized he wasn't a star struck fan who was going to ask for an autograph. Merical was recognizable as a reporter walking across the bridge in the recent hit movie "Selma" and appeared in two other scenes as well. In "Dumb and Dumber To," he's a passerby who just misses getting hit by a pork chop tossed by Jim Carrey. In the Hallmark Channel's Christmas movie, "Christmas in Conway," the bittersweet story of a man who builds a Ferris wheel in his yard for his dying wife, he was on screen in multiple scenes in the film's final 10 minutes, appearing in several shots with stars Andy Garcia and Mary Louise Parker. One of his favorite films to date is the HBO production "Bessie," starring Queen Latifah as the famed African-American blues singer Bessie Smith. Gussied up in an

elegant 1920s-era tux, he plays a bigoted aristocrat whose face is caught by the camera as he changes from snobbish distain to incredulous surprise when he hears her sing.

"In one scene I was standing so close to her that when she threw a drink in the face of another character, I got splashed," he said with a laugh.

He's done a lot of television, good enough to have been cast time and time again on several shows. "I did multiple episodes of 'Under the Dome' and 10 episodes of 'Banshee.' That one was fun because my wife and daughter both appeared on that show." Then there were the 80 or so "Homicide Hunter" episodes on the ID channel, including the one where he played a student pilot who crashes into a mountain. Merical has even made forays into what he terms "structured reality" shows. One of them, Lizard Lick Towing, is about an actual towing company that specializes in repossession.

In addition to his acting gigs, as a former race car driver, he's been tapped to drive on several productions, once alongside a Zamboni as a pace car. And he was Alan Alda's stand-in in "The Longest Ride," playing an accident victim covered in fake blood and trapped in a car.

On the horizon, there's a commercial for a national restaurant chain, as well as speaking roles in three upcoming films. He's the mayor of Ferguson, Missouri, in a film about the aftermath of a police shooting in that city; the head of a church board of deacons that is dealing with a disreputable pastor; and he'll have a role in an upcoming production, "American Hero," a film about Frank Shankwitz, the motorcycle officer in Prescott, Arizona, who founded the Make-a-Wish Foundation.

While he's been on a fast track in his newfound avocation, conversely the actual making of a film or commercial is a glacially slow and boring process, Merical admits candidly. Long days, sometimes 16-18 hours, are not uncommon. "A 12-hour day is actually a short one in the film business, long days are just routine," he said. "It takes countless hours for the technical crews to get set up before a single person steps before the camera." Cast members, including extras, can be there in full costume and make-up for an indeterminate amount of time before the magic word "action" springs the set to life.

"I happened to be in Atlanta when they were filming 'Goosebumps,' a big budget sci-fi film coming out this summer which stars Jack Black. I signed on and was cast as part of a group walking down the street. We sat around



for 14 hours from 4 p.m. until 6 a.m., which isn't unusual in this business. If anyone had told me I would be working 16-18 hour days and not feel tired at the end of it, I would have told them they were crazy," he said.

It is boring with the long hours and milling around with nothing to do, but there are some perks, he acknowledges, such as the food. Everybody on the set of a film project, including the extras, gets fed and "the food is incredible," he said. "It's just like being at a resort." And there is some pay, except for the volunteer extras, about \$100 a day.

He didn't start out with any show business aspirations. In fact he didn't appear in a single play at Nitro High School, where he graduated early at 16, or later at Marshall, something he now regrets. For more than 30 years he followed a traditional path. His professional life was spent in sales and he rose through the ranks to become a successful sales manager. And as divergent as sales and show business may seem, there actually are parallels, he believes.

"As a sales manager, I had to put on a good face to keep the teams motivated and that made it easy to act. Every appointment I went on was basically a different scene. I had to think quickly on my feet, to learn lines ... basically you're playing a role. I had to speak in front of people and now it's as easy for me to speak in front of the camera. I can look through the camera, that's a real asset, a skill that's appreciated by directors."

And Merical has worked with several Academy Award-winning directors, including Jonathan Demme, who directed the films "Philadelphia" and "The Silence of the Lambs."

He's having so much fun he has some advice for Marshall theatre students and people in general—travel to Atlanta and join up. And in today's electronic world, you don't need an expensive professional photograph—a good cellphone picture will do, he says, and virtually everything can be done on Facebook.

"A majority of films are now shot in Atlanta. At any given time there are 20-30 films and TV shows being filmed there. They're always looking for extras. You can make about \$100 a day and most of the time you're booked for two days. And there are chances to be volunteer extras who don't get paid but get good meals and then are eligible for drawings for television sets and other good prizes. I really urge people to give it a try. You can see big stars and may even get a few seconds on screen. I've never had so much fun in my life."



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