

The Friar Forum

Spring 2003

From the Abbot...

Dear Fellow Friars,

This spring marks an important milestone for the Friar Society and The University of Texas campus as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of our admission of women into the cloister. Since 1973, we have been recognizing the invaluable contributions of all students, male and female, and we hold strong in our belief that this once controversial decision further contributed to the tradition of character The Friar Society continues to uphold.

Last fall we were happy to honor one of the first female initiates, Justice Jan Patterson, as an honored alumnus for her numerous contributions to The Society, The University, and The State of Texas. In conjunction with the official celebration this spring, we have decided to embark on a new and important project on behalf of The Friar Society. With women faculty currently being underrepresented among both tenure and tenure-track faculty here at The University, we have been working with Provost Sheldon Ekland-Olson on establishing an endowed chair position designated for a female, tenure-track professor. We feel that the money generated through such an endowment will help a young professor in her efforts to obtain tenure and placement as a full professor at The University of Texas. Furthermore, we feel that such projects will further our reputation as a group of students and alumni that selflessly give back to the campus community.

Another important aspect of this effort will be to further unify our alumni through new city-based associations and continued communication and updates on our progress. To this end, we ask that you do your best to attend the events for the Reunion Weekend to celebrate this occasion with us.

Pax Vobiscum,

JW Walthall

About the Actives

Leith Abdulla is back to school working on his electrical engineering degree after finishing his one year co-op with IBM. He enjoys being back at school, and the only thing he misses from the career world is the paycheck. Leith is currently playing with his new tablet PC, and writing letters on the computer and sending them electronically to his friends and family.

Rob Addy is in his second year of law school at UT. Apart from his coursework, he serves as a student member on the faculty appointments committee and as a teaching assistant to the first year class. He was recently elected to the editorial board of Texas Law Review and will split his summer working for Susman Godfrey (Houston) and Vinson & Elkins (Dallas).

Nada Antoun, the current Almoner, is a graduating Radio-Television- Film student. During her last semester at the University she has been involved with the Eastside Community Connection and creating a voter awareness and education program for the Student Volunteer Center. Nada continues to work in opposition research for a political consulting firm. After graduation, Nada plans to move to Houston to participate in Teach for America where she will be an elementary school teacher. After her two years with the program, she hopes to return to Austin for graduate school.

George P. Bush is a third year law student. He will graduate in May and then go on to clerk for the Federal District in Dallas.

Alexandra Chirinos will be graduating with degrees in Plan II, Business Honors, and Finance this May. She is currently working on the Bilingual Mentoring Program in Student Volunteer Board and the Hispanic Scholar Chapter, both of which she founded during her tenure at the university. Alex was recently awarded the UT Parents Association Outstanding Student Award and the U.S.-Ireland Alliance George G. Mitchell Graduate Fellowship which she will use to study international human rights law in Ireland before heading to Harvard Law School.

Karen Gonzalez is a graduate student pursuing her M.A./Ph.D. in American Studies. She studies contemporary American religion and art, particularly audience reception and usage of sacred art and art spaces; the differing functions of sacred art for various communities; public art and public memory; and art and social activism (particularly civil rights). Her master's thesis explores Houston's Rothko Chapel as museum, church, and center of social activism. This semester, Karen is serving as

a graduate representative on the Provost's consultative committee on the selection of the new Vice Provost/Dean of Graduate Studies; the Commission of 125 (Character, Access, Scale Committee); and the Graduate Student Assembly. In addition, Karen is the co-chair of the Friar Centennial Teaching Fellowship Selection Committee.

Annie Holand is currently pursuing degrees in both law and higher education. In addition to serving as Friar Abbot during Fall 2002, Annie is currently the Vice President of both the Student Bar Association and the Chicano Hispanic Law Students Association. This upcoming summer Annie will be returning to Washington DC to work for the Mrs. Laura Bush.

Corinna Kester is in her fifth year of a double major in chemical engineering and Plan II. She just returned from a UN Environmental Program (UNEP) conference in Kenya where she was elected to the UNEP Youth Advisory Council. She's currently writing her thesis on the establishment of the UT Environmental Center (<http://www.UTenvironment.org/>).

This semester René Lara signed up for a light class load at the law school in order to lobby the legislature full-time on behalf of the Texas Federation of Teachers. He spends his days in the time-honored legislative tradition of closing the gap between last November's campaign promises and available state revenue.

Eric Opiela completed his Doctor of Jurisprudence in December 2002, and is currently writing a law review article on Texas water marketing. He is also the committee director for the Texas House Committee on Urban Affairs. After Session, he hopes to be relocating for a short time to Washington, where he will clerk for the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, but will get back to Texas as soon as he can. Before he leaves, he will wed the beautiful Lara Davidson in July.

Paul Navratil is a Ph.D. student in computer science. He is also a graduate representative in Student Government and participates in several organizations across campus. Paul also trains and instructs martial arts for a local training hall. He is currently interviewing for a summer internship with Austin-area industries.

Sarah Tierney, the current Scrivener, is working on her Plan II and Computer Science degrees. She is working at both the Telecommunications Infrastructure Board and the LBJ school as a research assistant this semester. Additionally, she is active in Orange Jackets, Student Volunteer Board, and the UT Heritage Society.

JW Walthall, Abbot for Spring 2003, will be finishing his Sociology, Math, and Economics degrees at UT this summer. This semester, JW has been the policy and platform director for the Students First campaign for Student Government and has been working on his research in social stratification and education. Next year he will be pursuing an opportunity to work on education policy in Austin while honing his skills in photography.

Forrest Wilder is in his fourth year of a triple major in English, Philosophy, and Anthropology. He has been organizing a campaign against tuition deregulation among UT System students around the state with UT Watch, a student-run watchdog group he co-founded last year. He will be studying Spanish in Mexico this summer.

News From Recent Graduates

Sara Frankfurt graduated in December. She is continuing her interning at the White House in Washington, D.C. She is an intern in the USA Freedom Corps Office, President Bush's volunteer initiative. She is aiding in research on service and volunteerism, participating in seminars led by leaders in the Bush administration, as well as providing administrative support for her office. Sara has enjoyed Washington, D.C. and hopes to find a permanent position within the administration soon. Sara has gone to the DC Texas Exes events and enjoyed meeting other Longhorns that now live in the area.

Kenn Kern is currently working as a law clerk in the Slobodan Milosevic case in the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) located in The Hague. He works for the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP). Kenn has assisted in the proofing of recent key witnesses appearing before the Chamber. He has also drafted a speech to the diplomatic community delivered by Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte.

Kenn is a native of Sunnyside, Queens, New York. He holds a Masters in American Government from Georgetown University. At University of Texas Law School, he has served as the Law School Representative to UT Student Government, as a member of the National Moot Court team, a Teaching Quizmaster, an editor of the Texas International Law Journal (TILJ), an teaching assistant to Admiral Bobby Inman in the LBJ Public Policy School as well as co-chair of the Student Recruitment and Orientation Committee (SROC).

Kenn will serve as a law clerk for the Honorable Thad Heartfield in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Texas in 2003-2004.

Initiation Speech by Leith Abdulla

For those of you that do not know me, I run a few websites around campus. Sticking with what I know best, I have posted my speech on the internet hoping that I can simply send everyone a link to it, and be done with my morning. Higher authorities have deemed this insufficient, and thus I will continue on with the meat of what I have decided to share with you all this morning.

What if everyone had personal access to the internet? Well, first of all, they would all have email addresses. Imagine the impact it would have on the United States Postal Service. Either stamps would cost 50 bucks a pop to cover the losses, or they might turn to the government to regulate email and charge .001 cents for every email sent out. By 2005, 36 billion emails will be sent daily, and at .001 cents— well, let's just say that is more money a day than Bill Gates would ever make. If you think this idea of someone charging for what is already free is far-fetched, think again, this idea has already been considered in the past and will certainly come up again.

If everyone had personal access to the internet, all magazines, newspapers, and books would become obsolete. Barnes and Nobles would close its doors, Starbucks will begin delivering double latte espressos, paper mills would become museums, and the worlds tree population might actually stand a chance against the chainsaws that await them.

If everyone had personal access to the internet, all eligible voters would wake up to check their email, receive a notice from the government that is up for election along with each parties website. From there, they can read the stances on each of the candidates (all the while closing little pop up banners of negative advertisement), and then vote in the public elections before it is time to go to work. This day will be a monumentous day in the democracy of the United States. I wonder that if we had this system a few days ago, would the outcome still be the same?

This simple and indiscriminating access to the internet would increase the amount and diversity of voters. Placing information at the fingertips of voters means that politicians do not have to rely on heavy advertising budgets to win a campaign. Current political parties will have to face the real threat of increased political competition as millions of dollars doesn't become a prerequisite for running for election. Access to the internet can create a paperless society, providing for a much greener earth.

Now I ask you which is more difficult, providing personal internet access, or getting politicians, corporations and the media to agree to make this shift to such a world?

Here is another related question, what if everyone owned cars that ran on hydrogen that only released water vapor into the air?

People would be able to breathe in Houston, Oil Rigs will become day trip adventures for history students at the nearby elementary, gas stations would become hydrogen stations.

If everyone owned these hydrogen cars, Oil companies would drop like flies, the automobile industry would undergo the largest shakeup of any industry in the history of capitalism, and current politicians would lose over half their campaign contributions with the fall of the this iron triangle. However unlike personal access to the internet, the hydrogen car does exist. So again I ask, which is moe difficult, building enough hydrogen cars for consumers, or getting politicians, the automobile industry, and the oil businesses to make the path for this new world? How to we begin to gain access to important technologies that already exist? What is preventing us from living in this world?

There is no easy answer, and there is no easy solution—but I for one want cleaner air, more trees, a chance for America to achieve pure democracy, and for everyone to be able to download this speech if they so desire.

Initiation Speech by Nada Antoun

The average child spends over 4 hours watching television, playing video games, watching movies and using a computer each day. This time is not supervised by a parent or teacher. These are 4 hours of time in which your children are in control. James Steyer, author of “The Other Parent” puts this in perspective. “If another adult spent five or six hours a day with your kids, regularly exposing them to sex, violence and rampantly commercial values, you would probably forbid that person to have further contact with your children. Yet most of us passively allow the media to expose our kids routinely to these same behaviors—sometimes worse—and do virtually nothing about it.”

Children today are overly exposed to programming of a violent, sexual and commercial nature. Children have become victims of deceptive advertising in which children are marketed to, manipulated and taken advantage of. According to Steyer, mass media cares nothing for your child’s physical, mental, emotional or spiritual health but only for the cash he can ensnare from your wallet by peddling sex and violence and inciting demands for toys and junk food. A recent report of the Surgeon General shows”

- 61 percent of television programs contain some violence, and only 4 percent of television programs with violent content feature an “antiviolence” theme.
- 44 percent of the violent interactions on television involve perpetrators who have some attractive qualities worthy of emulation.

- Nearly 75 percent of violent scenes on television feature no immediate punishment for or condemnation of violence.

The report further contends that television and film violence led to immediate violent behavior in individual children. Brief exposure to violent dramatic presentations on television or in films causes short-term increases in the aggressive behavior of youths, including physically aggressive behavior. In addition to increased violence and aggression among children, the prevalence of obese and overweight children has nearly tripled for adolescents in the past 2 decades. Overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults. This increases to 80% if one or more parent is overweight or obese.

The problem that persists is the lack of understanding. Most parents don't know or realize that such a strong correlation exists between commercial television programming and violence and health. I have presented to you a major problem and rather than allowing that to fester, I will propose a solution.

I recommend a massive, nation wide advertising campaign targeted at parents and children of all ages which would send messages promoting healthy food habits, public broadcast television programming, as well as anti-violence announcements. This campaign could be sponsored by the Surgeon General's office, the Center for Disease Control, the National Crime Prevention Council, as well as local and state governments. Such a campaign would teach parents and society how to better monitor children's exposure to television in addition to sending children positive messages about themselves and their peers.

In order to ensure that the future of this country is in good hands, we have to make investments in our children. As cliché as it may sound, they are the infrastructure of this country. Helen Keller once said "It is not possible for civilization to flow backwards while there is youth in the world." And to that I say, let us move forward with the hearts, souls, and intellect of children at hand as we aim to protect their impressionable and young minds as we lead them to bright futures.

Spring 2003 Friar Officers

J.W. Walthall -- Abbott

Nada Antoun -- Almoner

Sarah Tierney -- Scrivener

Karen Gonzalez-- Friar Centennial Teaching Fellowship

Paul Navratil, Eric Opiela, and Sarah Tierney-- Edward S.

Guleke Award Committee

The Friar Society

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Mark your calendars for
April 26th-27th, 2003
Friar Reunion Weekend



Please visit
www.friarsociety.org
to update your information.