

Winter 2022

Monarch

Philip Walzer (Editor)

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Monarch



**President
Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D.**

**First Lady
Marisela Rosas Hemphill, Ph.D.**

Moving ODU forward





Full Frame

You're looking at the star trails created as the Earth rotates under the North Star. You can enjoy the up-close space view at the Michael and Kimthanh Lê Digital Theater and Planetarium in the new Chemistry Building. Virginia's second-largest planetarium, equipped with the advanced Digistar 7 system, is home to lectures, shows and even Bad Movie Nights. The planetarium's dome can display many more striking images, including visits to the neighboring Andromeda galaxy, animations of cosmic ray showers, 3D models of proteins and detailed human anatomy lessons.

Read more about Michael Lê, his escape from Vietnam and success in the tech world on Page 14.

PHOTO BY SHARA WEBER

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COVER PHOTO BY ANGELA DOUGLAS RAMSEY



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Monarch

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Together, we'll reach new heights!

Greetings, Monarch Nation!

On behalf of our talented students, world-class faculty, dedicated staff, passionate alumni and generous supporters, both near and far, I am proud to share the latest edition of Monarch magazine. This edition showcases the

individual experiences and unique journeys of our fellow Monarchs and their incredible impact on their local communities and chosen fields. I hope you enjoy reading their inspiring stories as they share their strengths and talents!

Since being named the ninth president of Old Dominion University last spring and relocating to the area last summer, my family and I have received such a warm welcome. We are honored to have an opportunity to serve this campus, the community and beyond. From multiple stops throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia on the Monarch Nation Tour to campus events and open forums, Monarchs have shared their personal perspectives and hopes for a better tomorrow. Without question, this is a special time to be a part of our amazing institution, caring community and growing region. Together, we are forward-focused on advancing Old Dominion University and creating new opportunities and possibilities for our future!

As we prepare to begin the spring semester, I share my sincere appreciation and lasting gratitude for the manner in which our campus and our community re-engaged following the global pandemic. We have provided robust in-person engagements and experiences while remaining sharply focused on health and safety. During a time of adversity and uncertainty, the Monarch spirit shined brightly as our campus came back to life with energy and excitement for the start of the new academic year!

In the months and years to come, I look forward to hearing additional stories of how our institution has transformed lives. I am equally looking forward to hearing your thoughtful ideas on how we can expand our impact and reach unprecedented heights. This will be the central focus of our year-long strategic planning efforts in which we will chart a clear direction for our continued success. Working together, I am confident that our best and brightest days are ahead. I look forward to engaging with each of you as we lift Old Dominion even higher.

GO MONARCHS!

With Monarch Pride,

Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D.
President



@BrianOHemphill



Call it Monarch momentum.

I felt a burst of energy every time I walked on campus last semester, after more than a year of too-empty pathways and too-quiet hallways.

I hope you feel that vitality through these pages, too, starting with the arrival of Old Dominion's ninth president, Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D. A few weeks into his presidency, he set off on a six-day, seven-city Monarch Nation Tour to connect with alumni and other supporters across the commonwealth.

Our recap offers details on ODU's path forward, which President Hemphill said will be built on a student-centered

approach and a commitment to transparency and accountability. Just as important: the sense of enthusiasm the tour fueled among alumni and other supporters about their alma mater and its future.

The campus enjoyed another burst of excitement a few weeks later at our football home opener. The Monarchs took care of Hampton 47-7 in the first home game in 651 days. Senior executive writer Harry Minium captures the spirit of that evening as more than 5,000 students whooped in support at S.B. Ballard Stadium.

This issue also should get you looking skyward and thinking beyond planet Earth.

Our NASA feature showcases the University's deep connections with the agency by profiling seven Monarchs who work or do research there, including former astronaut Michael Bloomfield (M.E.M. '93), a veteran of three shuttle missions.

On campus, Art Director Shara Weber's and Senior Photographer Chuck Thomas's striking photos take you inside the Michael and Kimthanh Lê Digital Theater and Planetarium in the new Chemistry Building and to our "Museum of the Moon" exhibition, where a replica of the moon, 23 feet in diameter, hung between Chartway Arena and the Barry Art Museum.

Finally, I chronicle the remarkable story of the alumnus for whom the planetarium is named. Michael Lê, who escaped South Vietnam as a teen in 1975 after the Communist takeover, made it through ODU working four jobs and became a multimillionaire IT entrepreneur. He credits his unshakable optimism: "I never think things won't happen. I think they will if I try my very best."

Philip Walzer
Monarch Magazine and University Editor

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Hampton Roads Chapter



The spring 2021 issue of Monarch magazine recently received three awards — two from the Hampton Roads chapter of the Public Relations Society of America and one from Graphic Design USA.

We want you to keep receiving Monarch magazine. If you need to update your address on our mailing list, please go to our website — www.odu.edu/monarchmag — and fill out the Change Information Form in the right-hand column.



We're Back!

Students rejoiced as they finally returned to Old Dominion in person last fall. On social media, they shared what they most looked forward to – from “Learning something new!” to “Getting back into the groove of things and doing my best” to simply “Being on campus again.”

PHOTOS BY CHUCK THOMAS



President's high-energy tour amps up Monarch spirit



BY AMBER KENNEDY AND PHILIP WALZER

Six days. Seven cities. More than 1,000 guests. A whole lot of Monarch love.

A few weeks after taking over as Old Dominion University's ninth leader, President Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D. – accompanied by First Lady Marisela Rosas Hemphill, Ph.D., and fellow Monarchs – embarked in August on a whirlwind Monarch Nation Tour to engage with University supporters and hear their thoughts.

Starting in Roanoke's Penthouse at the Center in the Square and ending on campus at Priority Automotive Club at S.B. Ballard Stadium, the tour offered participants appetizers such as mini-crab cakes and blue cheese meatballs. But the main entree was an outpouring of passion about ODU's future and buzz about the new president.

"He had a broad vision – somewhat aggressive, which I liked – and he was talking about ODU on the national scale," said Durmon Coates '99, who attended the reception in Roanoke.

"There seemed like a new energy and a lot of excitement in the room," said Coates, vice president of operations and sales for Bright Services, a staffing agency. "I see great things for ODU."

Dinh Peter Nguyen '95, a Washington real estate agent who attended the get-together in Vienna, said that as a Vietnamese immigrant, he was proud that his alma mater had appointed its first Black president. "His resume gives me goosebumps," Nguyen said.

President Hemphill covered issues ranging from enrollment growth to diversity. One of his major points: It's not a one-person show.

"The vision is about togetherness," he said. "We have to truly lock arms and work together to be a forward-focused public research university that is committed to innovation and entrepreneurship."

He listed four core principles that would guide the University:

Excellence: "We're going to be focused on excellence in our teaching, research and engagement with the community."

Accountability: "And not just accountable to the General Assembly, but accountable to each other. If we say that we're going to accomplish something, we work every single day to do that."

Transparency: "I do not want to hide the challenges that we face. I think it is important for us to communicate openly

regarding matters concerning the future of the institution."

A student-centered approach: "Students will be at the heart of every single decision we make every day."

President Hemphill said the University should strive for prominence nationally and beyond in research areas including coastal resilience, cybersecurity, maritime activity and offshore wind energy. He also highlighted the importance of broadening and increasing partnerships, noting ODU's collaboration with Jefferson Lab, NASA's Langley Research Center and Wallops Flight Facility, Dominion Energy, Sentara Healthcare, Newport News Shipbuilding and Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS).

Old Dominion's agreement to establish a joint School of Public Health with EVMS and Norfolk State University will improve health care and reduce disparities in the region, he said. Pointing to the increased incidence of cancer, diabetes and high blood pressure in the area, President Hemphill said: "People are dying every day. We are leading the commonwealth in all the wrong categories with regard to health care disparities."

He previewed a collaborative approach as Old Dominion updates its strategic plan. The University will hold focus groups not just with members of the campus but also with



PHOTOS BY CHUCK THOMAS

President and First Lady Hemphill meet supporters during Monarch Nation Tour stops in Charlottesville, Alexandria and Richmond.

external constituencies, including neighbors, legislators, and military and business executives. “We want to hear what role ODU can play in their future.”

President Hemphill was a first-generation student and the first of his seven siblings to attend college. Before he came to ODU, he spent nine years as president of West Virginia State University and Radford University.

During the tour, he spoke candidly about the challenges facing higher education, including growing student debt, and areas of improvement for ODU, such as the six-year graduation rate.

The University must be focused on “degrees of the future to meet the jobs of the future,” he said, and the strategy includes expanding ODUOnline.

Jenn Franklin, an online student from Swoope majoring in special education who attended the Charlottesville event, praised the training she’s received in classroom strategies and the convenience of the program. Also, “I’ve been impressed by the diversity I’ve experienced and the encouragement for cultural responsiveness in the classroom.”

ODU, the president said, will maintain its emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion. A true test, he said, is how students and, ultimately, alumni can engage with people from different backgrounds and serve as strong citizen leaders.

President Hemphill invited all of Monarch Nation, especially alumni, to embrace the concept of “One message, many voices” and help promote the value of an ODU education: “We need your time, your talent and your treasure. We need you to engage with us and believe in us.”

Kim Curtis ’82, president and CEO of Tidewater Home Funding, said: “I’m excited to hear President Hemphill talk about getting the word out. We’ve had a great story to tell. We’ve told it. I think we’ll tell it even more now.”

Curtis, who attended the Virginia Beach reception, received the new Monarch Spirit Award, recognizing alumni who have made significant contributions to the University. Other honorees were:

Alexandria: Timothy J. O’Donohue ’76

Charlottesville: James S. Cheng ’82

Norfolk: Barry C. Bishop ’74

Richmond: Charles F. Catlett III ’70

Roanoke: Donna D. Fisher ’74 and Daniel Fisher ’72

Vienna: Joe E. Carter Jr. ’86

Amber Kennedy is ODU’s director of news and media relations. Philip Walzer is Monarch magazine and University editor.

What Else They Said

“He kept saying ‘we,’ and ‘we’ is big to me. He also talked about hearing each other out, and I think that’s one of the biggest things.”

– Communication student
George Pearson III

“I’m most excited about the collaboration we’re doing for the School of Public Health. I’m looking forward to this journey.”

– Board of Visitors Vice Rector
Toykea Jones ’03 (M.E. ’05)

“He was bringing the passion and the accessibility and the willingness to be accessible. Students relate to you because they feel you actually care. It’s not another job for you; it’s a lifestyle.”

– Former SGA President
Dani Carter ’21

What Else He Said

“You can be anything you want to be with an ODU education. We need to help our students understand how it will be transformative.”



Meet students where they are

*Listen to students. Exhibit compassion and integrity.
Provide the freedom to fail. Trust the team.*

In this Q&A, President Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D., talks about the values that shape his approach to leadership. He also discusses the influence of his experience as a first-generation college student, his favorite author, the First Lady's role (including as presidential adviser) and how he got into bow ties.

BY PHILIP WALZER

Q What's the most important lesson you have learned from students over the years?

A It is important to meet students where they are (i.e., listen). Students come from many different walks of life with varied experiences. It is important to understand the uniqueness that each of our students brings to campus.

Q Describe your leadership style in three sentences.

A I am one who leads by example, is compassionate in understanding both individual and collective needs, and places a high value on individual integrity and collective commitment. As a leader, I think that you have to provide your organization with the freedom to fail (i.e., take calculated risks knowing that there is a greater likelihood of success). I am a leader who values the importance of the team (i.e., it is not about one individual; everything we do is about the people who are in the trenches and doing the great work on behalf of students, faculty and staff).

Q Your biggest surprise so far at ODU?

A As president of a public research university, I have been pleasantly surprised at the nature and level of engagement with students. ODU, as part of its culture, has a great value for the student experience and has created an environment similar to that of a mid-sized public institution. This is not common in large complex research universities.

Q What was your proudest achievement at Radford?

A My proudest achievement was the Commonwealth of Virginia stepping forward to provide an additional investment of \$10 million annually

to equalize tuition at the newly established Radford University Carilion in Roanoke with the main campus in Radford. With the merger, there had been a great inequity in tuition and fees between the two campuses. This investment was significant for access and opportunity!

Q How has your background as a first-generation student influenced your approach as a president?

A It has allowed me to truly relate to and understand the journey of our ODU students. I have a unique understanding of their fears and concerns, as well as excitement, along their path to realizing their dreams. Being on a college campus as a first-generation student can be extremely intimidating because you do not have the points of reference of a second- or third-generation college student. Therefore, I always lead by thinking about all of our students and their experiences.

Q Who's your favorite author? Why?

A My favorite author is Jeff Selingo, who wrote the book "College (Un)bound." In the book, he really takes an in-depth look at the challenges and opportunities ahead for higher education. He truly pulls back the curtain and exposes key areas that higher education must address to meet the needs of current and future students as well as business and industry, while remaining competitive in an increasingly complex environment.

Q When did you start wearing bow ties? Why do you like them?

A I started wearing bow ties in 2007 when someone gave me one as a gift. I have been wearing them ever since. Currently, I have approximately 125 bow ties and no traditional ties. I have actually forgotten how to tie a necktie.

Q What role will the First Lady play at Old Dominion?

A At each institution, Marisela has defined her own role based on the needs and opportunities within the campus and the community. She has always shown interest in women's issues, activism and promoting social mobility. She is an accomplished scholar and administrator. As such, I often go to her for advice and guidance on the many issues that we face as an institution.

Q How are your twins, Catalina and Cruz, adjusting to life in Norfolk? Will we see them on campus?

A Cruz and Catalina have adjusted very well to the area. They love their new school and have made many friends! The kids have grown up on college campuses, and they truly enjoy events from the arts to athletics. It has been amazing to watch the kids engage with members of the Monarch family!

Q You've traded the mountains at Radford for the rivers of Norfolk. Do you miss those hills?

A Hampton Roads is a beautiful location with the ocean, rivers and natural beauty! There are a lot of different opportunities here that our family did not previously experience. We are honored and happy to call Hampton Roads and the City of Norfolk home!



for the football team – and for students

BY HARRY MINIUM '77

More than 5,000 students crammed into S.B. Ballard Stadium, filling nearly every seat in the end zone, for Old Dominion University’s Sept. 11 home opener, its first home football game in 651 days.

They didn’t just watch the Monarchs’ 47-7 blowout victory over Hampton University. They stomped. They banged thunder sticks. They yelled so loud, the racket might have caused Hampton to commit a couple of penalties.

It was the first game for head Coach Ricky Rahne, who came to ODU from Penn State more than a year and a half ago. Afterward, he said he didn’t remember much about the activity off the field. But he definitely noticed the students.

“They were awesome,” he said. “They were loud, and they were active.”

“Our games should be one big party for them. We want the students to know this is the place they are going to be on Saturday night.”

Student Government Association President Myles Nixon put it best: For students, it was more than the chance to see their first football game in nearly two years. It was the opportunity to “reclaim the Monarch Experience.”

By that, he meant the joys of on-campus life, the student activities, the parties, hanging out with friends at Webb Center – all the fun lost to the pandemic.

Dahris Tinsley, a junior, and Devan Glasgow, a sophomore, who are close friends from Fluvanna County just outside of Charlottesville, were among the returnees to campus this semester.

“They said classes were coming back on campus and that football was coming back, and that sounded good to me,” Tinsley said.

“So far, things have been pretty good. Things have opened back up, and it’s a lot safer.”

Glasgow, who’s more of a football fan than Tinsley, said, “I’ve been waiting for this game for so long.”

Nate Laurin, a junior, got to the game early to get a good seat.

“I missed football last season big time,” he said. “Football is really a big deal at ODU. I’m so glad it’s back.”

It was also a big deal for alumni and fans. The tailgate lots were humming. But so was Kaufman Mall.

ODU added food outlets, a beer garden and a giant-screen TV showing college football. The new spread featured an ESPN Zone set of adult games to go along with bounce houses, where dozens of kids expended megawatts of energy.

An hour before game time, several thousand fans were eating, drinking and dancing to the music.

“This is the fullest I’ve seen Kaufman Mall in years. What they’ve done here is fantastic,” said Jonathan Lazauskas, a recent ODU graduate who wore a light blue Taylor Heinicke jersey, silver makeup and a blue wig with spiky hair.





His father, Gary, dressed similarly.

Both said they missed ODU football terribly. “Mostly, we just stayed home last fall,” Gary said.

Lucille Mulich was tailgating next to the stadium. She’s a Navy fan, but her daughter, Michele, is an ODU alumna who helped get Monarch football off the ground when she made a donation in 2007.

Mulich sat back in a chair, taking in the sights, as Michele cut her a piece of cake. She was celebrating her 80th birthday at the ODU game.

“There’s no place I’d rather be,” she said.

Ray Wittersheim, a longtime ODU fan, was tailgating nearby. “Not having football last year,” he said, “it was like missing Christmas. I spent last fall sitting on my porch, trying to figure out what to do.”

In a lot adjacent to WHRO-TV were perhaps the most ardent group of tailgaters. They call themselves “The Monarchists.” The 30 or so diehards got started four hours before the game.

Across the lots, tailgaters gladly offered passersby alcoholic drinks and entrees from fried chicken to seafood shish kabobs.

It was a triumphant evening, and the fans’ sense of unity and generosity was accompanied by a deep spirit of patriotism.

The game was played on the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, which brought down New York City’s Twin Towers, damaged the Pentagon and killed nearly 3,000 Americans.

PHOTOS BY KRISTEN ZEIS

This night, most of the tailgating vehicles featured American, not ODU, flags.

Just before game time, a parachutist brought the American flag to the field while fans chanted “USA, USA.” A video at halftime replayed the parachute drop, accompanied by Lee Greenwood’s “God Bless the USA,” and fans cheered.

Brittany Williams, a Virginia Tech graduate, was there because her husband, Gary, is an ODU grad. They recently moved from Jacksonville, Florida, to Virginia so they can attend games in Norfolk and Blacksburg.

Williams put it all in perspective.

“There’s a sadness you will always feel on this day,” she said. “But at the same time, there’s an excitement about this game.

“We’re living what America is all about today.”

Harry Minium ’77 is senior executive writer at Old Dominion University.

The conclusion of the Monarchs’ season was even more stunning than the start: Five straight wins, ending with a 56-34 rout of Charlotte and a 6-6 record for the season. ODU was invited to the Myrtle Beach Bowl, where it lost to Tulsa, 30-17, on Dec. 20.

Old Dominion is joining the Sun Belt Conference by July 2023. It’s “a game-changer,” President Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D., says.

Read more in Monarch magazine this year.



Michael Lê in front of the new Chemistry Building, which includes a state-of-the-art planetarium named for him and his wife, Kimthanh.

PHOTO BY SHARA WEBER

He fled Communism and soared to IT success

BY PHILIP WALZER

Michael Lai Lê '80 opens a cabernet sauvignon, one of the 3,000 wine bottles from his cellar, to share with visitors. In the spacious kitchen overlooking a stand of cherry blossom trees and the lake on his 10-acre property in Raleigh, North Carolina, he offers swirl-sniff-and-sip instructions to maximize the experience.

It is a scene more than 9,000 miles and many worlds away from his childhood in Vietnam, where his dinner many nights consisted of a bowl of rice with fish sauce and a banana.

His fortunes have risen dramatically, Lê surmounting enormous obstacles time and again. When he was 19, he barely succeeded boarding a boat, unaccompanied by family members, and survived a monthlong journey to freedom amid death and deprivation.

In Norfolk, Lê (pronounced LAY) emerged from short-term homelessness through a remarkable coincidence and later juggled four jobs to get through Old Dominion University.

His start at IBM set the foundation for his dazzling business success. Lê has founded multiple software companies (his motto: find “a niche within a niche”) and sold a couple for multi-million dollars each.

He attributes his stunning ascent to an unquenchable spirit of optimism and full faith. “I never think things won’t happen,” he says. “I think they will if I put my best foot forward and try my very best.”

He’s also guided by a firm devotion to family, both in Vietnam and America, and a deep gratitude to his alma mater, which helped restore his life and propel his career.

Last year, Lê and his wife made a significant gift to endow the Michael and Kimthanh Lê Digital Theater and Planetarium in the new Chemistry Building. “I consider ODU like my family because I didn’t have any family with me then. I wanted to do something for the school that helped me when I needed help.”

He calls his childhood outside Saigon a “mixed life.”

“There was a lot of love and a strong, strong sense of responsibility,” recalls Lê, the fifth of 10 children. “But we had very little money.” Their poverty was exacerbated by his father’s frequent hospital stays. Lê secretly took on odd jobs, even selling lottery tickets when he was 7.

The hardships didn’t keep Lê and his siblings from studying hard: “My parents stressed that an education was the only sure way to get out of poverty.”

When South Vietnam fell to the Communists in April 1975, Lê’s family decided to leave the country. Lê was separated from the others, who waited for a helicopter that he later learned never arrived.

Lê met a friend at a Saigon port, hoping to board a boat to leave the country. The friend had gotten there on a motorcycle, Lê on a bike. The friend opened his backpack, stuffed with cash. The guard took the money and let him on.

“What about me?” Lê shouted. His friend threw him the keys to his motorcycle. The guard took the motorcycle and bike and let Lê aboard.

The trip was treacherous. Nearly 1,000 people crowded onto a boat meant for 200. “We lost people overnight. They tried to go to the bathroom, and they fell into the ocean.”

Lê subsisted on rice and instant noodles. After stopping at the Philippines and continuing to Guam, he could barely walk and needed IV nutrition.

Lê weighed 82 pounds.

“I don’t understand why I wasn’t concerned, but I never had any doubt that I would survive.”

Lê eventually flew to Norfolk, where he had found a sponsor.

But one month after he got there, his sponsor kicked him out after a fight over news about Vietnam. Lê aimlessly boarded a bus and got off near a Holiday Inn in Norfolk. He slept at the main entrance.

The manager woke him in the morning and told him to move. The next few nights, Lê slept on the beach nearby. He again encountered the manager, who said, “I’m going to give you a chance to do something here.”

If a dishwasher who was a chronic absentee didn’t show up for his shift, Lê could take his place. That’s how he got his first job in America.

Lê couldn’t believe how much steak customers left on their plates. One-quarter of a serving could feed his family of 12.

A chef regularly gave him a free grilled cheese sandwich but told him to eat it outside so no one would see him. “Literally, I mixed my sandwiches and my tears.”

Lê moved into a co-worker’s small garage apartment. Like his roommate, he found a used mattress from a nearby dumpster.

Lê had been in his second year in college in Vietnam and planned to continue his education.

At ODU, he received grants and scholarships but still had to take four jobs, which consumed more than 60 hours a week. During the day, he worked at the Computer Center and Department of Physics. He waited tables at a Chinese restaurant on the weekends and delivered pizzas for Domino’s at night.

Lê supported not just himself but also his family, forced by the Vietnamese government to become farmers.

He took 16 to 18 credit hours per semester. Lê recalls falling asleep regularly in his first morning class. He graduated with a 3.35 grade point average. Without the other demands, “I could have done way better.”

His oldest brother had taught him some English, but his listening ability was poor and he was unfamiliar with technical terms. Lê, a computer science major, recalls solving an equation on the board. He had no trouble with the math. “But I didn’t know how to say words like square root, so I didn’t say anything to the class.”

At ODU, Lê says, “I learned how to learn efficiently, how to learn not for the purpose of passing, but for the purpose of using.”

But he also suffered a health scare. One day, while picking up basketball tickets at Webb



Lê (left) before his first Communion in Vietnam and in his father’s arms. PHOTOS COURTESY OF MICHAEL LÊ



Lê was born with the name Lê Lai. It is pronounced “Lay Lie,” but in the United States, people called him “Lee.” In the late ‘90s, he adopted Michael as his American first name to honor his guardian angel St. Michael.

The Lês outside the entrance to their 26,000-square-foot mansion in Raleigh, N.C.
PHOTO BY JOSH GUO

Center, Lê suddenly couldn’t speak. “All I could do was this,” he says, feebly moving an index finger. Then he passed out.

Lê credits an ODU nurse for expediting his transfer to Sentara Norfolk General Hospital’s ICU, though he had no insurance. He lost a quart of blood and was diagnosed with a bleeding peptic ulcer, the condition his father had.

“Somehow, it was destiny that I got out of Vietnam, that the guy threw me the keys, and that somehow I didn’t die at ODU.”

Before Lê graduated, ODU’s career center helped him get a job as a systems engineer trainee with IBM in Norfolk. Later, he moved to IBM’s office in Boca Raton, attracted by the weather and palm trees, which reminded him of Vietnam.

There, he met Kimthanh (who goes by KT) at a Vietnamese church, and they married in 1986. In 1995, the Lês moved to Raleigh, thinking it would be an ideal area for their children to attend college.

He established his first business, LKSP Technologies Inc., named for their four sons, in 1997.

LKSP focused on helping companies transfer data from a “legacy system,” or one with outdated technology, to SAP (Systems, Applications and Products), a popular program to help businesses manage daily activities. Lê had devised his own data-migration

Michael and KT Lê at home with their sons (from left): Kevin, Lawrence, Patrick and Stefan. PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL LÊ



methodology, which helped LKSP attract big-name companies: Chevron, Goodyear, Panasonic, Waste Management.

Annual revenues surpassed \$14 million. Within 18 months of its founding, Lê sold LKSP for millions.

KT, an IBM engineer who held two patents, became the self-taught chief financial officer for LKSP. She flourished in that role, too. The CFO of the purchasing company said after one day of inspecting the books: “Everything is clean.” She has been chief operating officer for all of Lê’s ventures since.

After a short-lived retirement, Lê launched International IT Services, in part to provide young talents in Vietnam the chance to work on state-of-the-art technologies. That led to his next major company, Advantco International.

“To integrate SAP with any system,” Lê explains, “you need something in the middle – an adapter.” Advantco built those adapters.

Its clients included more than 80 of the Global 500 companies. Lê sold a majority of his interest in Advantco, again yielding millions, though he remains CEO.

His latest, PtEverywhere, was inspired by his youngest son, whose physical therapist had trouble sending him photos of exercises while he was away at tennis tournaments.

PtEverywhere compiled a library of exercises that was easy to upload. It branched out to provide “a one-stop shop for PTs to manage their clinics and connect with patients,” including a telehealth feature, which proved timely during the pandemic.

Lê’s business triumphs are grounded in these principles:

- “The magic of thinking big. You have to plan on reaching the moon to get to the moon.”
- “Find a niche within a niche.”
- “Never give up. Be willing to work very hard and make personal sacrifice to get through the survival period.”

He also has a personal touchstone: “to always be a decent and kind person. I am somewhat impatient and very demanding, but I try very, very hard.”

Lê, who grew up Catholic, considers himself a spiritual person. But his faith and optimism were tried last winter. KT’s parents died within

three weeks, and Lê and his wife contracted COVID.

His in-laws had lived in the original house on his property for more than two decades – a testament to Lê’s fierce family allegiance. After he left Vietnam, his father and the brother who taught him English died, the latter in a labor camp. But Lê helped his mother and eight remaining siblings leave Vietnam for America in 1990.



Their 10-acre property includes a larger-than-life chessboard. PHOTO BY JOSH GUO

And he takes pride in the accomplishments of his four sons: Lawrence, a filmmaker in Los Angeles; Stefan, a data engineer for an investment bank; Patrick, an ophthalmology resident at UNC Medical Center, and Kevin, an aspiring professional tennis player studying computer science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. “They’ve all set their

goals very high so they can do big things,” Lê says.

Lê’s 26,000-square-foot mansion is dominated by a majestic staircase, which splits into two curved branches. The “basement” features the wine cellar, movie theater, golf practice area, two-lane bowling alley and half-sized Olympic pool.

“A lot of the things I have now – I don’t think it’s because I didn’t have them before,” he says. “It’s because I want to do things that not everybody can do.”

The same held true for the gift to ODU.

The Michael and Kimthanh Lê Digital Theater and Planetarium, Virginia’s second-largest with seating for 120, has a \$900,000 dual-laser system that can project images on a 48-foot dome.

Lê likes the fact that the planetarium will benefit ODU students as well as those from other universities and public schools. “I felt this would be a great inspiration for less fortunate students who are in similar situations like I was and have to struggle to get through,” he says.

“It’s very cool to be able to see what our space galaxy looks like in real time and realize how small and insignificant we are and at the same time how significant we are as human beings.”

Read more about Michael Lê at www.odu.edu/monarchmag

MICHAEL & KIMTHANH LÊ

DIGITAL THEATER & PLANETARIUM

PHOTO BY SHARA WEBER





NASA

For more than a half-century, Old Dominion University alumni, researchers and students have played a significant role at NASA – from operating a 30-by-60-foot wind tunnel at NASA Langley Research Center to designing and launching miniature “cubesats” from the Wallops Flight Facility.

We profile seven graduates and professors who have made a solid landing at NASA – from astronaut *Michael Bloomfield* (M.E.M. '93), who flew on three space shuttle missions, to *Rafia Haq '19*, a flight software engineer at Langley who didn't even major in engineering.

From Mars to tornadoes, his work goes on

BY PHILIP WALZER

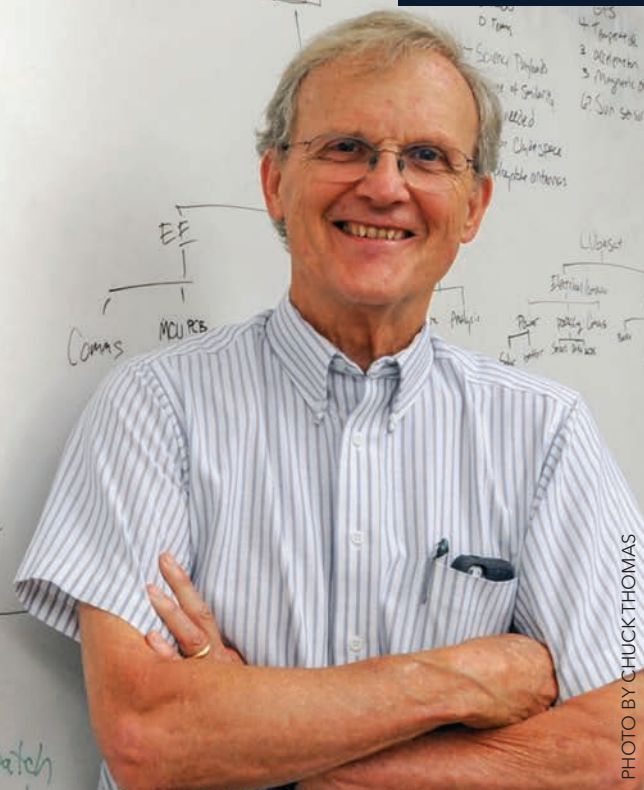


PHOTO BY CHUCK THOMAS

When **Bob Ash**, then a young faculty member at Old Dominion University, applied for his first federal grant more than 50 years ago, he was rejected. One reviewer said Ash didn't have the potential to do research.

Boy, did he get that wrong.

Starting in the late '70s, Ash worked to devise systems to extract oxygen and other resources from the surface of Mars. Between 1985 and 1988, 50 engineering majors designed and tested what they called the ODU Mars Oxygen Processor.

Last year, their work bore fruit. In April, NASA's Perseverance robot collected oxygen on Mars with a toaster-sized instrument "based on the same architecture as ours," Ash said.

The device designed by Ash's students made an earlier splash in Hollywood: It was the prototype for the vehicle that Matt Damon used to escape Mars in the 2015 movie "The Martian."

Ash, who had been the most senior faculty member at ODU, retired in June at the end of his 54th academic year at the University. But he plans to continue working on another project: A discovery, with NASA Langley researcher Allan Zuckerwar, involving the non-equilibrium behavior of fluids.

"It is my belief," Ash said, "that this particular phenomenon is responsible for determining whether a tornado is EF1 or EF5 or somewhere in between."

Ash, who was Eminent Scholar and professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering, won seven outstanding engineering faculty awards at ODU. He received more than \$6.3 million in federal grants and published more than 100 refereed articles. He's not sure of the exact count and doesn't care. "It's what you put in the article that counts," he said. "It's not how many."

Along the way, Ash served in leadership positions including interim vice president for research and acting

dean of engineering. But his heart stayed in teaching and research.

Ash, 79, said his career shows that "You need to be patient, and you need to be able to accept criticism. ... Collaboration is the secret to most of what we do."

He joined Old Dominion in 1967, when Lewis Webb was president. Ash already knew Webb's son, George, who was Ash's favorite engineering professor at Tulane University, where he received his doctorate. Two years later, Ash married George's sister, Mary Lewis Webb.

"At first, I didn't want anything to do with the president's daughter," Ash joked.

"Eventually I pursued her. That was the most important decision of my life. Not only is she an absolutely fantastic partner, but I got to know her mother (Virginia) and father. He was one of the finest people I ever worked with, and I was honored to be his son-in-law."

His love of flying led to three shuttle missions

BY PHILIP WALZER

Michael Bloomfield (M.E.M. '93) had been an Air Force pilot for 15 years but was told it was time to move to a desk job. So in 1995, he applied to be an astronaut – and got accepted. “I just wanted to keep flying,” Bloomfield, 62, said.

He flew on three space shuttle missions from 1997 to 2002, each about two weeks long.

The first thing you’ve got to get used to is the initial acceleration, speeding to 2½ Gs in the first two minutes of flight.

“You’re pinned back against your seat,” Bloomfield said. “It’s hard to lift up your arm. People describe it as an elephant sitting on you, and that’s probably a good metaphor.”

Then there’s zero gravity. “It makes the whole experience surreal when you don’t have gravity to help you out. It’s a lot of fun: You can play Superman and fly around, but it’s tough to get things done. You can’t just put things down. You have to attach them to something or stick them in your pocket.”

In his first mission, Bloomfield helped bring supplies, as well as American astronaut David Wolf, to the Mir space station. “It’s really amazing how much space is able to transcend politics. We had Russians and Americans living and working together.”

In the second, he flew to the International Space Station to install solar arrays using the shuttle’s robotic arm. He also employed the arm to guide his colleagues in their spacewalks: “I would move it to wherever they wanted to do the work. I enjoyed every minute of it.”

He commanded the third, another trip to the space station, to install a large truss on top of the station. That was also the first mission to use the space station’s robotic arm to assist a spacewalk.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NASA

His favorite was the second. Bloomfield knew what to expect and also wasn’t the commander. “I didn’t have to think about all the things that could go wrong.”

After that, he moved into NASA administration. His titles included chief of the shuttle branch and deputy director of crew operations. From 2007 until his retirement last year, he worked in private industry. Most recently, he was vice president and general manager at Oceaneering Space Systems in Houston, overseeing NASA-related contracts for hardware including tools and equipment for spacewalks.

He credits his success mostly to good timing – being there during the boom in shuttle flights in the 1990s and early 2000s. “I focused on the process and the journey. If you do that, the end will take care of itself.”

HIS TIME AT ODU

Bloomfield took distance-learning courses while he was stationed at Langley Air Force Base to earn his master’s degree in engineering management. “I learned a ton from ODU,” he said. “The thing I enjoy most is learning new stuff.” And he did – statistics, accounting, program management, communication and leadership.



PHOTO BY CHUCK THOMAS

From microbial mats to Mars

BY PHILIP WALZER

Nora Noffke calls herself “a traditional geologist.” She studies large sedimentary structures, formed by microscopic life, in marine areas.

“I like to be out in the field, with my hammer, in a remote area, enjoying the adventure,” she says.

Not as traditional: Examining photos of Mars for signs of life.

To understand how she got there, start with microbial mats, the subject of her doctoral dissertation at Oldenburg University in Germany. They’re “blue-green carpets composed entirely of microorganisms, mainly bacteria, that can extend for square miles.” In tidal flats, the mats interact with sediments to leave behind traces, known as

microbially induced sedimentary structures (or MISS), which have become her focal point.

They’re tough to find, says Noffke, an associate professor of ocean and earth sciences who came to ODU in 2001. But she has discovered them – in Virginia, Germany, Tunisia, South Africa and Namibia. Studying them helps scientists understand the early evolution of prokaryotes, a single-celled organism.

In 2013, Noffke detected MISS in the Dresser Foundation, which contains some of Earth’s oldest rocks, in western Australia. She and her colleagues published the discovery in the journal *Astrobiology* and, based on the age of the formation, said life could be traced back nearly 3.5 billion years.

Their work drew worldwide media attention, from CNN, ABC, the Associated Press and *Science* magazine, among others. “You know how it is,” she says. “You have five days of fame. Then no one wants anything from you anymore.” Yet the international attention “helped the field move forward tremendously.”

After Noffke delivered a talk at a NASA workshop, a geochemist asked her to look at Rover photos of the Yellowknife Bay Formation on Mars.

That led to another paper in *Astrobiology*. Noffke wants to be clear about what she wrote: “I saw morphologies on the surface that resemble MISS on Earth. I had pretty good arguments for saying those *could* be MISS. But you need way more information. This wasn’t a claim that we found fossil life on Mars.”

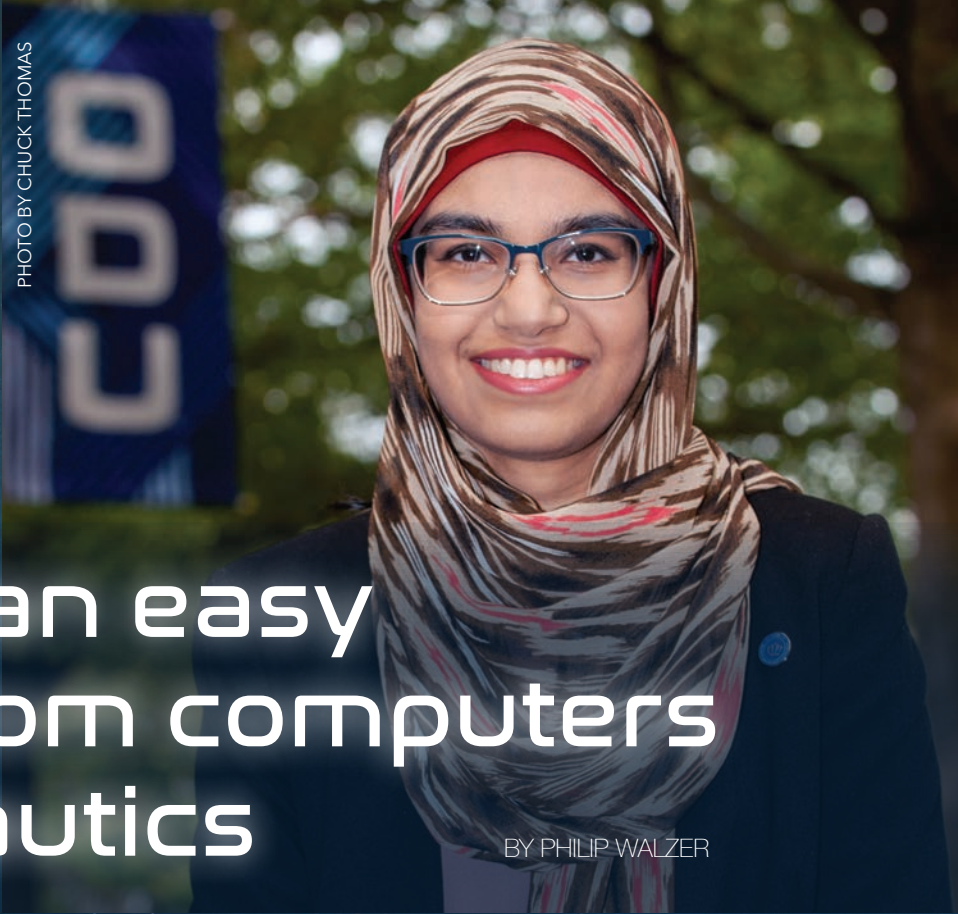
Her most recent paper, last year in *Astrobiology*, seeks to provide guidance for the exploration of MISS on Mars: “The paper outlines where to go and which environments to look for MISS,” she says.

Noffke, who has received research funding from NASA, will serve as external adviser to the European Space Agency for the 2022 Rover mission to Mars. She may be called on to help investigate whether deposits harbor MISS.

Will Noffke be disappointed if they are never found on Mars? Of course not. “I’m a scientist who likes to find out the truth,” she says.

Meet Noffkarkys

Last year, a longtime collaborator, Greg Retallack, a paleontologist at the University of Oregon, named a fossil in Australia dating from the Jurassic Age after Noffke. It is now known as Noffkarkys, or “net of Noffke.”



For Haq, an easy launch from computers to aeronautics

BY PHILIP WALZER

Rafia Haq '19 proves you don't have to have an engineering degree to be an engineer at NASA.

"I found out NASA accepts all kinds of majors – biology, chemistry, physics, math," said Haq, a computer science major who's now a flight software engineer at NASA's Langley Research Center.

Her aerospace career began even before she graduated. Haq started working part time at Analytical Mechanical Associates, a NASA contractor, the summer before her senior year and went full time the October after she graduated.

Her major project – "It was very challenging but a lot of fun" – involved designing a ground station that sensed boundaries and relayed warnings to drones for a drone competition among universities and businesses. The contest, though, was canceled due to the pandemic.

Haq moved to NASA in December 2020. "It feels more official, working directly with the government," she said. Her two main assignments so far:

- Creating a ground station for a LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) system that can illuminate the surface of the moon to help a spacecraft land.
- A return to drones, creating an app that provides the drone's autopilot system with real-time warnings of upcoming obstacles, like a tree or building.

The nice thing about working at NASA, she says, is "You're never stuck doing one project for too long. You're always doing different projects."

She's familiar with multi-tasking. She held several extracurricular positions at ODU, including student representative to the Board of Visitors and finance director of the Student Government Association.

Haq, a Kaufman Award finalist, also helped establish a campus chapter of Phi Sigma Rho, a sorority for women in STEM-H fields. She now serves as regional field director, connecting ODU and three other chapters with the national council.

David Metzger, dean of the Perry Honors College, suggested she apply for a NASA internship in 2018. "Take the chance,"

she recalls him saying. "They might say yes."

NASA did, offering her an internship. But it was full time, and she didn't think she could do it while holding down a full course load. "I felt weird," she says. "You don't say no to NASA." Yet that "no" didn't abort her mission. NASA passed her name to Analytical Mechanical Associates, which offered her the part-time job.

"From her first day in the Honors College, Rafia was thinking strategically and deeply about everything," Metzger says. "She didn't see a major as the royal road to a career. She used all of the resources at her disposal to find her way."

Haq is still multi-tasking, working at NASA while pursuing an online master's program in cybersecurity policy at Georgia Tech. "Cyber is definitely a field that affects everyone," she says.

Her studies have also shaped her ground-station work. One class emphasized "the need to keep the user in mind. It should be intuitive, and you shouldn't have to be an expert to use it."



PHOTO COURTESY OF NASA

She makes sure instruments are free of contamination

BY SHERRY DIBARI

Gugu Rutherford '12 didn't see how her chemistry and material science background could be applicable to NASA. NASA, after all, was about rockets and astronauts.

But during an interview for a NASA internship the year after she graduated, Rutherford was asked how she would perform sampling on the planet Mars.

"I literally gave the example of sampling in the ocean with Dr. (Greg) Cutter (professor and Eminent Scholar of ocean and earth sciences) on my last expedition with him," she said.

Rutherford also impressed the interviewers with her business acumen – gleaned from managing the cosmetics department at Nordstrom in Norfolk for seven years. "There were metrics that had to be measured to manage a profitable business," she said. "When it comes to making sure that we are being responsible for taxpayers' dollars, they knew I was committed."

Rutherford, of course, got the internship, which transitioned into her current job.

As a contamination control and planetary protection engineer at NASA Langley Research Center, she focuses on microscopic subjects. Even the slightest smudge or speck of dust can distort information on instruments used to gather scientific data.

"If you have nothing but molecular deposition from outgassing on the surface of a lens and you cannot receive or transmit any light through that, it can be devastating for the mission," she said.

She also monitors and reduces biological and particulate contamination on space payloads.

These days, she has an additional title – assistant branch head for Systems Integration & Test Branch – and spends more time collaborating with NASA scientists and engineers and industry partners.

Rutherford didn't take the direct route to a STEM career – or college.

She spent a few years working retail in Michigan and came to Hampton Roads to manage the cosmetics department at Nordstrom, which helped her connect with people.

The same week she started at Nordstrom, she also joined the U.S. Navy Reserve.

After seven years at Nordstrom and in the Reserve, Rutherford enrolled at Old Dominion University to double major in chemistry and biochemistry. She wasn't the typical chemistry student – a 30-year-old mother of color, working full time.

However, she found a welcoming community. "Even though we all had different backgrounds, we had a deep connection to each other."

"I hired her as an undergraduate lab assistant and was immediately impressed with her lab skills and attention to detail," said Cutter. Her departure for graduate school "was a big positive for science. ... She's a great role model for young women of color pursuing STEM careers."

She received her master's and doctoral degrees in materials science at Norfolk State University.

Rutherford, 41, also mentors high school and college students participating in programs at NASA. Her advice for young people interested in STEM: "You have to step out on faith and be fearless."

Sherry DiBari is director of communications and marketing for the Batten College of Engineering and Technology.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NASA

He was an ace in aeronautics

BY PHILIP WALZER

When **John Lin '80 (M.E. '85, Ph.D. '92)** won NASA's highest honor – the Distinguished Service Medal – he said he hoped the award would spotlight his branch and “grab some glory for the first A in NASA.”

Lin died on April 9 at the age of 64. During his 41-year career, colleagues gave the senior research engineer an A-plus for his contributions to that first A in NASA – aeronautics. Both aircraft manufacturers and the federal government reaped the benefits of his wisdom.

Perhaps Lin's most significant achievement was the invention of micro vortex generators, said Catherine McGinley, the head of the Flow Physics and Control Branch at NASA Langley Research Center. Large vortex generators had been around since the '40s; Lin designed a smaller, more efficient version that maintained the advantages but reduced the drag slowing an aircraft.

The consequences were dramatic. Lin's vortex generator ensured that the

Piper Malibu Meridian received safety certification from the Federal Aviation Administration, said Tony Washburn, Research Directorate chief technologist at Langley. Piper generated \$100 million in sales the year after it incorporated Lin's invention.

Another version of the micro vortex generator resulted in a 4% increase in maximum cruise speed on Gulfstream Aerospace Corp.'s G5, which later set dozens of national and world speed records. The performance boost also helped catapult Gulfstream sales to \$2.4 billion the year the G5 was introduced.

“John not only helped aircraft companies; he contributed to our national security,” McGinley said in her eulogy. Lin worked with Newport News Shipbuilding to improve the performance of an underwater vehicle used by the Navy SEALs.

Lin wrote more than 100 papers and articles and received more than 70 awards. He also encouraged other engineers and scientists to engage in professional organizations, such as the American Institute of Aeronautics and

Astronautics, Washburn said. “He was active in getting people nominated for awards, and he twisted my arm to apply to become an associate fellow.”

Outside work, Lin was known as a competitive tennis player with a sneaky lob. But when his match was done, he'd usually come back to NASA, McGinley said. “He would always work more hours than he should.”

Lin, who was born in Taiwan, also was active in the Toastmasters club, which promotes public speaking. “He turned into such a good storyteller,” McGinley said. “He could crack up a meeting so easily and reduce the tension. But he also got a lot of other people involved in it.”

Lin received his bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in mechanical engineering from Old Dominion. “He was very positive about the experience,” Washburn said. “He would encourage other people to go there.

“He just embraced Norfolk and Virginia and ODU and NASA. He felt like a fortunate man.”

His innovations will help moon, Mars missions

BY PHILIP WALZER

For the past three decades, **Walter Engelund '86 (M.E. '89)** has gotten paid for designing and shepherding technological innovations at NASA.

One example: The Launch Abort System for the Orion spacecraft, which is scheduled to take astronauts to the moon. The technology, which Engelund helped develop in his last position at NASA's Langley Research Center, can catapult astronauts from their spacecraft in case of emergency.

"We hope it never gets used, but it's there if the astronauts need it," said Engelund, who since 2019 has been deputy associate administrator for programs for NASA's Space Technology Mission Directorate in Washington.

"I'm excited about coming to work every day to create new capabilities for space exploration with humans and robots," said Engelund, among the highest-ranking ODU alumni at NASA. "I don't think there's any other place you can do that in the world."

Engelund enrolled in 1982 at ODU, where he received bachelor's and master's degrees in mechanical engineering. "I didn't know I wanted to work at NASA when I started school. But being exposed to all the research faculty at ODU drew me to that pretty quickly, like a moth to flame."

He began working at Langley as a graduate student and got a full-time job there in 1990. His first project: helping

design the entry descent landing system for the Mars Pathfinder.

He's also been involved in work on:

- An inflatable decelerator, or deployable heat shield, which could one day help astronauts land on Mars.
- The X-43A hypersonic aircraft, which flew at Mach 10 in 2004.

"We have technical challenges every day," Engelund, 58, said. "When things don't go as planned, we've got to look at alternative paths. We'd like to do more, but given the budget we have, we're doing amazing things."

And not just in space.

"I don't think the public appreciates how much NASA is involved in our daily lives. We have a big earth science program that helps protect our own atmosphere and climate." Engelund also pointed to a 2019 study that said NASA supported more than 312,000 private U.S. jobs and generated \$64 billion in economic activity.

Engelund's honors have included NASA's Exceptional Achievement and Exceptional Engineering Achievement medals. He's also enthused about what lies ahead, such as the Artemis missions, which will land the first woman and person of color on the moon and provide a technology testbed for future human missions on Mars.

"It's incredible to think of the possibility for exploration enabled by what we're doing," he said. "That's what gets me up every day."



PHOTO COURTESY OF NASA

DESTINED TO SUCCEED

"Walt's success in his career was predictable, even when I recruited him as a master's student for my research team at NASA Langley. What impressed me most were his academic achievement and his soft-spoken professionalism, which earned the respect of his team members."

Oktay Baysal, professor and Eminent Scholar of mechanical and aerospace engineering and former dean of the Batten College of Engineering and Technology

Surf's up!

Summer

schoolroom

BY LORRAINE EATON '85 (M.F.A. '99)

The surf report read pretty good for Virginia Beach that searing June day: One to two feet, semi-clean with a light onshore breeze, all under a drift of cotton ball clouds.

But one of the East Coast's best-known surfers wasn't in the water. Jason Borte '95 (M.S.Ed. '97) stood in the sand in a sea of blue, pink and lime green surfboards.

“How many of you have surfed before?” he asked the 30 or so wannabes fanned out in front of him.

A couple of boys in the back tentatively raised their hands, one admitting, yeah, but it was, like, only on the fake waves at Great Wolf Lodge.

No matter. This was the first day of Borte's Stoke-a-Thon, where disadvantaged kids got a week of free surf lessons.

It's just one of the ways Borte combines altruism with his evangelical love of surfing. The East Coast Pro Champion and Surfing Hall of Fame inductee has taught wounded veterans, children with autism and people with disabilities. His summer camps attract hundreds of other kids and adults.

But Borte, 51, considers teaching underprivileged kids his most important work.

The Stoke-a-Thon mission: to open the eyes of dozens to the playground in their backyard, to have them experience the exhilarating push of a wave, the sense of accomplishment that comes with standing on water and gliding to shore. Ultimately, to get them hooked on a sport that costs almost nothing – just a \$2 hunk of surfboard wax – after snagging a board.

Monday's lesson started with the basics – the safe way to carry a board, how to lie on it with toes touching the back, paddling and the all-important pop-up.

Listen up, kids.

“I think you are going to be real champs; I think you are going to wipe out, too,” Borte told them.

At 12, Borte wanted to imitate his older brother, Derrick '91, a surfer who's now a filmmaker. His first paddle out, at the 1st Street jetty, no one would have predicted his future success.

When Borte hit the water on a borrowed board that day in 1982 with his wetsuit on backwards, it wasn't pretty. But he kept at it, got stoked and saw that he had a natural knack for the sport. Borte became known for his explosive roundhouse, a sort of crazy-8 on the face of a wave.

Soon he was skipping classes at First Colonial High School to surf Hatteras and winning local events.

By 1988, Borte was considered “pro,” but his total winnings were \$36. A year later, he scored a sponsorship with the popular Ocean Pacific clothing brand. He could hardly believe his luck. He was getting paid to surf, and at the world's hottest surf spots – Indonesia, Cuba, Fiji, Hawaii, South Africa.

In between, he got married, had three kids and received degrees in English and social studies from ODU in 1995. Borte taught middle school for a year, then turned to writing for surf magazines. He became one of the most respected international surf journalists in his field.

And he kept surfing.

Borte (left) surfing the waves in Indonesia in 2013 and students getting the hang of surfing in Virginia Beach last summer.

PHOTOS BY NATALIE OLSON AND EDDIE COMPO





PHOTO BY EDDIE COMPO

Competitive surfers do more than glide on a wave to shore. They are athletes who zigzag across the face of waves, shoot above the water in aerial maneuvers, execute flashy 360-degree turns at the curl and do dazzling backflips.

Borte was so good he won the prestigious East Coast pro title in 1997, at age 27. He also founded The Surf School, now known as the Billabong Surf Camp, in partnership with 17th Street Surf Shop.

In 2003, his first book, a biography of surfing legend Kelly Slater, “Pipe Dreams: A Surfer’s Journey,” made The New York Times bestseller list. In 2010, he published “The Kook’s Guide to Surfing – The Ultimate Instruction Manual: How to Ride Waves with Skill, Style, and Etiquette.” (Every Stoke-a-Thoner got a copy.)

A year later, he surprised the surfing world when he gave up the sport for a year of “surfbriety,” chronicled in a snarky, witty,

introspective blog titled “How Surfing Ruined My Life.”

It was tough resisting the impulse to check the surf report every day and seeing other surfers at the jetty. But “I learned a lot about myself and surfing.”

These days Borte is teaching technology at Salem High School and spending summers doing what he loves best: teaching kids to surf. And, of course, surfing himself.

“I was like any other kid who rode a wave and wanted to do it again and again and again,” Borte said in his Hall of Fame acceptance speech in 2016. “I was lucky enough that I was pretty good at it. ... And I think that when you’re lucky, you pay it forward.”

By the final day in June, the Stoke-a-Thoners had experienced all sorts of waves.

“Clean, choppy, big, small. A lot of them are pretty self-sufficient at this point,” Borte said, standing on shore in a full wetsuit, surveying the action.

The Friday surf report again read better than average for Virginia Beach – waves two to three feet, a little bumpy, but fun. Each day, the tribe of wannabes had grown as kids told their friends about this awesome free thing happening at the beach.

That morning, a pink board popped out of the water, a sure sign of a wipeout. Some kids rode to shore lying belly-down on their boards. Others made it to their knees. Some were bona fide surfing.

Brayan Herrera Castillo, 13, riding a lime green board, maneuvered all the way to shore, finishing triumphantly with arms spread wide and a big, big grin. He hurried over to his family and, after a flurry of Spanish, paddled right back out to catch another wave, totally stoked.

Lorraine Eaton '85 (M.F.A. '99) has two longboards standing dormant in her garage but hopes to someday get totally stoked.

Tony Brothers doubles as NBA referee, restaurateur

BY PHILIP WALZER

NBA referee Tony Brothers '86 hit a cultural three-pointer last year with the opening of a downtown Norfolk restaurant offering fine dining and live music.

The place is popping most nights, but what gives him the biggest thrill is seeing "Brothers" in big type on the floor near the entrance. It's his name, the name of the restaurant and – most important – the name of his mother, Dorothy Brothers, who was senior vice president and national director of minority business development at Bank of America.

"I'm happy I'm able to do something that shines a bright light on her," he says.

Brothers, 56, says his restaurant does more than feed people: "We bring people together from different cultures and backgrounds."

The restaurant seats 110 people on two floors. The top floor is where the music and dancing happen – Motown on Tuesdays, R&B Wednesdays and jazz Thursdays.

"It's a different genre every night," Brothers says, "so we don't rely on the same 52 people" to fill the seats upstairs. He's brought in national names like jazz guitarist Adam Hawley and singer-songwriter Jonathan Butler.

"There's a whole collage of family here," he says. His fiancée, Kimberly Jenkins, runs the restaurant. Her son Kevin, who used to cook at Cedar Point Club in Suffolk and Leone's Italian in Norfolk, is executive chef. Brothers' son, Trent, is a server. And so is Jenkins' other son, Calvin.

The staff totals 17. "I found the right people to make something happen," he says. "They do all the work, and I kiss all the babies and get all the credit."

Brothers is in his 28th season as an NBA ref. He estimates he runs 4 to 6 miles during each game. He blocks out the jeers. "Was I right? Did I have a positive effect on the game? That's all I'm striving for."

The NBA thinks he's right. Of 70 referees, 12 are chosen to officiate in the finals. He's done that for the past 10 years. "To be able to get there and stay there," Brothers says, "is a task like no other."

Brothers also runs a nonprofit, Men for Hope, which helps low-income students. Its summer fundraiser featured a celebrity golf tournament – with ex-pros like the NBA's Olden Polynice and Kenny Gattison '86 and the NFL's Ricky Ervins – wellness screenings and personal finance seminars. The event raised \$130,000.

Men for Hope provides funds to the Achievable Dream Academy and a Norfolk State University scholarship, among other causes. The organization also supports life-skills coaching for the restaurant's staff.

"All the different pieces of my life are literally coming together," Brothers says. "This isn't me. It's all divine intervention."



PHOTO BY ROBERTO WESTBROOK



The most popular entrée at Brothers restaurant:
herb-roasted lamb chops

His favorite:
salmon grilled with
lemon pepper butter

Brothers is pursuing a master's degree in public administration at ODU. His GPA as of the summer was 4.0.

A dramatic recovery spurs a \$2 million donation

BY HARRY MINIUM '77

Cynthia Faschini describes her 33-year marriage to Andy Wallach as a “fairy tale.”

Both are successful businesspeople, Navy veterans and graduates of Old Dominion University. Andy runs Wallach Planning & Investments. They’ve traveled to Europe and the Caribbean.

But their lives changed forever in December 2019, when the ATV he was driving in Aruba crashed. After two months of surgeries and hospitalization, they were told Andy would never walk again and had a 50% chance of living a year.

Those doctors didn’t know Andy’s and Cynthia’s determination and commitment to each other and how their prayers would be answered by miracles.

Perhaps the biggest occurred in 2020, nine months after the accident, when Andy began treatment at ODU’s Monarch Physical Therapy. He is again walking, with a walker. They’re back to hosting parties, bowling and planning vacations, including a trip to Cancun and a cruise in the Pacific.

In gratitude, Andy and Cynthia will donate \$2 million to the therapy clinic in the

new Health Sciences Building, which is scheduled to open in the summer of 2023.

The clinic will be named the Faschini Wallach Center for Restorative Therapies. It will be staffed by physical and occupational therapists, who have made a huge contribution to Andy’s recovery.

“The clinic has dramatically changed our lives,” Cynthia said. “What they’ve done has been miraculous.”

Lisa Koperna, the director of Monarch Physical Therapy, said their gift will help provide “more comprehensive rehabilitation and post-rehab services.”

“They are ordinary people doing extraordinary things to help others,” she said.

The story of their last two years is also extraordinary. It’s about a marriage that has grown stronger, Cynthia’s steadfast care of her husband, Andy’s dogged determination to walk again, and those little miracles that seemed to happen when they most needed them.

The crash in Aruba left Cynthia with a broken femur in her right leg. She was the lucky one.

Andy broke his left leg in three places; the compound fractures were so bad that it was practically severed. For weeks, doctors considered amputating it. Nobody knew it then, but he had also suffered a spinal cord injury, severely reducing his ability to move his legs.

He was flown to a trauma center in Fort Lauderdale and underwent several surgeries. From there, Andy was moved to the Acute Spinal Care Rehab Center at McGuire Veterans Administration Hospital in Richmond after being rejected by several other centers.

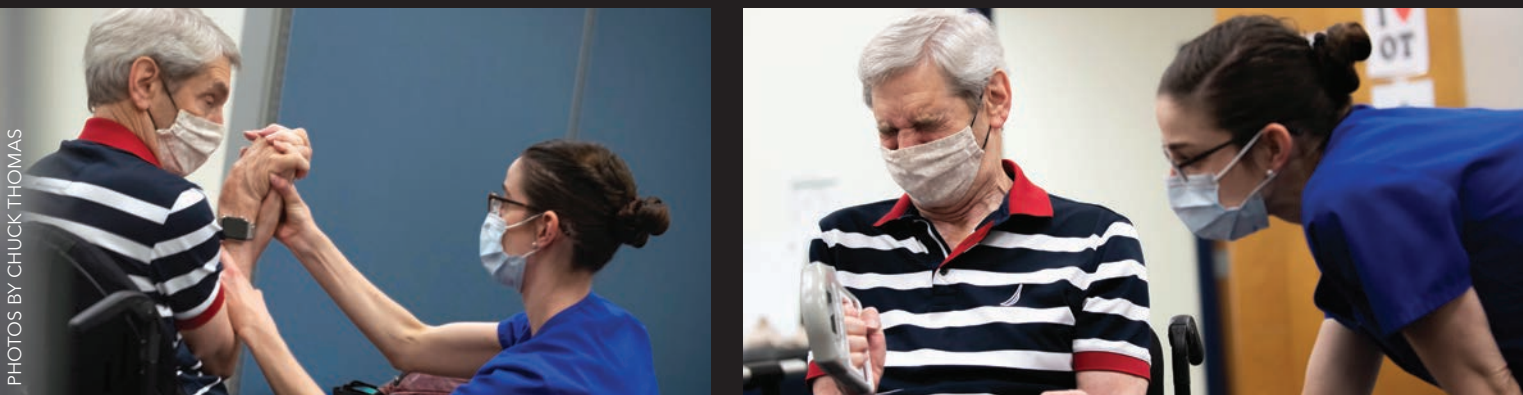
His prognosis wasn’t great. He couldn’t walk or stand. And because he had been intubated for months, the already slender Wallach lost a lot of weight. But it helped that Andy, like his wife, follows a plant-based diet and exercised regularly.

He made good progress in 12 weeks in Richmond, aided by physical therapist Peter DiSalvo, a 2015 ODU doctoral graduate, and returned to his Norfolk home in a wheelchair.

In October 2020, Andy started treatment at Monarch Physical Therapy.

Occupational therapist Hannah Schmidt doesn’t go easy on Andy Wallach.

PHOTOS BY CHUCK THOMAS



Wallach with physical therapist Maggie Cody (DPT'20), left, and his wife, Cynthia Faschini

His recovery has been aided by a machine called REX. Monarch Physical Therapy has one of only six in the country.

It's a high-tech pair of bionic legs — an exoskeleton of sorts — powered electrically. Essentially, it allowed Andy's body to go through the motions of walking before he was able to do so.

Just as important as the technology have been the people.

Maggie Cody, a 2020 ODU doctoral recipient who is Andy's lead physical therapist, mixes kindness with tough love, sometimes barking at him to stay on task.

Near the end of one session, Andy walked down a hallway with his walker. He reached his destination, a water fountain.

"Keep going," Cody said firmly.

"But this was our goal," he replied.

"But don't you want to go past it?"

"Yes, Maggie."

He closed his eyes and kept going.

Occupational therapists, or OTs, who help prepare patients to resume daily activities, have also played a key role.

His OTs work on strengthening his hands and hand-eye coordination and tasks such as getting in and out of bed. During one exercise, he clasped a vice grip, wincing with pain.

But he rarely loses his sense of humor.

When Andy finished assembling a fake set of silverware, dishes and glasses, he picked



up the tray, bowed and said, "Madam, I'm your waiter."

Andy and Cynthia go to Monarch Physical Therapy three or four days a week, two hours each time. Andy also works out at home four hours a day and exercises twice a week at the ODU Student Recreation Center.

Cynthia prepares meals, helps dress and bathe her husband and takes care of all the appointments, medications and anything else that needs doing.

"I mean, she has no life of her own," Andy said, tearing up. "I would not be alive without her. And I mean that literally."

His determination has been just as crucial. "It's remarkable what he's done," said Andy's son, Josh, master lecturer and associate dean of the College of Sciences. "Not a lot of people could go through what he's been through and not be devastated."

Andy is also committed to helping others heal.

"Somebody could be standing on the parallel bars," Koperna said, "and Andy will notice that

something is different with that person. He'll ask, 'What's going on?' and offer good advice."

These days, Andy uses a walker and sometimes cheats — getting up on his own and walking without someone at his side. He stands without assistance, and his muscle tone is returning.

"He's going to walk again," Cody said.

Andy and Cynthia believe it, too.

When the new Health Sciences Building opens, Andy predicts he'll walk through the front door, without a walker and with Cynthia by his side.

Monarch Physical Therapy is at 1015 West 47th St. near Killam Avenue. Phone: (757) 683-7041; email: MonarchPT@odu.edu, or go to the Monarch Physical Therapy website, odu.edu/partnerships/community/programs/health/monarchpt.

Harry Minium '77 is senior executive writer at Old Dominion University.



A golden summer in Tokyo for six Monarchs

COVID-19 added a steeplechase of obstacles to the summer Olympics.

The stands lacked fans – or parents. Athletes weren't allowed to tour Tokyo. Medal winners received low-key recognition. And the lack of partying at the Olympic Village made the place as quiet as a Buddhist retreat.

Yet athletes still managed to savor their competitive moments as the world watched them give their best.

“There were lots of restrictions in place,” says weightlifter Caine Wilkes '15, who competed in the +109kg (super-heavyweight) category. “But when I walked onto the platform before every lift and saw the Olympic rings, I just took a deep breath and said to myself, ‘Yeah, this is it. This is the big stage.’”

Wilkes was among at least a half-dozen Monarchs who shined in competition or behind the scenes at the Olympics and Paralympics. And not all represented Team USA. Here are their stories.

*Ben Gleisser is a freelance writer in Toronto.
Harry Minium '77 is senior executive writer at Old Dominion University.*



Adam Andrasko '09, CEO of USA Artistic Swimming, didn't go to Tokyo, but he kept a close watch on his team from Colorado Springs during the Women's Duet. Lindi Schroeder and Anita Alvarez finished 13th (out of 22), and narrowly missed qualifying for the finals.

"I'm proud of the team's performance," says Andrasko, 36.

Adam Andrasko '09



"Everyone connected with the team did a tremendous job – there were lots of last-minute phone calls, logistics and planning to make our appearance happen."

The sport's name was changed from "synchronized swimming" to "artistic swimming" in 2020 "because we didn't like the association with 'synchronized diving,'" Andrasko says. "We wanted to align ourselves more with artistic gymnastics."

After graduating in 2008 from Lock Haven University in Pennsylvania with a

degree in sport administration, Andrasko earned a master's in sport management at ODU and then interned with what is now known as the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOC). He was later hired as member services director of USA Field Hockey. In 2018, he was named to his current position and became the youngest executive to head a Team USA organization.

"When I entered ODU, I thought I'd make a career as athletic director at a college, but my professors helped me secure the USOC internship, which opened my eyes to a new world of sports management," Andrasko says. "Today, I wake up every morning knowing this is what I want to do."

— Ben Gleisser

If you think the Olympics is just for landlubbers, think again. Sally Barkow '02 is the performance manager/Nacra coach for US Sailing, the national governing body for the sport. A Nacra is a catamaran, which was converted to a sailing hydrofoil for the Olympic games.

The American Nacra team placed 9th out of 20.

"Although we're a little disappointed in the overall results, we had a young team with potential," Barkow, 41, says. "Watching the top three finishers in each class showed me we just didn't have it all put together, but the level of our athletes was extremely professional. The experience in Japan will surely pay off for our team in the future."

Barkow fell in love with sailing as a youngster growing up on a small lake in Wisconsin. While earning a psychology degree at ODU, she sailed for the Monarchs under Coach Mitch Brindley.

In 2004 and 2005, she won the World Sailing Women's Match Racing Championship. Barkow sailed for Team USA at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and was twice named Rolex Yachtswoman of the Year (2005, 2007). She joined US Sailing as coach in 2019.

"When I'm coaching, I spend half my time assessing performance in the moment and the other half strategizing how to help my athletes for the future," says Barkow, who lives in Kamas, Utah. "It's never boring being out on the water."

— Ben Gleisser



Sally Barkow '02

You don't want to cross swords with Paralympian fencer Terry Hayes '97, who competed in all three categories of parafencing – foil, epee and sabre.

The former heavy equipment operator in the Army was diagnosed with primary cerebellar degeneration, a brain disease, in 2011. After attending a sports camp for women in wheelchairs, she discovered parafencing.

Terry Hayes '97



In the sport, competitors' wheelchairs are locked in place, and after the referee's "en garde," they stab, jab and slash with lightning speed in pursuit of victory.

"It looked so exciting," says Hayes, 63, who lives in North Fort Myers, Florida. "But when I first picked up an epee, it felt so awkward and unnatural. But I'm a very determined person – I'm not a quitter – and I learned to master it."

Hayes finished seventh to 12th in four events. "My teammate, Shelby Jensen,

and I made Paralympic history by being the first two women to compete in sabre at the Paralympic Games," she says. "It was the first games that women were offered the opportunity to fence this weapon."

Hayes told 13News she couldn't have gotten to the Paralympics without the support of her wife, Freda. "She drives me to every one of my lessons. She helps me get dressed. She's done everything but fence."

A retired special education teacher, Hayes says her proudest moments at the games were hearing over the loudspeaker: "Representing the United States of America, Terry Hayes."

"It brought tears to my eyes every time."

— Ben Gleisser

Stephanie Roble's Olympics experience began with joy and inspiration. It ended in frustration.

Roble '11, a member of the women's sailing team, remembers marching in the opening ceremonies with more than 600 teammates, chanting "USA." "Even though the stadium was empty, it was a unifying moment," she says.

Roble and Maggie Shea were in sixth place heading into the final day of competition, but they were dinged for two penalties for "improper moving of the body to propel the boat" and finished 11th.

"We sailed in very similar conditions the day before and didn't have any different techniques, so it was confusing to us," says Roble, 32, who lives in Miami.

"We never thought we were doing anything wrong."

She's taking the long view: "We were happy with how we were racing, how we were scoring and our speed and tactics. Part of the sport is out of your control."

At ODU, Roble was MVP as a sophomore, team captain as a senior and a two-time All-American. Off the water, she majored in finance. "Steph was a good student, and she didn't mess around when she was sailing," longtime head coach Mitch Brindley says.



Stephanie Roble '11

After she graduated, she won a world championship and five national championships and was named US Sailing Rolex Yachtswoman of the Year. Will Roble and Shea sail in the 2024 Olympics? "I would love to find a way to make it to Paris. But it's too soon to make a decision."

— Harry Minium '77

Golfer Maggie Simmermacher '18, representing her native Argentina, made her debut Olympics appearance, finishing 58th.

"Playing in the Olympics was a big step in my career," Simmermacher, 25, says. "I just turned pro two years ago, and I'm still on a learning curve. I'll perform better in the next one" in Paris.

The Olympics, she says, offered "a cool opportunity to play on the best course in Japan against the best golfers in the world. But it was challenging to try to give my best – waking up at 3 every morning, traveling 90 minutes to the course, playing in a practice round for five hours and then playing for real another three hours."

A golfer since she was 4, Simmermacher was recruited by several universities. She chose ODU "because I loved the place when I saw it, and I liked the atmosphere of the golf team. They seemed like a family."

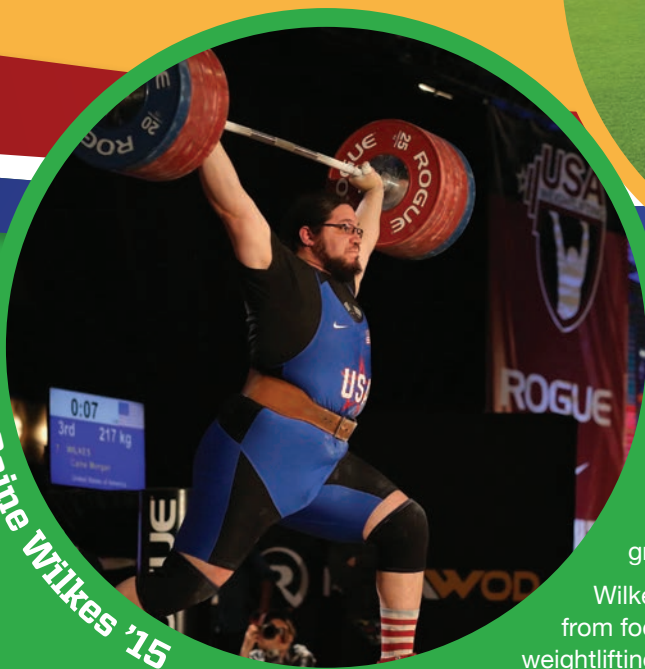
On her way to earning a degree in international business, she led ODU's golf team to the Conference USA championship in 2017 and won the Conference Player of the Year award.

The Women's World Golf Rankings names her the best golfer in Argentina and fifth best in Latin America.

She's already en route to fulfilling her Olympics prediction: After Tokyo, she finished second at the Skaftö Ladies Open in Sweden.

— Ben Gleisser

Maggie Simmermacher '18



Caine Wilkes '15

Caine Wilkes' art business is called Quiet Guy Graphics, but he lets out a fearsome scream when he hoists weights. And he can lift the equivalent of a handful of people.

Wilkes '15, whose nickname is Dragon, placed ninth in his competition, lifting 390 kg, or nearly 860 pounds. Pretty impressive, but, unfortunately, Georgia's Lasha Talakhadze hefted a bit more –

chose his father, Chris. "He was able to keep me loose by cracking jokes in the back room." A Renaissance lifter, Wilkes double-majored in English and art at Old Dominion. His most influential mentor was now-retired English professor Tim Seibles, who also served as Virginia's poet laureate.

He began pumping with his three brothers in the garage of their Chesapeake home, under the direction of their father. Wilkes was permitted only one coach in Tokyo, so he naturally

488 kg or 1,076 pounds – to grab the gold.

Wilkes switched from football to weightlifting in high school.

He competed nationally while at ODU and later won gold at the Pan American Games in 2014, then again in 2017 and 2019. In between, he won silver at that event in 2016, 2018 and 2020.

"I took his Intro to Creative Writing workshop as a filler, but he was so passionate about language, he ignited my enthusiasm for writing," says Wilkes, 34, who lives in Matthews, North Carolina. He plans to coach other lifters and "push my creative writing ventures," along with his graphics business.

— Ben Gleisser



Famous friends hold court in Newport News

BY HARRY MINIUM '77

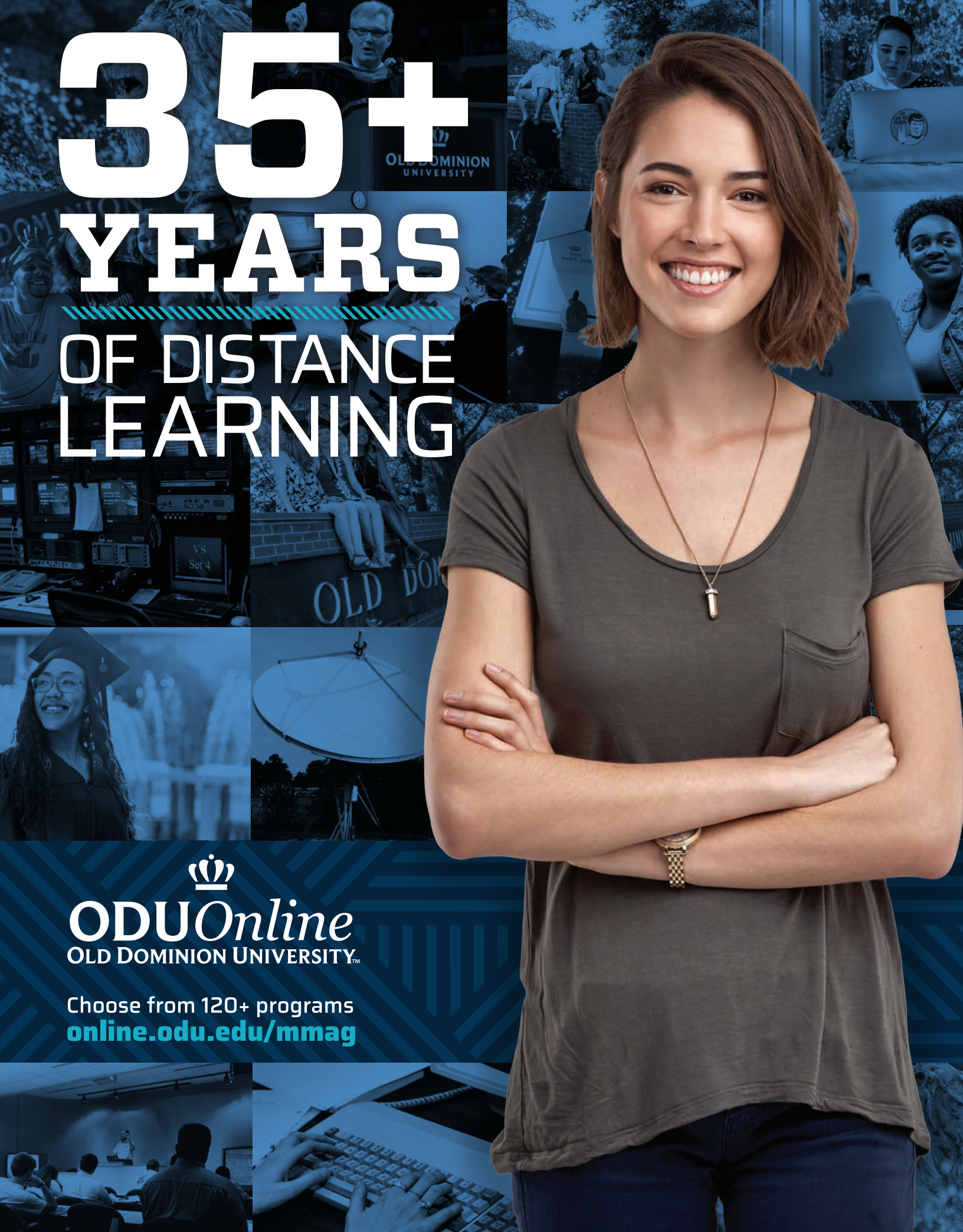
Two of Old Dominion University's most famous alums – women's basketball coach and star Nancy Lieberman '80 and ESPN anchor Jay Harris '87 – have been tight friends for almost two decades. They reunited in Newport News over the summer for the dedication of a new basketball court at a Boys & Girls Club.

Nancy Lieberman Charities, working with the company Sport Court, has built nearly 100 in low-income areas across the country. "Protect this court," Lieberman told the youngsters who put it to use after the ceremony. "Don't let anything bad happen here. And make it a welcoming place for everyone."

The court is named for Harris, who also serves on ODU's Board of Visitors, but he said it memorializes the spirit of his father, Al. "My dad taught me that doing the right thing doesn't just help others; it also helps you," Harris said.



PHOTOS BY CHUCK THOMAS



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TWO VETERANS WHO STILL EMBRACE SERVICE

BY PHILIP WALZER



KRISTA BRANT

Military experience: She worked as a nuclear electronics technician from 2006 to 2017. “I operated nuclear reactors that powered aircraft carriers. It was stressful, but it made me more resilient.” She’s been in the Reserve since 2017.

Her time at ODU: Brant’s husband, Garrett, also a nuclear electronics technician, was stationed here, so she enrolled in 2017. “I knew I didn’t want to do engineering, but I didn’t know what I wanted to major in. The Military Connection Center not only helped me navigate the benefits and application process; they told me I could be an undeclared student and still get my benefits, which was the best news ever.”

Academics: She graduated in the spring with a bachelor’s degree in occupational and technical studies, honing her training skills. “I taught college-age students how to operate nuclear reactors. Being a training specialist was my favorite part of being in the Navy.” She minored in women’s studies and sociology.

Back as a grad student: In the fall, Brant, 36, began a master’s program in educational leadership and higher education.

“I enjoy having influence on young adults and helping them be successful later in life.”

Big honor: Last spring, Brant won the Kaufman Award honoring a student who demonstrates “the highest qualities of leadership and service.” She had to be pushed into applying because she didn’t think she had a chance. After she got the news, “I went into shock for a good couple of days.”

Her activities: Brant has served in several roles at the Military Connection Center, currently program outreach coordinator, and is vice president of the Student Veterans of America chapter. She was founding president of two honor societies – Salute, for military-affiliated students, and Alpha Alpha Alpha, or Tri-Alpha, for first-gen students like herself.

Brant also is a team leader for Peer Advisors for Veteran Education, helping select and advise the advisors, and a member of ODU’s new Queer Resilience Coalition. This year she helped lead Green Zone Training to help faculty and staff understand the experience of military-affiliated students.

KATHERINE MARTINEZ

Military experience:

She served for four years as a sonar technician, gathering and analyzing oceanographic data to help vessels – and whales! – navigate the water.

Her path to ODU: She enrolled in Tidewater Community College in 2019 and earned an associate degree in social sciences in 2020. She began at Old Dominion that fall because of her experience with...

Student Veterans of America:

Martinez served as president of TCC's chapter and was happy to learn ODU has a strong chapter, too. She's now president, the first woman in that position in ODU's history. The organization, she says, engages in important advocacy for vets, whether it's helping them apply for college admission or VA benefits.

Other activities: Motivated by the loss of a mentor in the Navy, she coordinated the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Out of the Darkness Walk in Virginia Beach for four years. "I want to make it normalized to have an honest conversation about mental health. It's OK not to be OK, and there are people and resources to help you."

Martinez, 26, also works with the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern



Shore to increase access to food for needy veterans. And she volunteers as a children's mentor in the Character Does Matter program run by the Travis Manion Foundation, a nonprofit that helps vets and their families.

Academics: Martinez graduated in December with degrees in sociology and criminal justice, and a minor in cybersecurity. "I have always had an interest in true crime," she says. "I also chose sociology because, knowing how diverse our communities are, I felt I would be able to do more if I learned about society and the people within it."

Career plans: Martinez began work in December as a personnel security specialist for the federal government.

Philosophy: "Everything I do is community-based. If we build partnerships, we can make a huge difference."

THEIR PERSPECTIVE

Carryovers from military life:

"I was always doing a million things at once; I took that with me when I got out," Martinez says. Brant says she's not the most organized person, "but I handle working under stress and pressure very well because I had to do that for many years."

On female vets: Brant says it's hard to connect with military-affiliated women. "Some don't feel entitled to be called a veteran or they had a poor experience in the military and don't want that to be an identifiable part of their life." That's why, both say, it's important for students to see two women vets in leadership roles on campus. "We want to give all people a voice."

Rating ODU: "We offer a lot of great services, and there's a plethora of things they can get involved with," Brant says. But as a mother whose husband was often away, she says, "The child-care piece is lacking."

Martinez says: "The SVA and MCC help make people feel like they're part of a family. But we can always find room for improvement."

On faculty and students: Martinez has had "a positive experience in a lot of my classes. Professors are pretty welcoming to my opinions." Many students are from Hampton Roads, she says, so they're already familiar with the military. "For the most part," Brant says, "faculty and staff are very supportive of military students, but not everyone is."

Making headlines: Both Brant and Martinez were featured in G.I. Jobs magazine last year as recipients of its Student Veteran Leadership Awards.

To reach the Military Connection Center, call 757-683-7153
or email military@odu.edu

To contact the Student Veterans of America chapter,
email odustudentveteran@gmail.com

Promising profs 40 and under

BY PHILIP WALZER

Marvin Chiles: Don't emphasize the oppression

Marvin Chiles found his calling early. He started watching the History Channel when he was 4. A few years later, he got a History Channel book for Christmas. "I read that book all day."

Chiles joined ODU as an assistant professor of history in 2020. The choice was easy: He's from outside Richmond, and his research on racial issues centers on the commonwealth.

He expects his first book, "The Courage to Change: The Politics of Racial Reconciliation in Modern Richmond," to be published in 2023. "The book argues that what's going on in Richmond is proof that the modern South is getting less racist over time," Chiles, 29, says. "However, it has not gone far enough."

Chiles supports Virginia's push to expand Black history in public schools. He believes,

however, that critical race theory shouldn't be introduced before 11th grade. Any earlier and it could increase resentment and prejudice, he says.

Chiles warns students of his Black history courses: "If you expect a chronicle of victimhood, drop my class now." He covers free Blacks who came to America, the 20,000 who fought on both sides during the Revolution and slaves who negotiated their freedom. "They did everything they could not to live in oppression."

He also believes in the importance of making research accessible to the public. In his Richmond book, he's experimenting with writing in first person. "History is, by its very nature, democratic."



Felecia Commodore: Untangling how universities are run



PHOTO BY CHUCK THOMAS

The board at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill drew a hailstorm of protest after it initially rejected journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones for tenure, ignoring the recommendations of faculty and administrators. But some good may come of it, said Felecia Commodore, assistant professor of educational foundations and leadership.

“The curtain was pulled back, like in ‘The Wizard of Oz,’” said Commodore, who wrote about the incident for *The Conversation* and analyzed it in a videocast for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. “People found out the amount of power boards have. And now they’re asking questions.”

Commodore, 38, also asks questions – and suggests answers – in her research, which includes university governance, the role and composition of boards, Black women leaders

and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). She co-wrote “Black Women College Students,” a 2018 book that offered a roadmap to promote their success and encouraged colleges to look at factors like mental health.

The UNC controversy, Commodore said, could prod boards toward greater accountability. That should include expectations for advancing diversity and equity, which she has outlined in a model she calls *Culturally Sustaining Governance*.

HBCUs, she said, “have had to navigate a higher-education system that at its foundation was anti-Black.” But she’s not giving them a pass. Too many rising women are forced to “lose their relationship with their authentic selves” to get ahead. Strong governing practices, Commodore said, are key to ensuring the future of HBCUs.

John Whiteman: From stingrays to sparrows

“I’m interested in the engine that makes animals run,” said John Whiteman, assistant professor of biological sciences. Specifically, how they process nutrients.

His subjects include sun bears and emperor penguins. But his focus burrows down to the atomic level.

Whiteman, 40, is lead researcher in a multi-institutional project with a \$900,000 National Science Foundation grant examining how animals, such as sparrows and lizards, process water with different oxygen isotopes.

The goal: to discover “a simple way to assess metabolic rate and water intake – two very important factors that are notoriously difficult to measure in the field.”

Other work includes:

- Researching with Ian Bartol, professor of biological sciences, whether stingrays absorb nitrogen directly from seawater.
- Debunking the belief that polar bears engage in “walking hibernation” in the summer when food is hard to find. “Basically,” said Whiteman, who was quoted on the subject in *The New York Times*, “they’re doing what you or I would do if we lost access to food for a while – fasting, losing body mass, but not dramatically slowing their metabolism.”

His guiding principle: “Leave the world a better place than I found it.”

Whiteman, who came to ODU in 2018, also admits he has a lot of fun researching and teaching. “Think of the most interesting question that nobody has answered, and try to answer it. That’s about as engaging as it gets.”



PHOTO BY MIKE LOCKHART

Christine Strong: 'Push the boundaries'

Christine Strong started teaching very young – as an undergraduate TA at the University of Oklahoma, where she later received her doctorate.

She came to Old Dominion in 2019 as an assistant professor of economics. “It was the place I felt most comfortable,” she says. “They didn’t only talk about diversity; they tried to do something about it.”

Her teaching philosophy: “Get to know them. Lighten the room. Take something serious and turn it into something funny and allow them to connect with you on a human level.”

That doesn’t mean Strong ignores serious subjects. “I think we should push the boundaries,” she says. So in her Money and Banking class last year, she prompted an

intense discussion on discrimination in the U.S. banking system.

Students voiced differing opinions, but Strong pushed them to take an analytical approach: “Your job is to look at the data and come up with solutions. You need to learn to leave your emotions out of it.”

Strong, 36, who was born in Cameroon, studies the CFA franc zone, which covers 14 sub-Saharan African countries. The system has brought relative stability, though Africans see vestiges of French colonialism.

She also incorporates it in her classes. Her message: “What works in the U.S. doesn’t necessarily work in other parts of the world. I also want them to understand how lucky we are here, although things are not perfect.”



PHOTO BY CHUCK THOMAS

Anna Bulysheva: A path to restoring heart function

Anna Bulysheva has enjoyed the best of both worlds at Old Dominion.

She began as a post-doc and then research assistant professor at the Frank Reidy Research Center for Bioelectrics, where she built strong research partnerships on and off campus. Now she’s an assistant professor of

electrical and computer engineering, which also allows her to “mentor and teach students and give back to the community.”

What attracted her to biomedical engineering? “I always had an interest in therapeutic and medical devices created to regenerate tissue. I like the idea of being able

to come up with solutions to disease and dysfunction.”

Bulysheva, 37, has co-written about 20 refereed articles. The most recent, in the journal *Bioelectrochemistry*, looks at the successful regeneration of heart muscle tissue after myocardial infarction.

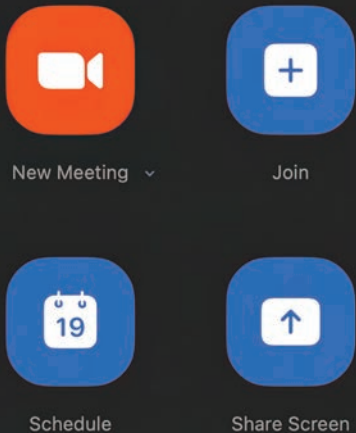
Using lightning-quick electric pulses, each lasting 20 to 100 milliseconds, Bulysheva’s team injected vascular endothelial growth factor B into a heart. “We were able to show that you can have muscle cells return to the site where the damage occurred,” she said. The application could end up speeding recovery times and reducing deaths, though she said it may take a few decades to reach the public.

Bulysheva is working on other bioelectric applications, including the potential to induce insulin production in diabetics and repair torn tendons, which could benefit athletes and veterans. She’s also chair of the curriculum committee for biomedical engineering at ODU and coordinator of the minor.



PHOTO BY CHUCK THOMAS

Research Notes: *Zoom fatigue, asthma and sturdy seniors*

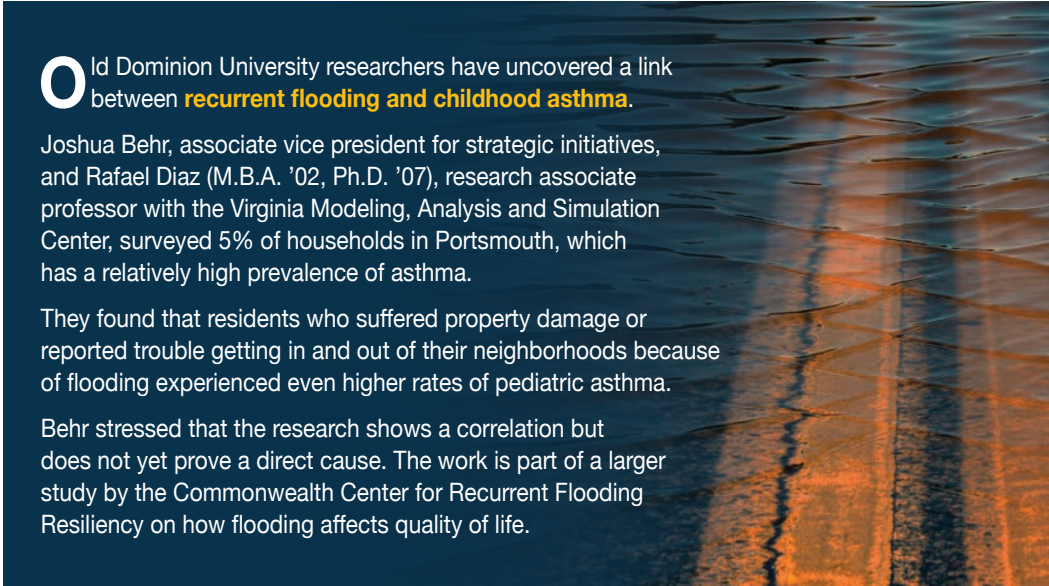


We've all experienced it in the past year and a half – **Zoom fatigue**. Three assistant professors of management – Andrew Bennett, Emily Campion and Sheila Keener – studied how to minimize it and reported their findings in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*:

- It's not the number of meetings but their timing that affects fatigue. Late-afternoon meetings are most likely to tire people out. Best time: early p.m.
- People who felt a greater sense of belonging to others in the group experienced less fatigue, Bennett said.
- Though someone always forgets to do it, muting reduces lethargy.

They conducted their research with Kathleen Keeler of Ohio State University. Their findings were reported by *The Washington Post*, *Forbes*, the *Associated Press* and *U.S. News & World Report*.

Campion, now working on a project on telework with the Society for Human Resource Management, has found that most companies they surveyed plan to continue allowing remote work in some form.



Old Dominion University researchers have uncovered a link between **recurrent flooding and childhood asthma**.

Joshua Behr, associate vice president for strategic initiatives, and Rafael Diaz (M.B.A. '02, Ph.D. '07), research associate professor with the Virginia Modeling, Analysis and Simulation Center, surveyed 5% of households in Portsmouth, which has a relatively high prevalence of asthma.

They found that residents who suffered property damage or reported trouble getting in and out of their neighborhoods because of flooding experienced even higher rates of pediatric asthma.

Behr stressed that the research shows a correlation but does not yet prove a direct cause. The work is part of a larger study by the Commonwealth Center for Recurrent Flooding Resiliency on how flooding affects quality of life.



Hannah Twiddy, who is scheduled to receive her doctorate in human movement sciences in May, is headed to Australia this year on a Fulbright scholarship to study factors promoting **healthy aging** among older adults. "I'm very interested

in the idea of maintaining your health at every stage of life," said Twiddy.

She has already gathered data in Costa Rica and Hampton Roads. In Australia, she will conduct further research and examine findings from the University of Newcastle's Centre for Generational Health and Ageing. She's particularly interested in whether healthy elders successfully transmit their positive habits to the next generations. She's found that older Americans are more confident than Costa Ricans that they have.

Three faculty members also won Fulbright awards last year: Justin Haegele, human movement sciences; Sandeep Kumar, civil and environmental engineering, and Dimitrie Popescu, electrical and computer engineering.

– Philip Walzer

Natalie Diaz wins Pulitzer Prize for poetry



Natalie Diaz '00 (M.F.A. '07) won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in June. She was the first Latinx writer to receive the award.

She was honored for her collection "Postcolonial Love Poem." In a 2019 interview with *Monarch* magazine, Diaz said of the book: "It is a leap toward love. What better way to live than to say, 'I was born and raised on a reservation, and I still love, and I still deserve.'"

Diaz, who grew up in the Fort Mojave Indian Village in California, is an associate professor of English at Arizona State University. In an article on Arizona State's website, she said: "I don't think I've ever felt this way about a prize before." The Pulitzer,

she said, was "a kind of recognition ... of the things I'm trying to fight for in language."

She told the *Arizona Republic*: "I, of course, have an Indigenous lens, yet I think that Indigenous lens is extremely important to non-Indigenous peoples. We're all fighting for this Earth, for one another against injustice."

She also received a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant" in 2018 and last year became the youngest chancellor ever elected to the Academy of American Poets.

In September, Gov. Ralph Northam included "Postcolonial Love Poem" among 39 artifacts in a time capsule to represent Virginia for future generations.

— Philip Walzer

Norfolk's mayor pays tribute to activist

Kenneth Cooper Alexander '90 believes his 2016 election as Norfolk's first African American mayor had roots in Evelyn T. Butts' voter-mobilization campaigns and community leadership more than 50 years ago.

Alexander pays homage to Butts in his book, "Persistence: Evelyn Butts and the African American Quest for Full Citizenship and Self-Determination," which stemmed from his doctoral dissertation at Antioch University.

Long concerned about low voter turnout, Alexander says he aimed to understand how Butts overcame personal travails to transform from a struggling seamstress into a courageous, creative crusader who motivated thousands of low-income Blacks to vote for the first time.

"I never met Mrs. Butts, but I can pass her torch to new generations," he said.

Butts, who died in 1993, is often cited for her lawsuit that resulted in the U.S. Supreme Court decision striking down Virginia's repressive poll tax in 1966 – the year Alexander was born. However, Alexander asserts her greatest contributions were her voter-outreach drives and persistence in challenging Jim Crow oppression. Butts even picketed a preseason pro football game at Foreman Field in 1961, demanding an end to segregated seating and insisting that the Washington Redskins integrate its team.

"Mrs. Butts is essential in the long continuum of resilient Black grassroots leaders," Alexander says. "Many were women working



behind the scenes to energize and mobilize neighbors and connect them with the overall struggle for full and equal citizenship. We continue to learn from them."

— Michael Knepler

Read about Sheri Reynolds' first novel in nine years at www.odu.edu/monarchmag

A skateboarder's story encourages empathy

The title of **Sheeryl Lim's** young adult novel, "Brown Boy Nowhere," describes how the main character, Angelo Rivera, feels. The Filipino American skateboarder moves with his family to a small town, where he faces but eventually overcomes bigotry and ostracism.

Amazon chose the book for its First Reads program, and it was listed as the top seller in young adult Asian American fiction e-books over the summer.

Lim graduated summa cum laude in 2005 with a psychology degree, which "helps me get into the minds of my characters and decide their motivations," she says. After working in marketing and advertising, Lim published 17 romance and paranormal novels. She moved into YA fiction because

"the experiences are so brand-new in that age group. Everything is so fresh."

She's more of a longboarder, so she relied on her skateboarding husband, Rus, to double-check the moves in the novel.

Lim, 37, grew up in Southern California and lives in Virginia Beach. She did not identify Angelo's geographical location because "what he experiences can be anywhere."

Angelo is befriended by a group of self-described "faceless outsiders," including a tuba player and graffiti artist. "I see them as kindred spirits," Lim said. "I've always thought of myself as someone who followed her own unique path."

With the increase in hate crimes against Asian Americans, Lim hopes her novel "cultivates understanding and kindness.



Once you think a certain way, it's hard to step out of that. But I believe education and empathy can change people."

— Philip Walzer

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CAMPUS BRIEFS



PHOTO BY CHUCK THOMAS

President Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D., signed a memorandum of understanding in August with his counterparts at Eastern Virginia Medical School and Norfolk State University to establish Virginia's first **school of public health**. "As a community, with all of us coming together, we will be able to do dynamic work on behalf of our citizens," he said.

Old Dominion and Norfolk State have received \$5 million from the state and \$4 million from Sentara Healthcare for the venture.

The school, which will address public health inequities in lower-income areas, will offer a master's degree in public health and doctoral programs. It will be based on ODU's campus, and a dean will be appointed.

NEWS

Old Dominion has **frozen tuition and fees** for all students for the 2021-22 year. ODU remains the most affordable state-supported doctoral institution in Virginia.

A coalition of institutions including Old Dominion University won a \$13 million U.S. Department of Defense contract to develop a "**smart warehouse**" at the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Albany, Georgia.

The Remote Experience for Young Engineers and Scientists (**REYES**), a free, virtual STEM-H program, was offered for a second summer. Over its two years, REYES has attracted more than 11,000 participants from 135 countries.

ODU was named one of the Southeast's best colleges by **Princeton Review** and a top-tier institution by **U.S. News & World Report**.

PEOPLE

Gail Dodge, dean of the College of Sciences, has been appointed chair of the Nuclear Science Advisory Committee, which advises the U.S. Department of Energy and National Science Foundation.

Ted Ellis, Scholar in Residence at the College of Arts and Letters, received a President's Gold Volunteer Service Award from the White House.

Khan Iftakharuddin, former chair of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, was named interim dean of the Batten College of Engineering and Technology, succeeding **Ben Stuart**.

Sampath Jayarathna, assistant professor of computer science, received the National Science Foundation CAREER Award.

Emily Ondracek-Peterson, a violinist, educator and arts administrator, was named the first executive director of the F. Ludwig Diehn School of Music.

Allison Page, assistant professor of communication and theatre arts, was named a 2021 Mellon Emerging Faculty Leader.

"The Gang's All Queer: The Lives of Gay Gang Members," a book by **Vanessa Panfil**, associate professor of sociology and criminal justice, is being developed by HBO for a series.

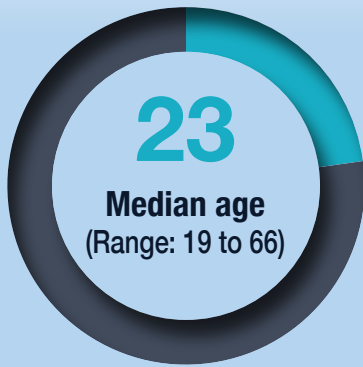
Chad A. Reed has been appointed vice president of administration and finance. Reed, who holds a similar position at Radford University, succeeds **Todd Johnson**, who served in an interim role after Greg DuBois left ODU to become chief financial officer at Florida Atlantic University.

Peter Schulman, professor of French and international studies, was named an Officer in the Order of the Academic Palms by the French government.

Allen Wilson has been named university counsel, succeeding Earl Nance, who retired. Wilson previously was lead counsel for Radford University and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.

Johnny Young, associate vice president for student engagement and enrollment services, won the On-Campus Service Award from the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Men and Masculinities Knowledge Community.

May 2021 profile: Bachelor's degree recipients



25%
First-generation students

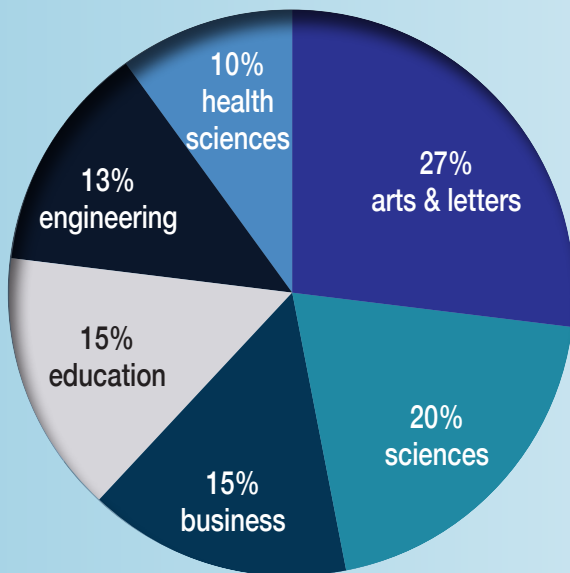


Gender
58% women
42% men

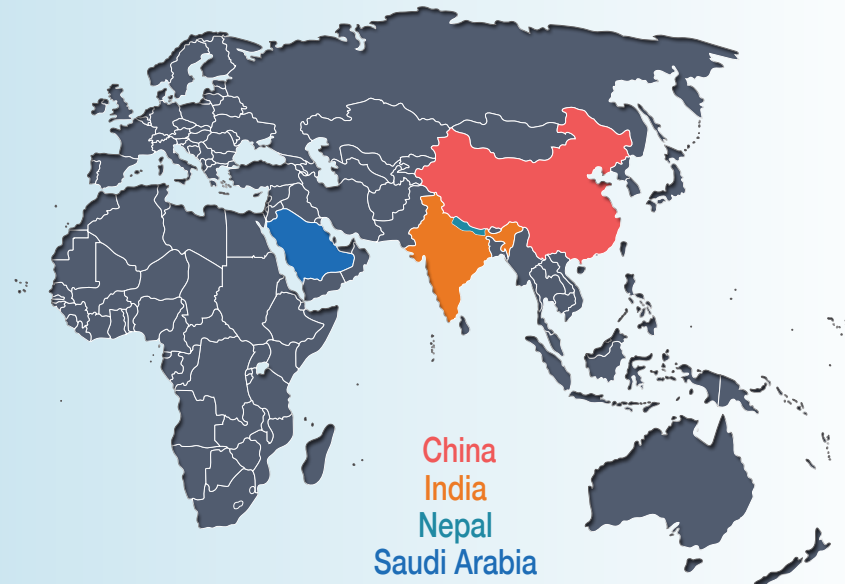
Race
53% white
23% African American
8% Latinx
6% Asian American
10% other



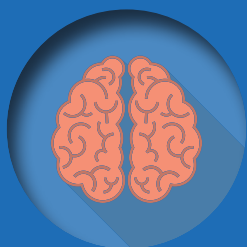
The college connection:



Where in the world? (Top 4 countries):



Top 5 majors:



Psychology



Nursing



Criminal Justice



Communication



Biology

Leah Onosato

The golfer scores high – or low – when she needs to. Last season, her 74.0 stroke average was the lowest on the women’s golf team. But she’s maintaining a 4.0 grade point average as an English major. The senior from Kumamoto, Japan, was named to the 2021 Conference USA All-Championship Team. She also received the Conference USA Commissioner’s Academic Medal.

PHOTO: BILL TIERNAN



FROM ATHLETIC DIRECTOR WOOD SELIG

Persistence paid off for athletes, trainers

In my 36 years in college athletics, including 23 as an athletic director, I never witnessed such perseverance from the coaches, student-athletes and fans at Old Dominion University as I have during the pandemic. Many of us lost family members, others saw their businesses founder, and all dealt with enormous personal stress and uncertainty.

The 2020–21 “season” is thankfully behind us.

So it was such a pleasure on Sept. 11 to welcome more than 18,000 fans, including a record 5,000 students, for our first home football game in 651 days as we faced Hampton University. Not only did Coach Ricky Rahne pick up his first victory as a head coach, but the joy and relief I saw on the faces of our football players, spirit squads and fans was palpable.

Many of our most generous donors and alumni stepped up to help us prepare for our first football season in nearly two years. Dennis Ellmer, president and CEO of Priority Automotive, headed a group of donors who funded a season-ticket TV

campaign featuring Washington quarterback Taylor Heinicke, the most famous player in our football history. The campaign yielded 1,000 new season ticket holders for 2021 and contributed greatly to the terrific atmosphere in S.B. Ballard Stadium.

In case you were wondering how badly ODU student-athletes wanted to compete this year, more than 98 percent have been vaccinated.

The credit for our high vaccination rate goes to our coaches and training staff, who haven't forced anyone to be vaccinated but have been aggressive in educating athletes about the dangers of COVID and the risks of not being vaccinated, including the cancellation of competition.

Scott Johnson, our associate athletic director for athletic training, deserves special recognition. He and his staff routinely worked 14-hour days for nine months while our teams competed last winter and spring. Johnson and his staff conducted more than 14,000 tests, and the 1.07% positivity rate among our student-athletes proved that they

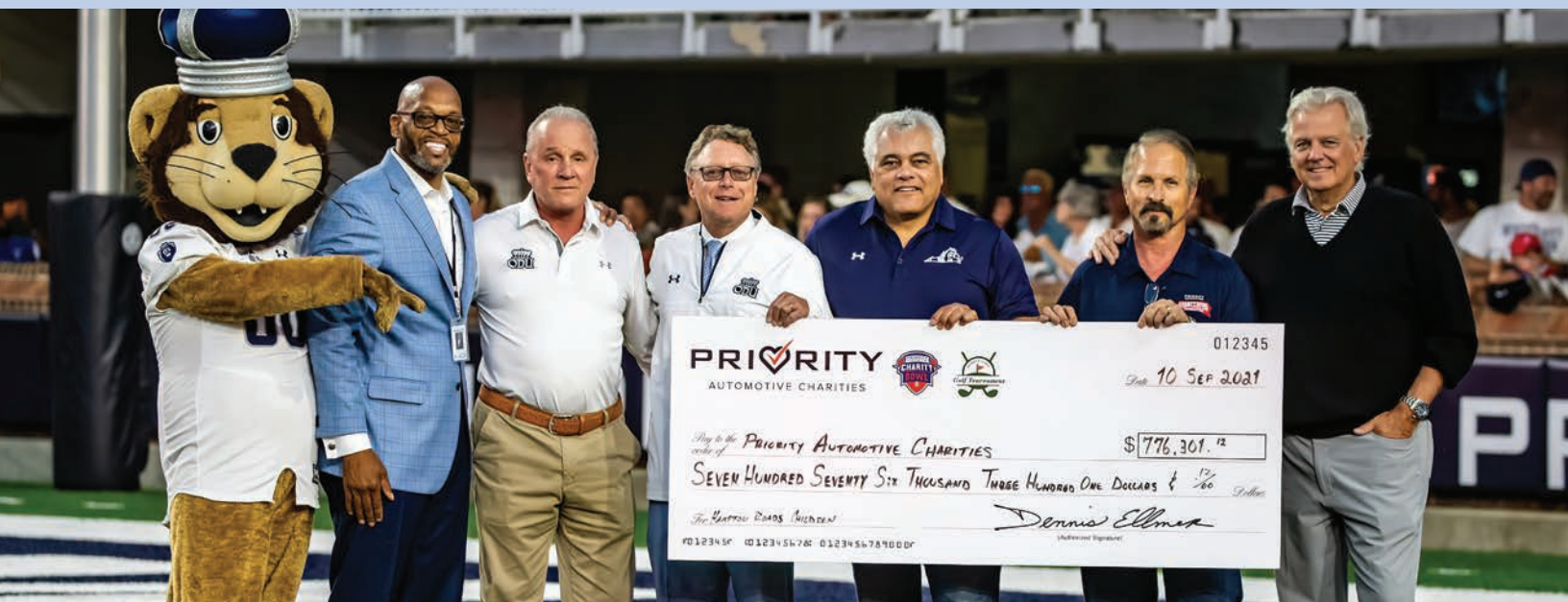
did their very best to remain in self-imposed “bubbles” with their teammates.

Thanks in part to their efforts, our baseball and women's tennis teams won Conference USA titles. Our staff was certainly stretched to the limit as we competed in 12 sports at the same time during the spring, hosting 111 home athletic events. Our game management, athletic trainers and sports information staff played a significant role in making this happen.

We also had the best academic semester ever last spring, with our athletes maintaining an overall 3.31 GPA, while our football team had a composite GPA of 3.1, its highest ever.

I thank our alumni, donors and friends of ODU athletics for standing by us throughout the pandemic, then and now, and I welcome everyone back to help us Restore the Roar surrounding ODU athletics as our athletes thrive off the electric energy generated by fans during our events.

See you at a future ODU game.
GO MONARCHS!



For baseball team, humble facilities, big results

BY HARRY MINIUM '77

The way Athletic Director Wood Selig sees it, baseball coach Chris Finwood has done more with less than any coach in America.

Finwood's team last season emerged the Conference USA victor and ranked among the 16 No. 1 seeds in the NCAA tournament. But ODU's nearly 40-year-old Bud Metheny Stadium was considered so outdated, the Monarchs became the first No. 1 seed in more than a decade to have to play on the road.

"They haven't used this as an excuse, they haven't griped, they haven't moaned," Selig said. "They just went about their business and built a fantastic baseball program despite a very modest and average facility.

"Now is the time to turn our attention, to turn our focus, on correcting that and give them what they deserve. Hopefully, it will be something that will keep them among the elite in college baseball."

Being forced to host a regional in another state sparked ODU officials and alumni to consider an upgrade to Metheny Stadium.

Populous Architects, which helped plan the renovation of Kornblau Field at S.B. Ballard Stadium, last month released a proposal including expanded and upgraded seating, luxury suites and new locker and meeting rooms.

The improved stadium, Selig said, "will be designed to host Conference USA and NCAA championships. Whatever we do will address what happened this year."

ODU became a national Cinderella story last spring as a self-described blue-collar team that won a ton of games. The Monarchs led the nation in home runs for most of the season. After Finwood lost his wife to cancer, the players dedicated the rest of the season to their coach. ODU swept four games to win the Conference USA tournament, but then had to play far from home, at the University of South Carolina.

ODU defeated Jacksonville in the first round and then won perhaps its most meaningful game of the season, a 2-1 victory over South Carolina in front of a hostile crowd of 7,315.

The Monarchs lost their final two games, both to the University of Virginia, including a heartbreaking 4-3 defeat on a walk-off home run in the bottom of the 10th inning in the Columbia Regional final. The team finished 44-15.

ODU is certainly among the elite now. The Monarchs ranked No. 16 in the final NCAA Top 25 and No. 17 in the final USA Today coaches' poll.

The team lost three pitchers in the Major League Baseball draft, but 11 of their top 12 hitters will return this spring – and that doesn't include Chris Dengler, the 2019 Conference USA Freshman of the Year, who missed most of last season with an injury.

"We have a lot of guys back who are used to winning, and I hope they will pass that on to our younger players," Finwood said.

Meanwhile, Selig expects to have initial plans for the new stadium drawn before then. "That certainly would help us keep the momentum going," he said.

Harry Minium '77 is senior executive writer at Old Dominion University.



HEADED FOR THE BIGS?

These four Monarchs were signed by Major League Baseball teams last year:

Outfielder Kyle Battle,
New York Yankees

Pitcher Hunter Gregory,
Toronto Blue Jays

Pitcher Aaron Holiday,
Oakland Athletics

Pitcher Ryne Moore,
Milwaukee Brewers

PHOTO COURTESY OF ODU SPORTS



Frederique Zandbergen (left) with Blanche Krabbe on the Wylde Swan.

A long journey inspired a new outlook for freshman

BY JOE GARVEY

Frederique Zandbergen, a freshman from the Netherlands on Old Dominion University's field hockey team, had a life-changing experience that reshuffled her priorities.

In March 2020, she and about two dozen other teens flew to the Caribbean for a study-at-sea trip. The plan was to sail to several islands aboard the schooner Wylde Swan, winding up in Cuba, then fly home. But about two weeks into the trip, they learned their flight back was canceled because of COVID. So they went home the long way, sailing across the Atlantic on a journey that lasted five weeks.

Zandbergen, who's from Tilburg, about 70 miles south of Amsterdam, said the voyage helped bring more purpose to her life.

"Before the boat trip, I was a more materialistic person who lived my life without thinking about anything, and everything just came to me if I wanted it," she said. "And I really cared about what other people thought about me and I always wanted the newest stuff. When I came back,

I didn't have the feeling anymore that I needed that."

The group had stopped at Dominica, St. Lucia and Martinique. When they found out they wouldn't be flying home, "a lot of people were in shock," said Zandbergen, who was 15 at the time. "They were scared, they didn't know what to do, they were homesick, and they were crying."

For better or worse, during the trip home, the students were largely unaware of the virus' progression. Without Wi-Fi, they had no internet connection for their smartphones. "We were living in a bubble," Zandbergen said.

The ocean crossing wasn't entirely smooth. Insects got into the prepackaged food, and the boat's water filtration system malfunctioned, which meant no one was able to shower for weeks.

Zandbergen had an additional challenge: The week before the trip began, she had dislocated an elbow on a family skiing vacation, and she wore a cast most of the time.

But being "24/7 together" built bonds in surprising ways.

"In your teenage years, you want to be popular, you want to be cool, and you have a certain bubble you want to be in," Zandbergen said. "And with all the other persons you think aren't cool, you don't want to hang out with them. I had such a different connection with the people I met on the boat."

Zandbergen and three of her fellow travelers spoke about their trip for an article in *The Atlantic* magazine last year.

ODU field hockey Coach Andrew Griffiths is impressed with how she handled the experience.

"It was a fascinating experience that not many people her age would have gone through on a sailboat," he said. "She says right now she's not homesick and not afraid of being away from home. And that trip probably is part of the reason why."

Joe Garvey is a public relations and marketing specialist at Old Dominion.

FROM THE OFFICE OF ALUMNI RELATIONS

Dear Fellow Monarchs,

There is a great deal of excitement at Old Dominion University these days, and as the new ODU Alumni Association (ODUAA) president, I am likewise feeling the anticipation of things to come.



When I started my term in July, another president was starting his administration at ODU – Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D., the University’s ninth leader. From his weeklong journey around the commonwealth in August, the energy, passion, knowledge and charisma President Hemphill brought to each of his talks electrified the ODU community. His vision for Old Dominion has the Alumni Association excited about ODU’s future as a regional and national treasure.

I am equally enthusiastic about the opportunity to serve and represent this amazing and talented Monarch alumni population of more than 160,000. Looking forward, I hope to continue to explore our relationships with alumni in a different way than we’ve done in the past. The Alumni Association will seek to expand its footprint by engaging new pockets of alumni across the country in offering new chapter membership opportunities.

The ODUAA seeks to focus on its relationships not only after graduation but also beginning with our Monarch scholars. Therefore, engaging in student scholarship is incredibly important to the Alumni Association – and to me personally as a first-generation student. Being able to fundraise to support students in need speaks not only to the association but to the future of our Monarch Nation.

Finally, I want to share a simple and sincere thank you to our alumni who are connected with the University. For those who are not, know that the ODU Alumni Association is here for you when you are ready. Contact the alumni office or simply update your information in the Lion’s Den. Whether volunteering your time, attending an ODU alumni event, mentoring a student or donating to scholarships, any resource you would like to offer would be a boon to your fellow alumni and future alumni, as well.

Go Monarchs!

*André Wells '07 (M.P.A. '13)
President, Alumni Association*

1970s

Paul F. Moersdorf (M.S. '73, Ph.D. '78) received 2020 Alumni of Distinction honors from Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, Pa., site of his undergraduate degree. Moersdorf established a career in oceanography, meteorology and environmental support as an educator, scientist and administrator for the National Oceanographic Office and the U.S. Navy. He retired to Elon, N.C., and taught oceanography and environmental science at Elon University.

Wilbert W. James Jr. '78, retired president of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky, has been appointed to the Piston Group board of directors. James was raised in the Lambert’s Point neighborhood in Norfolk and worked for 30 years at Toyota. Piston Group is one of the largest private, minority-owned automotive suppliers in North America.

1980s

Albert S. Moor II '81 was promoted to Suffolk city manager in May on a unanimous vote by the Suffolk City Council. He served as the city’s director of public utilities from 1995 until moving into interim city manager roles in July 2020.

David Tomasko '82 was named executive director of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program in Sarasota, Fla. Tomasko’s specialty is water quality assessments and natural resource plans in the Gulf of Mexico and around the world.

Vice Adm. Kenneth Whitesell '83 took command of Naval Air Forces and Naval Air Force, Pacific Fleet, in October 2020 in San Diego, Calif. Whitesell, a Navy pilot, had served as deputy commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet since July 2019.

Steven M. Sertich '84 was sworn in as the 75th president of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists during its virtual meeting in August 2020. Sertich, an Army veteran and lawyer, is an independent contract nurse anesthetist at Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas and 17-year member of the Nevada State Bar. His specialty is medical legal consulting.

Todd West '84 was promoted to vice president of in-service aircraft carrier programs for Newport News Shipbuilding, a division of Huntington Ingalls Industries, last November. His job involves planning and execution of complex overhauls and aircraft

Class Notes are compiled by Janet Molinaro (M.A. '14)

carrier refueling, as well as oversight of an R&D facility that supports the Navy's nuclear propulsion program.



Patrick Shuler '85 kept a secret for 18 months after the pandemic canceled the Virginia Beach Neptune Festival in 2020. He kept mum while he waited to take the throne as

King Neptune XLVII, ceremonial leader for the event, held Sept. 30–Oct. 2 last year. Shuler is a Virginia Beach resident and partner with Dixon Hughes Goodman, an accounting firm in Norfolk.

Andrew Harris '86 has been hired as sales and marketing director for Linear Devices Corp. in Ashland, Va. The marine company's Lectrotab group designs and builds electromechanical trim tabs for commercial and pleasure boats. The company's president is another ODU engineering graduate, **Dan Roberts '86**, who came to Linear Devices in 2007 and has grown sales to nearly \$4 million.



Dennis Self '87 was hired as CEO of Acoustic in June 2020 after its parent owner, IBM, dropped marketing technology from the family business. Self inherited a company

with hundreds of employees and several thousand customers that needed the infrastructure to operate independently and process more than 2 billion events a day.

1990s

Donna Kelsey (M.S. '93), CEO of American Senior Communities and chairwoman of the board for Indiana Health Care Association/Indiana Center for Assisted Living, was named a "woman of influence" by the Indianapolis Business Journal in October 2020.

Jason Allegra '94 was appointed commander of the Fairfax County Police Department's Sully District Station in 2021. He picked a law enforcement career more than 26 years ago after taking ride-alongs with Chesapeake police during college.

Kelly Till '94 joined the Richmond Times-Dispatch and its current owner, Lee Enterprises, in 2020 as vice president of sales for Virginia. Till had been vice president of advertising at The Virginian-Pilot and Daily Press. Prior to her move, she merged the two newspapers' sales staffs and set up an internal digital marketing agency to better work with owner-operator Tribune Publishing Co.

Curtis E. Edmonds Jr. '95 presented his initial sermon Aug. 16, 2020, at Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) in Fredericksburg, Va., and went on to earn a Master of Divinity in May 2021 from Virginia Union University. Edmonds juggled a day job as human resources manager for Euro-Composite Corp. in Culpeper with roles as a husband and father of three children during his ministerial studies.

William E. Hutchings Jr. '95 was promoted to Suffolk city attorney effective July 1 after a three-month interim stint. He joined the city attorney's office in 2006 after working in Fairfax County and Washington, D.C.

Syed Farasat Shah (M.S. '95) has been chief executive officer of Balochistan Energy Co. Ltd. since September 2020. The company is based in Quetta, a city in the Balochistan province of Pakistan. Shah has spent much of his career in exploration and production for oil and gas companies.

Sean Clark '96, who has worked for more than 25 years in recreation, including at departments in Norfolk, Virginia Beach and on the Peninsula, was named director of parks and recreation for Elizabeth City-Pasquotank County, N.C., in October 2020.



Aubrey L. Layne Jr. (M.B.A. '97), Virginia's secretary of finance, joined Sentara Healthcare as senior vice president and chief of staff on July 1. He reports to Howard P. Kern,

Sentara president and chief executive officer, and oversees areas including legislative affairs, corporate social responsibility, real estate, construction and the Sentara College of Health Sciences.

Layne was the state's secretary of transportation from 2014 to 2018 under former Gov. Terry McAuliffe. Prior to state-level posts, Layne worked in real estate



ALUMNI AUTHORS

"Relationship Grit: A True Story with Lessons to Stay Together, Grow Together, and Thrive Together" by Jon Gordon and **Kathryn Gordon '90** (Wiley). The Gordons, motivational speakers and authors, candidly discuss a time that nearly broke their 23-year marriage. By applying relationship G-R-I-T (God, Resolve, Invest, Together), the Gordons maintained their bond and thrived. They offer advice to couples faced with similar challenges, heightened by the global pandemic.

"The History of the Hampton Yacht Club" by **James Shoemaker '81** (Palmetto Press). Shoemaker is a longtime Hampton Roads shipbuilder and sailing enthusiast whose connection to the club began in his youth. His father was a charter member of the Hampton Yacht Club, which began in 1926 and continues today, dedicated to pleasure boating in Tidewater.

"How to Avoid Being a Victim of the American Healthcare System: A Patient's Handbook for Survival," by **David Wilcox (D.N.P. '20)** (Amazon). Wilcox advocates from an insider's perspective as a nurse and healthcare administrator to help the public "safely navigate the healthcare system" when dealing with insurance companies, high prescription prices and patient safety issues.

"The Big Book of Infectious Disease Trivia" by **Kristina Wright (M.A. '07)** (Ulysses Press). Pandemics, epidemics and diseases, from survivable to deadly, have intruded on human existence — past, present and future. Wright's book takes a friendly look at a serious topic, just in time to brush up for your next trivia night!

He's got a heart – and a knack – for helping nonprofits

It didn't hit **William Reyes '16** just how much Hearts of Empowerment was helping people until he was delivering free groceries for a client, Empowered Mums. When he got to a single mother of three, "She started crying on the spot," Reyes, 27, said. "And then her children started hugging her and telling her everything would be OK."

"Sometimes I get lost in my own world. But to see her reaction – what we're doing may seem small, but it had a big impact on her."

Reyes co-founded Hearts of Empowerment in 2018 with two friends of his freshman-year roommate, Saed Davis. "We thought, 'Why don't we start a nonprofit?' But we're going to add our spin to it – the excitement, the joy of being young adults."

Reyes describes Hearts of Empowerment as "a nonprofit for nonprofits," helping organizations in the Washington area with fundraising, programming, consulting, marketing and branding. As chief communications officer, Reyes oversees corporate relations, donor and community outreach and grants administration.

Over the past three years, the organization has worked with more than 30 clients, including Toys for Tots, YMCA Loudoun County and Housing Up, which provides affordable housing and support for homeless and low-income families.

"Hearts of Empowerment is by far the best thing that's ever happened to me," said Amy Montoya, founder and president of Empowered Mums, which helps single and low-income mothers. "We reached about 100 moms together by purchasing and delivering groceries every Sunday."

Reyes helped land Empowered Mums segments on WUSA-TV and El Zol radio station, which led to a piece on the "Today" show. "Their determination, dedication and pure intentions embody what true community leaders are," Montoya said.

Reyes said: "I see the smiles we're putting on people's faces, the impact they tell us we're having on their lives. When I go to bed, I feel like I've accomplished something."

– Philip Walzer

For more information on Hearts of Empowerment, go to www.heartsofempowerment.org



PHOTO BY JHUNYAE KIM



and was president of An Achievable Dream Academy in Newport News, which helps at-risk students succeed in school.

David Quackenbos (M.A. '97), retired Naval commander and former divinity school instructor for Regent University, has been hired as an assistant professor of Christian ministry at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo.

Aashish Matani '98 was elected to the Williamsburg Community Foundation board of trustees in May. Matani is managing director and founder of the AHM Wealth Management Group of Merrill Lynch. The foundation awarded \$1.45 million in grants and scholarships to the Williamsburg community in 2020.

Clenise Platt '98 was elected in June to lead the Norfolk Botanical Garden's board of directors. She is the first African American to chair the nonprofit board, founded in 1992. Platt is staff development coordinator for the Virginia Beach Public Library and in 1999 founded The Platinium Group, which provides personal and professional development training, consulting and keynote speakers.

Kathryn Balonek '99 (M.B.A. '01) has been promoted to head of business contracting for Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command in Washington, D.C. After previous far-flung posts, her new job puts her within driving distance of her son, who attends ODU.

Marvin Bradley (M.S.Ed. '99), COO of Beaufort County Schools, received the Dr. Samuel Houston Leadership Award in May from the North Carolina School Superintendents' Association (NCSSA) and the N.C. Alliance for School Leadership Development. The honor recognizes an outstanding graduate of the NCSSA Aspiring Superintendent Program.

Marianne Rice (M.S.Ed. '99) crafts music and performing arts educational programs for Florida schools as the first Lory Doolittle director of music education for the Jacksonville Symphony. Rice, an educator in Florida's Duval County Public Schools, was hired in October 2020. She also wrote "Music Education Through Gullah: The Legacy of a Forgotten Genre" and a children's book, "Anire's Adventures."

Recognizing excellent nurses even before the pandemic

Long before the nightly tributes to health care workers during the early days of the pandemic, **Cynthia Sweeney (M.S.N. '87)** was dedicated to recognizing exceptional nurses. For seven years, she served as vice president of nursing at The DAISY Foundation, a 22-year-old nonprofit that bestows The DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses.

More than 156,000 nurses have received The DAISY Award, which Sweeney says serves not only as a great morale booster but also as an excellent tool for retaining nurses and developing role models – especially in these challenging COVID times. “Hospitals that maintained the award program in spite of the pandemic felt that the meaningful recognition had a positive impact on the resilience of their nurses and provided motivation to keep going.”

Sweeney’s own 45-year career is a lesson in resilience. After joining the Navy Nurse Corps in 1976, she broke barriers as one of the first to balance work and family. Her master’s from Old Dominion – where Sweeney was the first recipient of the Helen Yura-Petro Award for Excellence in Nursing – served her well when she had two weeks to help staff Walter Reed National Military Medical Center with fellow reservists after most of its employees were deployed for Operation Desert Shield/Storm in August 1990. She then applied her training expertise as director of educational products and services at the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

“There is both an art and science to nursing,” she says. “We need to rebalance nursing care and health care in general so that the science is delivered in a very compassionate way.”

Newly retired and living in Annapolis, Maryland, Sweeney received the foundation’s Lifetime Achievement Award. Now she is collecting stories of a different sort – oral histories from fellow members of the Navy Nurse Corps for the Library of Congress. “We need to capture and honor these stories before they’re lost,” she says.



— Kristin Baird Rattini

2000s

Cmdr. J. Vincent Libasci III '01 took command of the USS Cole in November 2020 at Naval Station Norfolk after serving as the Cole’s executive officer. Libasci, a native of Melbourne, Fla., joined the Navy in 1994 and was commissioned in 2001 through the Enlisted Commissioning Program.

Ejenobo “Jena” Oke (M.F.A. '01), a fiber artist, has woven a career in the arts and academics as a weaver and quilter and associate professor of art at Manchester University (North Manchester, Ind.). She teaches studio art and art history classes and is chair of Manchester’s art department.

Cmdr. Jason Horning '02 became commanding officer of the USS Truxtun guided-missile destroyer in ceremonies at Naval Station Norfolk on May 7. Horning began his Naval career in 1993 as an electronics technician and earned his commission through the Seaman to Admiral Program.

Jennifer Leigh (M.B.A. '03) was hired in May as vice president of human resources for S.L. Nusbaum Realty Co. in Norfolk. She previously worked for CBRE and Sentara Healthcare.

Boaz Marmon '03 became rabbi for Congregation Shaara Tfilla and the Jewish Community Center of Saratoga Springs, N.Y., in September 2020. Ordained in 2015 at the Academy for Jewish Religion in Yonkers, Marmon also served in the U.S. Army from 1992 to 1997.

Chris Paullet (M.S.Ed. '03) was promoted in July to the principal’s job at H.L. Trigg Community School in Elizabeth City-Pasquotank (N.C.) Public Schools. He had been an assistant principal at Northeastern High School.

Charles Bohs '04 acted on a hunch that the public wanted comfort food during the pandemic when he opened his Chick-fil-A in midtown Manhattan in October 2020. After

operating for nearly a year under COVID-19 restrictions, he and the staff were eager to see Broadway shows reopen.

Linda Haselton’s lucky number came up in 2021 when she was named the Elementary Educator of the Year by the Virginia Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Haselton (M.S.Ed. '06) is math interventionist for students in grades K-5 in Greene County, Va., where she has taught for 24 years.



Vicki Britt (Ph.D. '07)

in May was named senior vice president for innovation, engineering and flight for Gulfstream Aerospace Corp., based in Savannah, Ga. She joined

Gulfstream in 1996 and has 30 years’ experience in the aerospace industry.



A tale of two Monarchs (and Chapman)

Tony Kemp '85 was devastated when Chapman, his canine companion for 12 years, died in 2020. But Kemp takes comfort that “he’s home again,” thanks to the creativity of his friend **Lisa Jeffress '87**.

Kemp and Jeffress got to know each other as members of the Ebony Impact Gospel Choir. Kemp works as strategic acquisition program manager for the Defense Logistics Agency in Richmond and acts on the side.

Jeffress is office manager and fiscal technician for Old Dominion’s Office of Counseling Services. She’s also an artist and poet whose work has been featured at the former Art Atrium and Maizelle galleries.

Kemp calls Chapman “a human miniature poodle. The way he would stare at you and study you, it looked like he wanted to be part of the conversation.” When he was put down, “it was the hardest moment of my life.”

He asked Jeffress to memorialize Chapman. In March, she completed a pencil sketch of Chapman and Kemp, which hangs in Kemp’s bedroom. “It was a gift from the heart,” she said.

When Kemp saw it, “All the emotion came out again,” he said. “She captured our bond – the way he always looked at me.” He offered his thanks to Jeffress in a tearful 15-minute video.

She based her work on a photo of Kemp and Chapman and pictured them together on a park bench. “I don’t look at the whole picture. I focus on one piece at a time. Detail is my thing.” She had plenty of it – from Kemp’s beard to the pineapple pattern on his shirt.

Kemp interjected: “Even the texture of Chapman’s fur – on the top of his paws, on his ears. You got it all.”

— Philip Walzer

Jonathan Adams '09, teacher and head basketball coach at Notre Dame High School in Chattanooga, Tenn., was tapped for the Catholic Health Initiatives Memorial Foundation board in 2020. At ODU, Adams was a 6-foot-6 forward on the men’s basketball team.

Mallory Dimitruk '09 now is vice president of default management for Chartway Federal Credit Union. She had been director of consumer lending.

Tom Struble (M.E.M. '09) was promoted in 2020 to director of commissioning, qualification and validation for DPS Group, a global engineering firm. Last year, he was elected chairman of the International Society of Pharmaceutical Engineering’s Boston chapter board.

2010s

Rebecca Cowan (Ph.D. '10) was honored by Inside Business as a Top 40 under 40 community asset in 2019. She teaches counseling at two universities, owns a private counseling practice, Anchor Counseling and Wellness, and has served as a disaster mental health volunteer for the American Red Cross.

Grace Garvin-Little '10 earned honors as a 2019 Women in Business from Inside Business. She is CEO and co-founder of Brink Records, which produces the East Coast Music Conference, an annual festival of performances and workshops to promote indie music groups. Garvin works in marketing and public relations at Sentara Enterprises.



Naomi Gunnell '10 (M.P.A. '15) was promoted to senior program officer for the Hampton Roads branch of Local Initiatives Support Corp. in July. Her work connects residents in economically stressed neighborhoods with opportunities in the community.

Cameron Peel '11 was appointed to the New River Community College Board in August 2020. Peel is vice president of sales with Camrett Logistics, which owns distribution facilities and warehouses along the I-81 corridor in Southwest Virginia.

Sarah Rae Young '11 (M.A. '12) earned her doctorate from George Washington University in May. Her dissertation studied implementation of Americans with Disabilities Act policies in private postsecondary education. Young is assistant director of Disability Support Services at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

Danica Royster '12 in November was elected to a full term to represent Superward 7 on Norfolk City Council. Royster had been appointed to temporarily fill the term vacated by Angelia Williams Graves, who was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates in January. Royster is a wealth consultant with First Genesis of Virginia LLC.

Chris Williams (M.P.A. '12, Ph.D. '18), a former Navy submarine commander, was promoted to site operations manager for

Google's Lenoir (N.C.) data center in May. He has worked at the data center since 2012.



Duncan Alonso '13 became executive director of the Virginia Beach Court Appointed Special Advocates in August 2020. The private nonprofit CASA recruits, trains and supervises volunteers to advocate for victims of child abuse in the city's courts.

Chiropractor **Erika Lackey '13** moved her practice last spring to Reinhold Chiropractic Group, which has offices in Virginia Beach and Suffolk.

Fred Tugas '13 has been promoted to assistant dean for student affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University. He is a certified

Gallup Clifton Strengths coach and has worked in student affairs at VCU since 2018.



Daniel Byler Clark '15 joined the nonprofit 757 Angels as associate director in August 2020. His specialty is technology and project management. He previously worked at Tidewater Investment Co. as an investment strategist.

Britain Hart (M.S.Ed. '15) of Bedford, Va., continued her quest to win the Bare Knuckle Fighting Championship in women's mixed martial arts with a decision win against Paige VanZant in February in Florida. Hart, a self-described Air Force "brat," was a mom of two and in a failing marriage when she turned pro. She boxes in the featherweight class.

His gambit is to spread the love of chess

Alton Jamison '01 knows the name of his 1½-year-old business, Black Moves First, isn't true in chess: White always goes first. His aim is not to shake up the rules, but to encourage more minority kids to play the game.

"It opens opportunities for college scholarships and helps them think through their decisions," says Jamison, 43, a mechanical engineer in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. "Instead of reacting off your emotions, you have to think two or three moves ahead."

Jamison's venture, at www.blackmovesfirst.com, features chessboards made of maple wood and ivory. "I got into it to sell the boards," he said, "but people want to wear the stuff." His top-selling items include Black Moves First hoodies, jackets and T-shirts.

Business got a boost in 2020 with the release of the Netflix chess drama "The Queen's Gambit." But Jamison aims beyond chess.

"Our motto," he said, "is 'Changing the world, one move at a time.' We want to inspire people to move in the right direction, whether it's to start a business or be the first in their family to go to college."

In the spring, he launched a Black Moves First podcast. He also has been a pastor, motivational speaker and author. His most recent book, "Getting Off the System: Moving from Lack



Alton Jamison playing chess with his daughter, Madison.

to Abundance," provides "Biblical principles to help people get in a better financial place."

Jamison has had mixed success at home with chess. His wife, Tashawnda '01, is a high school math teacher. "She supports me, but she'd rather play Solitaire." Their 14-year-old daughter, Madison, "played for a couple of years, then grew out of it. But she's back into it now."

Jamison himself is getting more serious. He takes weekly lessons from a grandmaster in Hungary who is on the national team. Jamison planned to make a big first move late last year: competing in his first official chess tournament.

— Philip Walzer



Jamaal Hines '15 discovered his path to community service as a graduate assistant in sport management at Northern Illinois University. He is now making an impact on youth as an after-school

specialist at Lake Braddock Secondary School in Fairfax County. "What's better than working every day to improve the life of someone else?"

Yasmine Farley (Ph.D. '16) was hired as director of career services at Fayetteville State University in Fayetteville, N.C., last September 2020. She has worked in higher education for 13 years, most recently in a similar position at Campbell University.

As a boy in Venice, Fla., **David Rossheim (M.A. '17)** dreamed of becoming an astronaut, but color blindness prevented

it. Instead, he became a contract program manager for space projects at Raytheon in Colorado. Rossheim, a major in the Army Reserves, now is commander of the 6th Space Company, a new Reserve unit that supports the space mission from the ground. "It's one of the greatest honors of my life and a dream come true," he says.

William G. Saunders IV (M.P.A. '18) was appointed Windsor, Va., town manager effective Aug. 17, 2020. A Windsor resident, he most recently was director of planning and community development for Surry County.

Sarah Albright (M.S.Ed. '19) has two indelible first-year teaching memories. First, Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam shut down the state's schools in March while she was interviewing for a full-time job. She landed a job anyway and taught world history at Lakeland High School — so well, in fact, that Suffolk Public Schools later named her Rookie Teacher of the Year.



Diane Ryan (Ph.D. '19) became vice president of academic affairs at Yavapai College in Prescott, Ariz., last year. She went to Yavapai from Tidewater Community College, where she

was named Administrator of the Year in 2018.

Ellen Jones '21 tapped into rap music and the Nearpod virtual technology to pull students into U.S. history as a first-year teacher at Cradock Middle School in Portsmouth in 2020. The former professor pursued ODU's Career Switcher program to learn about teaching younger students. "I started feeling like I might be able to make a bigger difference for students if I got to them sooner." WAVY recognized her success in its May 28 broadcast.

Monarch Album



Wedding Bells

Annie Weishaar Medairy '16 and Casey Medairy were married on Oct. 24, 2020. The reception was held outdoors at the Historic London Town and Gardens in Edgewater, Md., on the South River. Annie, who majored in park and recreation management, with a minor in dance, is a former member of the ODU Dynasty Dance Team and was a campus tour guide for Admissions. She and Casey have bought a home in Mount Airy, Md.

Received Sept. 1, 2020 – Feb. 28, 2021

Mary Lee K. Lowe '41 of Norfolk, 2/5/21

Adel M. Kruger '47 of Norfolk, 10/11/20

Joseph L. Nelson Jr. '47 of Lynchburg, Va., 1/24/21

Jerome D. Perlman '47 of Norfolk, 12/24/20

James E. Shaw '47 of Norfolk, 1/7/21

Harold L. Friedman '48 of Norfolk, 1/25/21

Marilyn M. Tonkin '48 of Suffolk, 9/23/20

Landon S. Birsch Jr. '49 of Norfolk, 12/26/20

Pansy D. Perlman '49 of Norfolk, 9/3/20

Cecil John Carroll Jr. '50 of Chesapeake, 9/20/20

Dorothy S. Latham '50 of Norfolk, 12/2/20

Frances H. Seate '51 of Norfolk, 11/7/20

Cecil C. Baecher '53 of Richmond, Va., 2/6/21

Capt. J. LeRoy Bowman, USNR (Ret) '54 of Suffolk and Danville, Va., 10/6/20

Marvin G. Eley Jr. '54 of Virginia Beach, 2/19/21

Ernestine F. Pitchford '55 of Hampton, 1/27/21

Warren L. Furlough Sr. '56 of Chesapeake, 8/30/20

Leigh S. Stewart Jr. '56 of Norfolk, 2/12/21

Donald R. Grubb '57 of Roanoke, Va., 9/20/20

Kay P. Barnes '58 of Hampton, 12/16/20

Gerald F. Foster '58 of Norfolk, 2/19/21

Bertha S. Gower '58 of Chesapeake, 2/3/21

William R. Phillips Jr. '58 (HON '95) of Gloucester Point, Va., 9/23/20

Tony P. Anthony '59 of Newport News, 12/1/20

Theodore D. Galanides '59 of Norfolk and Virginia Beach, 2/17/21

Margaret W. Walker '60 of Chesapeake, 12/5/20

Judith D. Clay '61 of Virginia Beach, 10/30/20

Denny C. McKinney '61 of Statesville, N.C., 10/16/20

Doris W. Poe '61 of Chesapeake, 1/2/21

Constantine A. Spanoulis '61 of Virginia Beach, 2/2/21

James R. Doyle '62 of Powhatan, Va., 1/12/21

Jean W. Drennan '62 of Culpeper, Va., 12/16/19

Benn B. Griffin '62 of Portsmouth, 9/27/20

Mary W. Rumsey '62 of Norfolk, 12/3/20

Anna H. Deal '63 of Virginia Beach, 9/30/20

William L. Matthews III '63 of Williamsburg, 11/20/20

Jack S. Wilder (M.A. '63) of Perkinston, Miss., 9/24/20

Donald W. Alcorn '64 of Norfolk, 1/19/21

L. Winston Culpepper '64 of Kitty Hawk, N.C., 8/21/20

Ralph W. Hines '64 of Stephens City, Va., 1/12/21

Harold C. Morris '64 of Sandston, Va., 1/17/21

John A. Ingram Jr. '65 of Virginia Beach, 10/16/20

Stanford R. Peerless '65 of Virginia Beach, 10/24/20

Albert J. Resolute '65 of Portsmouth, 10/9/20

A people person who valued the church and education



AULETHA JONES '14

was so dedicated to helping people, she even advised those she interviewed in her role as human resources representative at Perdue on the Eastern Shore. “Mom took the time to motivate them in their life goals, even if it didn’t begin or end with Perdue,” said Natasha Davis, her middle daughter.

Jones, who died on Jan. 29 at the age of 67, “knew every position in the office,” said Orlander Jones, her husband of 20 years. “She helped train a lot of people, and she could take over their desks and their jobs if they left.”

She “loved the church with all her heart,” he said. Her titles at Macedonia Baptist Church in Bloxom included trustee, pastor’s aide and member of the Culinary Committee, Senior Choir and Golden Spices, a group of senior citizens who danced during services. She always paid her tithe early before going on vacation.

Jones also valued education. “When I got pregnant in high school, my mom said she never wanted me to give up on my dreams to go to college,” said Marva Davis, the youngest daughter. So Jones helped Davis raise her grandson. Before that, she took two jobs to send her oldest daughter, Saadia Davis, to college.

“She tried to educate herself through all of her life,” Natasha Davis said. “She had tons of books in the house.” She received her bachelor’s degree in criminal justice in her early 60s and was working on a master’s in theology from Liberty University at the time of her death.

She was a smart dresser, too. “My mom rarely wore jeans or sneakers,” Natasha Davis said. Saadia added: “She always had to have her heels on and her hair done” – even when she went to a picnic.

“She dressed me up, too,” said Jones’ husband. “When we got together, I had one or two suits. I’d say I have 15 or 20 now.”

— Philip Walzer

Valerie C. Andersen '66 of Lakeland, Fla., 12/25/20

Clifton E. Austin Jr. '66 (M.S.Ed. '68) of Norfolk, 2/9/21

Merrill E. Baines '66 of Suffolk, 2/20/21

H. Edward Norris Jr. '66 of Yorktown, 2/21/21

Rona R. Phillips '66 of Auburn, Ala., 11/27/20

S. Perry Robbins '66 of Belvidere, N.C., 9/9/20

Benjamin W. Ward Jr. '66 of Heathsville, Va., 11/5/20

Donald L. Burns '67 (M.A. '79) of Norfolk, 1/30/21

Franklin E. Dennis '67 of Virginia Beach, 1/29/21

Martin M. Freedman '67 of Norfolk, 12/31/20

Lynn H. Kellam '67 (M.S.Ed. '87) of Williamsburg, 1/10/21

John W. Woodward '67 (M.E. '73) of Virginia Beach, 12/2/20

Helen H. Barnes '68 of Roper, N.C., 1/21/21

Linda A. Legum '68 of Virginia Beach, 1/21/21

W. Patrick Monaghan, USN (Ret) '68 of Yulee, Fla., 9/24/20

Theodore M. Bonk '69 of Portsmouth, 9/5/20

J. Donald Greene '69 of Norfolk, 9/25/20

Joseph H. Hart '69 of Richmond, Va., 11/13/20

Almanzo R. Lamoureux '69 (M.A. '82) of Pittsboro, N.C., 9/22/20

Thomas J. Reilly Jr. '69 of Peabody, Mass., 10/14/20

Blake B. Shepherd '69 of Watkinsville, Ga., 1/26/21

John W. Swan '69 of Charleston, S.C., 10/27/20

James R. Ambrose '70 of Defiance, Mo., 11/25/20

Lynda E. Burchfield '70 of Hyannis, Mass., 9/14/20

William K. Everhart '70 of Huntersville, N.C., 1/5/21

Richard S. Fuller '70 of Suffolk, 1/11/21

Roger A. Jones '70, '72 of Harrisonburg, Va., 2/26/21

Joseph L. Petrie '70 of Portsmouth, 12/31/20

Virginia K. Boetcher '71 (M.S.Ed. '79) of Virginia Beach, 1/26/21

Cmdr. Donald J. Buchanan, USN (Ret) '71 (M.S.Ed. '78) of Virginia Beach, 9/23/20

Deborah C. Daugherty '71 of Suffolk, 10/25/20

Harrison J. Ewell '71 of Chapel Hill, N.C., 10/5/20

Guy M. Farmer '71 of Newberry Township, Pa., 1/3/21

James E. Lucas (M.S.Ed. '71) of Chesapeake, 9/19/20

Nan Mills-Smith (M.S. '71) of Newport News, 10/7/20

Iris B. Mullican '71 of Suffolk, 1/15/21

Peter F. Daly '72 of Hampton, 9/3/20

Guy E. Daugherty Jr. '72 of Virginia Beach, 12/13/20

John L. Franklin '72 of Pinehurst, N.C., 9/5/20

Vince F. "Punchy" Marshall Jr. (M.S.Ed. '72) of Virginia Beach, 12/2/20

Eleanor P. Murphy '72 of Virginia Beach, 12/27/20

Charles W. Nuttycombe (M.S.Ed. '72) of Newport News, 12/4/20

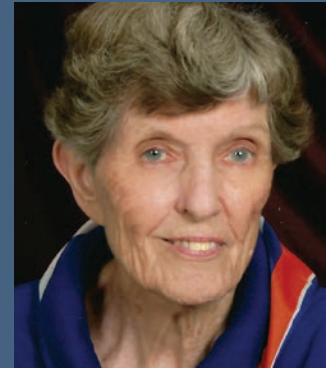
Olaf J. Osmundson '72 of Massanutten, Va., 9/30/20

William R. Pollok (M.B.A. '72) of Virginia Beach, 1/6/21

James W. Wooldridge Jr. '72 of Richmond, 2/7/21

She became a first-time novelist at 89

The book "Just Across the Sound" opens with Sarah Eliza Mott moving from Long Island, New York, to Norfolk, determined to pursue her "new understanding of what life was meant to be for everyone." That understanding was the belief in the abolition of slavery in 1860.



SHIRLEY SMITH NESBIT SELLERS '70 (M.Ed. '75), the

great-granddaughter of the real-life Mott, wrote the novel. It was published in 2015, when Sellers was 89.

Sellers, who died on May 12 at the age of 95, was a lifelong teacher and poet. But the book "was clearly the accomplishment of her lifetime," said her son, Craig Nesbit.

"She was always a writer," said her daughter, Blair Nesbit Jackson, who has what she believes to be her mother's first poem, written when she was 6. And Sellers encouraged her kids to write. "It was a constant 'Use your mind, use your words, use your imagery,'" Jackson said.

"That had a lot to do with my becoming a journalist," said Nesbit, a former executive editor of *The Daily Progress* in Charlottesville.

She also instilled powerful lessons in her children. Nesbit said: "I learned from her the ability to focus and get done what needs to get done." Her daughter took away the message that "It's going to be a better tomorrow."

Sellers taught in elementary schools in Norfolk and was director of the Larchmont United Methodist Preschool. She also served on the boards of organizations including ODU's Town-N-Gown, the Virginia Opera Guild and the South Hampton Roads League of Women Voters.

For decades, Sellers had wanted to write the novel about her great-grandmother. She started in her mid-80s, writing every word in pen. Mott's story, Nesbit said, appealed to "the maverick side of her and her belief in equality and civil rights."

Sellers also wanted to be close to Mott for eternity. She got her wish. Sellers' urn was buried above Mott's casket in Magnolia Cemetery in Norfolk.

— Philip Walzer

Henry B. Ambrose '73 of Norfolk, 10/28/20

Larry A. Johnson '73 of Portsmouth, 11/9/20

Lewis E. Ollice '73 of Chesapeake, 12/7/20

Annie C. Curran '74 of Raleigh, N.C., 12/19/20

Nancy R. Dunning '74 of Jupiter, Fla., 10/23/20

F. Brinson Early (M.S.Ed. '74) of Portsmouth, 9/29/20

Gary I. Greenfield '74 of Wilkes-Barre, Pa., 10/13/20

John S. Hadfield '74 (M.B.A. '77) of Norfolk, 1/10/21

Fred A. Hensley '74 of Norfolk, 10/28/20

Theodore R. Stohr Jr. (M.S.Ed. '74) of Wilsonville, Ore., 1/12/21

Audrey P. Fisher (M.S.Ed. '75) of Portsmouth, 2/17/21

Daniel P. Goode '75 of Virginia Beach, 9/23/20

Russell H. Grimstead Jr. '75 of Cocoa, Fla., 12/8/20

H. Kent Lacy '75 of Chesapeake, 8/25/20

Edwin C. Perego Jr. '75 of Fort Mill, S.C., 10/27/20

Debra B. Simmons '75 (M.S.Ed. '81) of Virginia Beach, 1/30/21

Jeane J. Dughi (M.S. '76) of Virginia Beach, 2/2/21

Joan B. Karl '76 of Moyock, N.C., 2/21/21

Hugh M. McKinney '76 of Huntersville, N.C., 12/24/20

Therese H. Mikulka (M.S. '76) of Virginia Beach, 1/7/21

Terrance D. Murphy '76 of Salem, Va., 11/25/20

William J. Pascarosa (M.S.Ed. '76, M.A. '86) of Virginia Beach, 12/31/20

Eric P. Puryear, USN (Ret) (M.S.Ed. '76) of The Villages, Fla., 1/8/21

Linda K. Robinson '76 of Hampton, 12/24/20

Isaac Andemariam '77 of Virginia Beach, 12/20/20

Earnest L. Everette (M.S.Ed. '77) of Norfolk, 10/14/20

Jeffrey M. Hallock '77 of Virginia Beach, 1/31/21

Ann S. Harrison (M.S.Ed. '77, Ph.D. '93) of Virginia Beach, 9/24/20

Cmdr. R. Mark Helm, USNR (Ret) (M.B.A. '77) of Virginia Beach, 1/11/21

Page C. McGaughy (M.S.Ed. '77) of Norfolk, 8/21/20

John L. Pettit '77 of Georgetown, Ind., 12/27/20

David E. Portis (M.S.Ed. '77) of Virginia Beach, 2/8/21

Earl H. Sykes Jr. '77 of Norfolk, 10/12/20

Lt. Richard H. Varner, USN (Ret) '77 of Norfolk, 9/3/20

Lt. Andrew P. Blackwell, USN (Ret) '78 of Sumerduck, Va., 8/24/20

Lana A. Loring '78 of Gloucester, Va., 12/24/20

David B. Marchant '78 of Topping, Va., 9/25/20

Paula A. Alperin '79 of Norfolk, 1/21/21

Teresa D. Basgier '79 of Virginia Beach, 11/2/20

Douglas W. Johnson '79 of Suffolk, 1/18/21

Kristen M. Lentz '79 of Norfolk, 1/7/21

Tracy A. Leyden '79 of Purcellville, Va., 9/2/20

Nancy B. McDonald (M.S.Ed. '79) of McRae, Ga., 2/25/21

Charles E. Miller Jr. '79 of Chesapeake, 9/2/20

Joy F. Richardson '79 of Fairhope, Ala., 11/14/20

Lois D. Webber '79 of Jacksonville, Fla., 12/14/20

Sandra M. Hall '80 (M.S. '90) of Norfolk, 11/21/20

Larry L. Moyer '80 of Fayetteville, Ga., 12/9/20

Anthony P. Nocera '80 of Woodbridge, Va., 1/24/21

Betty J. Perkinson (M.S.Ed. '80) of Portsmouth, 12/24/20

Harold J. Sonkin '80 of Norfolk, 1/28/21

Lee L. Vanatta '80 of Savannah, Ga., 10/21/20

Patricia N. White '80 of Chesapeake, 11/12/20

Gladys C. Wiley '80 of St. Augustine, Fla., 12/30/20

Bessie C. Banks '81 of Virginia Beach, 12/24/20

Clare H. English '81 of Norfolk, 11/14/20

Carolyn F. Glover (M.S.Ed. '81) of Suffolk, 1/5/21

Joseph J. Lovas Jr. '81 of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., and Virginia Beach, 10/23/20

Ignatius A. Signorelli, USN (Ret) '81 of Virginia Beach, 2/3/21

Thomas J. Csomay '82 of Hampton, 1/10/21

Janie E. Hughes '82 of Portsmouth, 2/23/21

Joseph A. McNichol '82 of Newport News, 9/13/20

Robert P. Midgett II '82 of Virginia Beach, 1/18/21

Cmdr. Robin L. Starck, USN (Ret) (M.B.A. '82) of Norfolk, 1/27/21

Michael A. Chapman '83 of Richmond, Va., 9/3/20

Mary J. Heil (M.S.Ed. '83) of Poplar Cove, Va., 11/20/20

Master Sgt. Edward Kauawaiakea Lee Jr., USAF (Ret) '83 of Virginia Beach, 10/10/20

Helen R. Levister (M.S.Ed. '83) of Hampton, 9/5/20

T. Michael O'Toole '83 of Grafton, Va., 11/6/20

Royal A. Peterson '83 of Hampton, 8/31/20

James R. Reid III '83 of Virginia Beach, 10/25/20

Bart S. Van Nieuwenhuis '83 of Sulphur, La., 11/20/20

Brian J. Aivalotis, USN (Ret) '84 of Virginia Beach, 9/2/20

Ruben T. Cook Jr. '84 of Yorktown, 10/31/20

Sophia M. Goanos (M.S.Ed. '84) of Portsmouth, 12/5/20

Mark W. Metz '84 of Rocky Mount, Va., 10/10/20

Jean C. Brooks '85 of Ridgefield, Conn., 2/5/21

Karen L. Guth (M.S.Ed. '85) of New Port Richey, Fla., 11/17/20

Joanne Peterson '85 (M.A. '89, Ph.D. '00) of Norfolk, 12/7/20

Deborah M. Symons '85 of Fairfax County, Va., 1/5/21

G. Matt Byrum '86 of Chesapeake, 11/15/20

Donald Y. Hodges Jr. '86 of Hampton, 12/26/20

Stephen D. Janis '86 of Chesapeake, 2/16/21

Ellen E. Krebs '86 (M.B.A. '88) of Lawrence, Kan., 10/23/20

Margaret S. Misovec '86 of Chesapeake, 12/10/20

Anthony J. Sison '86 of Virginia Beach, 1/10/21

James H. Balderson '87 of Virginia Beach, 1/20/21

Sarah T. Brown (M.S.Ed. '87) of Portsmouth, 10/5/20

Gregory S. Burgess Sr. '87 of Vineland, N.J., 12/11/20

Louise C. Rawls '87 (M.S.Ed. '90) of Virginia Beach, 12/20/20

Cynthia B. Sessoms (M.S.Ed. '87) of Norfolk, 10/25/20

Sharon K. Todd '87 of Port St. Lucie, Fla., 1/29/21

Alverna Wilkins (M.S. '87) of Chesapeake, 10/7/20

Rodolfo A. Antolin Jr. '88 (M.S. '98) of Virginia Beach, 8/23/20

Midori Bamba '88 of Virginia Beach, 9/17/20

Wesley R. Stephens '88 of New Orleans, La., 12/9/20

Howard Lee '89 of Hampton, 11/8/20

Lt. Cmdr. B. Patrick McSherry Jr., USN (Ret) (M.A. '89) of Virginia Beach, 10/9/20

Ira L. Armstrong III (M.B.A. '90) of Virginia Beach, 9/30/20

Kenneth R. Forster '90 of Myersville, Md., 10/10/20

Diane D. Jones '90 (M.S.Ed. '04) of Norfolk, 10/25/20

Sharon L. Schreiber (M.S.Ed. '91) of Haddon Heights, N.J., 12/13/20

Brian W. Anderson '92 of Virginia Beach, 11/8/20

Gail P. Cuthbertson (M.S.Ed. '92) of Portsmouth, 9/4/20

Arlene E. Manning '92 of Chesapeake, 9/12/20

K. Diane Monroe (M.S.Ed. '92) of Virginia Beach, 11/22/20

Erica H. Petty '92 of Virginia Beach, 1/15/21

Christopher T. Gibbs (M.B.A. '93) of Virginia Beach, 11/21/20

Robert L. Payne III (M.S.Ed. '93) of Norfolk, 11/15/20

Marlene M. Stanton (M.S.Ed. '93) of Smithfield, Va., 11/19/20

Richard B. Wagner '94 of Seaford, Va., 1/2/21

Lt. Col. Barbara Carr, USAF (Ret) (M.S.Ed. '95) of Williamsburg, 10/10/20

Barbara S. Hall (M.S.Ed. '96) of Norfolk, 9/22/20

Linda M. McCubbins '96 (M.A. '99) of Norfolk, 1/29/21

Kurt Wagenhals '96 of Lodi, Calif., 1/8/21

Paul J. Bohnet '97 of Virginia Beach, 2/5/21

Bonnie H. Church '97 of Blacksburg, Va., 1/1/21

Peggy M. Hebert '97 of Portsmouth, 10/14/20

Carole J. Krieger '97 of New Philadelphia, Ohio, 1/1/21

Rick Vigniski '97 of Norfolk, 10/2/20

Lt. Cmdr. Stanley H. Winner, USN (Ret) (M.S.Ed. '97) of Virginia Beach, 9/13/20

Erma June T. Vinson (M.S.Ed. '99) of Chesapeake, 1/18/21

M. Wayne Price (M.A. '00) of Virginia Beach, 10/3/20

M. Reid Rawls (M.S. '00) of Virginia Beach, 1/12/21

Jason S. Russell '02 of Virginia Beach, 12/13/20

Susan Y. Jones (M.S.Ed. '03, '15) of Newport News, 10/28/20

Jeanette B. Rice '03 of Norfolk, 2/11/21

Charles F. Tournon (M.S. '03, Ph.D. '09) of Williamsburg, 1/25/21

Catherine M. Kuethe '04 (M.S. '07) of Suffolk, 9/18/20

Rachel A. McMahan (M.S.Ed. '04) of Virginia Beach, 1/21/21

Joan A. Neely (M.S.Ed. '04) of Virginia Beach, 10/24/20

Kent J. Coley '05 of Virginia Beach, 12/5/20

Veronica C. Gray '05 of Newport News, 12/25/20

Derrick B. Lamm '05 of Virginia Beach, 1/3/21

Jamie L. Mayaka '05 of Newport News, 12/7/20

Michael S. Bender '06 of Cummings, Ga., 1/13/21

Vahnessa J. Arnberg '08 of Dudley, Mass., 12/5/20

Lois A. Wilson '08 of Virginia Beach, 10/31/20

James T. Baxley (M.S.Ed. '09) of Murrells Inlet, S.C., 11/12/20

Chloe C. Robinson '09 of Manassas, Va., 11/30/20

Monika B. Lane '10 of Big Stone Gap, Va., 2/3/21

Sakeenah Abdullah '11 of Fieldale, Va., 11/7/20

Arthur J. Horvath '11 of Hampton, 12/30/20

Sean M. Melehan '11 of Virginia Beach, 11/8/20

Monae T. Mitchell '11 of Virginia Beach, 9/5/20

John Mosholder, USN (Ret) '11 of Norfolk, 8/10/20

Allison A. Stofko '11 of Montclair, Va., 12/15/20

Brian A. Moore '12 of Newport News, 11/29/20

Ransom P. Wensel '13 of Norfolk, 1/18/21

Mindy T. Long (M.S.Ed. '16) of Hampton, 10/23/20

Anthony J. Gaylord Jr., enrolled, of Virginia Beach, 8/12/20

Brandon Wolfe, enrolled, of Orofino, Idaho, 3/31/21

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FREEDA BADKINS, a part-time secretary at Old Dominion University for 20 years, died on March 4. She was 91.

“She loved the staff there,” said her husband, Texas Badkins. And a few presidents felt the same about her. “She took many letters from President (Lewis) Webb. President (James) Bugg didn’t want anyone else taking dictation. He said, ‘She does it quickly, and she does it accurately.’”

FORREST P. “PAT” CLAY JR., a professor emeritus of physics who taught at Old Dominion from 1961 to 1993, died on April 15. He was 93.

“Pat might have been the last surviving faculty member who participated in the creation of the physics major and the Ph.D. program,” said James L. Cox Jr., professor emeritus and former chair.

Clay was active in ODU’s Faculty Senate and held leadership positions in organizations including the Norfolk Republican City Committee and the Virginia Opera.

CONRAD FESTA, a former chair of the Department of English and associate dean of the College of Arts and Letters, died on April 11. He was 91.

Festa was hired as a professor of English and worked at Old Dominion from 1961 to 1987. After that, he served as provost and interim president at the College of Charleston. Festa was the college’s longest-serving chief academic officer.

JOHN GRIFFITH, a professor of finance since 1999, died on June 19 at the age of 68 after complications from surgery.

“There has been no greater advocate for the quality of the education of our students, preparing them to meet the expectations of their future employers,” said Bruce Rubin, chair of the finance department.

Jeff Tanner, dean of the Strome College of Business, called Griffith “a strong advocate for his faculty and staff, but it was his teaching, advising and mentoring students that drove him.”

MARTIN JORDAN, a senior housekeeping worker at ODU from 1972 to 2014, died on Jan. 21, 2021. He was 68.

“Martin was a guy you could always count on,” said Dillard George, former director of facilities management. Once, George remembered, Jordan walked 5 miles to get to campus early to help clean up after a snowstorm.

“Martin never said no to anything he was asked to do,” said Harvey Logan, assistant director of facilities management. “He conquered everything that was put in front of him.”

KATHARINE “KITTY” KERSEY, former chair of the Department of Early Childhood Education, died on Aug. 17. She was 86.

Kersey taught at ODU from 1969 to 2014 and wrote five books and several newspaper columns, advocating “positive discipline” while opposing corporal punishment. “She was much beloved by the families and community for her wealth of knowledge and caring approach to children,” said Stacie Raymer, professor of communication disorders and special education.

Kersey, University Professor emerita, received the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia’s Outstanding Faculty Award.

REGULA MEIER, associate professor emerita of foreign languages and literatures, died on March 21. She was 91.

“Frau Meier was such a positive influence in my life,” Shari Harper ’82 wrote in a memorial. “She was an irrepressible bundle of energy and always upbeat.”

Meier taught full time at ODU from 1968 to 1998 and continued as an adjunct instructor through 2016. Her honors included ODU’s Robert L. Stern Award for Excellence in Teaching and the Virginia Distinguished Foreign Language Teacher Award.

Her late husband, Heinz, was dean of the College of Arts and Letters.

ROD NELSON, a retired Navy commander who served as assistant director of ODU’s physical plant, died on July 6 at the age of 96. He was building and grounds director from 1978 to 1983.

SUZANNE “SUE” PARKER, the graduate nursing program coordinator, died on March 11 of multiple myeloma. She was 71.

Parker had been with ODU since 1996 and was named HACE Employee of the Year. “Her vast knowledge of graduate education policies and procedures enabled her to keep graduate nursing faculty on track,” said Karen Karłowicz, chair of the School of Nursing. “Students relied on her to help them navigate admissions and course enrollment.”

DON RUNYON, former assistant vice president for auxiliary services, died on Feb. 28 from complications stemming from pulmonary fibrosis. He was 75.

Runyon, who worked at ODU from 1992 until 2007, ran auxiliary operations including parking, Webb University Center, the card center and the mailroom. He oversaw the construction of the Ted Constant Convocation Center and the privatization of the bookstore and dining services.

In 2020, he led a beach dune restoration project near his home on the Chesapeake Bay, planting native grasses and removing invasive wisteria.

BETH ANN TELLER ’21, assistant program manager for the Strome College of Business’ undergraduate advising office, died in a car accident on July 27. She was 38.

“Beth was a beautiful person,” associate dean Connie Merriman said. “She cared for other people, and she never missed a chance to make someone’s day a little better.”

Teller, who worked at Strome for more than a dozen years, “inspired me to be a better counselor every day,” said Akeyla Barbour Reid ’12 (M.S.Ed. ’15), transfer success coordinator.

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Shine On, Monarch Moon

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

The moon shined a little lower and a little brighter over ODU last fall. The Barry Art Museum's "Museum of the Moon" celebration brought a glowing replica, 23 feet in diameter, above 43rd Street and Hampton Boulevard from Oct. 15 to Oct. 17. The sculpture by British artist Luke Jerram has traveled the world.

The festival drew about 10,000 moon gazers. It featured a Native American dance troupe, food trucks, environmental presentations – and plenty of selfies.

PHOTO BY CHUCK THOMAS



A Family AFFAIR



Ken and Jeanne Danser

Ken and Jeanne Danser were born into military families half a world apart - Jeanne in Japan, where her father was stationed in the '50s, and Ken in Norfolk. Both fathers served in World War II and the Korean War. Ken's father was a chief petty officer and served for 20 years, and Jeanne's father achieved the rank of master chief petty officer and served for 30 years.

Ken and Jeanne met in the seventh grade and became friends within the same group. Not surprisingly, both ended up at ODU. At that time, however, they were focused on different majors and drifted apart. Jeanne graduated in '77 with a B.S. degree in secondary education in

the Darden College of Education and went on to teach distributive education and business education at several Norfolk schools, including Granby High, Lake Taylor Middle and Norview High. She particularly enjoyed teaching the fashion merchandising and computer classes. Ken had received a full academic scholarship but lost it in his second year, making him refocus and return a stronger student. He received a B.S. degree in criminal justice in '78 and went to graduate school at the State University of New York at Albany, where he studied criminal justice and research methodology.

Ken returned to Norfolk and taught criminal justice at ODU for four years. From there, he worked at Festevents, where he forged relationships with most of the people and businesses downtown. Later, Ken and a friend started a small beverage company focusing on flavored waters. Demand was so great that they found it difficult to make their deliveries and decided to sell the business. From there, he worked for Coors and Seagram's and then became the state manager for on-premise accounts for Jack Daniel's.

In the meantime, Ken and Jeanne were reacquainted at their 10th high school reunion, and they've been together ever since! Through the years, the Dansers watched as their love for ODU morphed into a family affair. Both their fathers studied at ODU - Ken's father in electrical engineering and Jeanne's in business management. Additionally, Jeanne's four siblings graduated from ODU, along with one of her brothers-in-law, who became an All-American wrestler in '69-'70. Their family's love for ODU is continuing in the next generation through Jeanne's niece, who is in ODU's dental hygiene program, and her nephew, who is majoring in business analytics.

Now the Dansers are retired, but their days remain full. Ken has spent decades volunteering. He's been especially involved in the Sertoma Club, a national organization that serves communities across the United States by improving the lives of those who need help, including people who are hard of hearing or deaf and those with communicative disorders. When you see Ken in social situations, it's sometimes hard to tell which hat he's wearing - but you can be sure that it's blue and white.

Ken and Jeanne have been longtime ODU athletic fans, and like many other alumni, their enthusiasm escalated when ODU's football program came back in 2009. They became involved in the serious business of ODU tailgating, working with friends, aptly named "The Friends of Jack Daniel's Tailgating Clan," to plan the food for each game.

They decided to make a gift to the football stadium, and later it became important to them to impact students directly. They included a scholarship in their estate plans that will provide educational support to student-athletes. Ken also wanted to honor Jeanne by restricting their gift to the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies and to name their scholarship *The Jeanne Ruse and Ken Danser Student-Athlete Scholarship in Education*. Their generous gift will provide educational support to future athletes studying in the Darden College. In the meantime, the Dansers can be found at most ODU athletic events with friends supporting the Monarchs.

If you've been considering an estate plan that includes ODU, or you have already done so, we welcome you to join us in the 1930 Society, where your gift will assist future students with their education through scholarships or program support.



To learn more about how you can create a named scholarship to honor a loved one or to help future ODU students in other ways, simply contact a member of the Gift Planning team today.
plannedgiving.odu.edu



Office of Gift Planning

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