Discovering the Holes in our Diets

The Cost of Convenience
Carb Confusion
Backfiring Biology or Malnourished Moms
**Carb Confusion**
Counting calories used to be the only way to diet. Then low-fat diets came and went, only to be followed by carb counting today. But before you banish potatoes from your diet forever, learn from UNLV experts about the research behind the latest trends in nutrition.

**Gaining Weight in the Mecca of Cheap Food**

**The Atkins Diet: What’s at Stake?**

**Backfiring Biology or Malnourished Moms?**
How two academic disciplines are approaching the problem of skyrocketing obesity and diabetes rates in Native Americans.

**The Cost of Convenience**
Cake mixes, casserole starters, and the nation’s highway system have reshaped the diets that served us well for centuries. Unfortunately our biological evolution hasn’t kept pace with our dietary shifts.

**Today’s Chefs Pulling More Out of Their Hats**

**The Smell of Money:**
UNLV Student Makes Mark on the Gourmet Scene

**Reality Check**
Is all you know about schizophrenia based on TV shows and A Beautiful Mind? Psychology professor Daniel Allen shares his insights about the debilitating mental disorder that is shrouded in misperceptions.

**Study in Contrasts:**
Ann Fleming and Ken Kulas

**Another Completion:**
Randall Cunningham

**Brewing Up a Business:**
Scott Plail

**Weathering the Storm:**
Sam-Erik Ruttmann
Heart and Soul:
UNLV Celebrates City’s Centennial

For the past 48 years, UNLV has grown into its role as the heart and soul of our vibrant community — a great center of learning, research, and service as bright and innovative as Las Vegas itself. Some of our most unique and renowned programs have developed in direct synergy with our community — in pursuit of alternative energy sources, nuclear transmutation strategies, innovative approaches to hotel management, and creative architecture, to name just a few areas. In this centennial year for Las Vegas, the university is at the center of a number of exciting efforts to document and celebrate history, even as we continue to make it right here on campus.

One of the most visible marks of the centennial celebration appeared on campus just recently in the form of a most unusual mural, the “Big V” (see page 6). Designed by a team of student artists, the deceptively simple design, affixed to the front windows of the Flora Dungan Humanities Building, welcomes visitors to campus with the colors of a Las Vegas sunset. Though the “V” itself has many symbolic meanings, designer Sean Russell describes its outstretched stripes as beams of “infinite potential” converging into a single, central point of activity — the university — and uniting the city’s energy with the drive of academia.

“The city as a center where, any day in any year, there may be a fresh encounter with a new talent, a keen mind or a gifted specialist — this is essential to the life of a country. To play this role in our lives a city must have a soul — a university, a great art or music school, a cathedral or a great mosque or temple, a great laboratory or scientific center, as well as the libraries and museums and galleries that bring past and present together. A city must be a place where groups of women and men are seeking and developing the highest things they know.”
— Margaret Mead

This mural depicting the kinship between a great university and its community was among the first dedicated as part of the “City of 100 Murals” public art program of the Las Vegas centennial celebration. A second campus mural will soon be unveiled at the Lied Library.

The university is also involved — as both co-sponsor (with the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority) and participant — in an exciting effort to bring the depth and richness of Las Vegas’ history to a national audience. This fall, the prestigious PBS documentary series The American Experience will present an unprecedented historic look at Las Vegas — its beginnings, its lore, and its influence — as well as its modern allure as both a visitor destination and a fast-growing residential community. A number of UNLV experts are among the voices and sources contributing to this extraordinary effort. Thousands of hours of original interviews and source material associated with the production will also become part of the permanent archive in the Lied Library’s special collections for future generations to utilize and enjoy.

This centennial year is also packed with excitement right here on campus. By the time you read this, we will have broken ground on our long-anticipated new student recreation center and student union — and later this month we will also re-dedicate the newly renovated Wright Hall. History is all around us — in fact, this year’s spring commencement — on May 14 — falls precisely on the 100th anniversary of the historic land auction remembered as the birth of Las Vegas. At our commencement ceremony, I will have the pleasure of presenting the President’s Medal to Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman as chair of the city’s Centennial Committee, in recognition of our shared history, and in anticipation of a future of limitless potential. I hope that you will join us in celebrating this truly special occasion.
**Students Put Their Backs into Volunteer Service**

**By Erin O’Donnell**

For Labor of Love volunteers, it’s more satisfying to wield a hammer than whip out a checkbook. The program, sponsored by the Rebel Service Council, organizes community service projects that let volunteers get physical.

So far this school year, dozens of students and staff have signed up to spend a Saturday morning erasing graffiti, sprucing up a Boys & Girls Club, helping rescued horses, building homes, and more. In the bargain, volunteers get breakfast, lunch, transportation, and an instant sense of accomplishment, says Andy Unfug, Labor of Love committee chairman.

“You see a difference immediately. That’s what I really enjoy about it,” says Unfug, a senior majoring in psychology. “It blows my mind every time to see how much the students are able to do.”

The program was launched 10 years ago to recruit volunteers once a semester to work on a Habitat for Humanity house. It’s since become part of the Rebel Service Council, which organizes many service-learning programs. Such programs expand learning beyond the classroom and give students a way to explore the roles they are beginning to play as citizens.

Labor of Love now sponsors a couple projects each month, and this year 10 organizations are reaping the benefits.

One of the most frequent beneficiaries is the no-kill animal sanctuary of the Nevada Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Doug Duke, director of the shelter, says Labor of Love crews have weeded the grounds, made building improvements, even helped with a benefit concert. It’s just this kind of manual labor that the shelter needs the most from volunteers.

“Oh, of course all volunteers want to pet the cats and walk the dogs, but the students were willing to do anything. That’s not typical of your average volunteer,” Duke says.

April is the program’s busiest month with conservation work at Red Rock Canyon, an Earth Day visit to Spring Mountain Ranch State Park, and building a Habitat house. The students will also return to the SPCA to help the shelter prepare for a June expansion to triple its space for dogs.

Most projects draw close to the maximum number of 20 participants, which Unfug says is “large enough to do a good chunk of work and still make sure there’s enough for everyone to do.”

Sometimes those on the receiving end get into the act. One of Unfug’s favorite projects was a trip to Child Haven last year to clean up the play area and landscape the grounds. Volunteers paired up with the children sheltered there, and they worked side by side.

“What I remember is bonding with the kids and seeing how much it meant to them for us to be out there,” he says.

**More Info:** Visit the website for the student involvement and activities office at sia.unlv.edu/service.

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**Program for Seniors Receives Grant**

UNLV’s lifelong learning program received a $100,000 grant from the Bernard Osher Foundation.

UNLV is one of 13 campuses nationwide to be added this year to the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute network, which includes 61 universities that offer learning in retirement programs. Other recipients this year include Harvard, Northwestern, Clemson, and Rutgers.

As a result of the grant, the UNLV lifelong learning program, which is offered through the Division of Educational Outreach, will be known as the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UNLV.

UNLV has been offering lifelong learning programs for the past 13 years, with approximately 300 Las Vegas seniors enrolled each fall in more than 20 study groups designed and conducted by the seniors themselves. The weekly two-hour sessions cover a range of topics, including music, literature, history, and writing.

In addition, UNLV’s Academic 62+ program allows seniors to take academic classes for free during the fall and spring semesters. Seniors can also take classes at a 50 percent tuition discount during the summer term. Classes taken for credit can be applied to an undergraduate degree.

**More Info:** Visit educationaloutreach.unlv.edu.
Rebel Resource
A quick look at a campus resource you can use.

The Howard Hughes Collections
Just can’t get enough of Howard Hughes? Seems you’re not alone. Although director Martin Scorsese didn’t come knocking at the door of the Lied Library’s special collections section when making The Aviator, many others have. The Aviator stirred up interest in Hughes and sent documentary filmmakers, journalists, and history buffs to the archives at UNLV.

What’s there: About 100 cubic feet of boxes containing thousands of press clippings and photos related to Hughes. The files of the late Dick Hannah, who handled Hughes’ public relations, give insight into how the Hughes operation attempted to control coverage of its eccentric leader. The archives of Hughes Electronics Corp. include a great deal of corporate information about Hughes’ aviation ventures. Particularly prominent among photos here are those of the controversial Spruce Goose, “which must have been photographed about every five minutes while it was under construction,” says Peter Michel, director of special collections.

What’s not: Sorry, no handwritten wills leaving a portion of Hughes’ vast estate to you or anyone else. In fact, the collections contain no personal Hughes items at all.

What the collections reveal: “They provide fascinating insight into how determined Hughes and his people were to control his public image,” Michel says. “Hughes obviously was particularly concerned with protecting his image as a great aviator.”

How you can see the collections: Visit an online digital version of many of the items. It’s being launched this month. Go to www.library.unlv.edu, click on “collections,” and look under “digital collections/exhibits.” For in-depth research, visit the special collections section on the fourth floor of Lied Library. It’s open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday. Special collections items can’t be checked out; they must be used on site.

More info: Call 702-895-2243.

Law Students Win Competition by Focusing on Mediation
Lisa McClane and Jay Odum, both second-year students from the William S. Boyd School of Law, placed first in the Law Student Division National Client Counseling Competition Finals.

The pair competed against teams from 14 other schools, winning the honor to represent the United States in the Louis M. Brown International Client Counseling Competition in Hawaii April 7-9.

Sponsored by the American Bar Association, the Client Counseling Competition emphasizes the importance of preventive law, stressing that clients’ problems can be resolved more effectively outside than inside a courtroom.

In the national competition, the theme was sports and entertainment law. The UNLV duo performed the role of two attorneys jointly conducting an initial interview of their clients. Facing actors playing the role of clients, the two attorneys had to obtain relevant information from their clients, advise them of legal and alternative options, and help the client decide whether to retain the attorneys.

The competition’s final round featured a married couple whose teenage son had been severely injured during a baseball game. Judges praised McClane and Odum for their knowledge of relevant legal issues, empathy toward their clients, and their skill in explaining both the benefits and detriments of litigation given the clients’ family circumstances. The duo emphasized that mediation might prove more satisfactory than litigation for the family, given that the parents needed to spend their time caring for their son.

Jean Sternlight, Saltman Professor of Law and director of the Saltman Center for Conflict Resolution at UNLV, helped the team prepare for the competition. “We are incredibly proud of the honor that Lisa and Jay have brought to our school and to the Saltman Center for Conflict Resolution,” she said. “The law school was founded on the idea that lawyers need to be prepared not only to litigate disputes when necessary, but also to help their clients avoid disputes altogether and resolve disputes creatively and informally when possible.”

Campus Tours
The campus landscape changes quickly as new buildings are constructed and programs are added. If you’ve never toured campus, or it’s been a while since your last trip, come see how we’ve grown. UNLV’s office of community relations offers campus tours to its friends in the community. Tours can be tailored to your specific interests. You can take a tour of the whole campus or just catch such highlights as the Boyd School of Law, the Hughes College of Engineering, the School of Dental Medicine, and the Lied Library.

For tour information, call 702-895-2653 or visit communityrelations.unlv.edu.
Thinking Inside the Box

Anthropologists Dig Through Ethics Issues in the Storage of Ancient Bones

By Gian Galassi

Under the watchful eyes of observers and a 24-hour security detail, UNLV anthropology professor Vicki Cassman methodically examines the bone fragments of a dead man. Only this is no crime scene investigation, it’s the Burke Museum of Natural History at the University of Washington.

The object of her scrutiny is the 9,200-year-old Kennewick Man. In 1998, Cassman was tapped by the Mandatory Center of Expertise for the Curation and Management of Archaeological Collections of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as one of two members from the American Institute of Conservation to oversee the curation and preservation of those valuable skeletal remains.

Kennewick Man has sparked a custody battle between the federal government, several Native American tribes who want to claim him, and several scholars who want to carry out extensive studies of him. It’s Cassman’s job, along with colleague Nancy Odegaard of the University of Arizona, to ensure that while Kennewick Man’s ultimate fate is determined in the courts, the fine balance between scholarly inquiry and respect for the dead is maintained.

As an archaeologist and a conservator, Cassman is no stranger to the often competing interests regarding access and preservation of human remains. But it was her experience with the Kennewick case that finally brought the issue into sharp focus.

At the outset of the project, she encountered curatorial practices that were in conflict with the spirit of the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the legislation requiring museums and federal agencies to return certain Native American cultural items, including human remains, to lineal descendants.

“When we first saw him, he was housed in a very crude masonite box with bits and pieces in brown paper bags,” Cassman says. “The whole experience was a real eye-opener into how little information there is out there about proper curation. It also made me realize that stewardship ethics in anthropology are in need of a little updating.”

Although the repatriation act does not explicitly call for the revision of curatorial practices, Cassman and her colleagues say the legislation has forced professionals in the field to pay closer attention to how remains are handled. Cassman says the condition in which the remains of Kennewick Man were kept was typical and illustrative of the need for change in her profession.

“Human remains are in this very odd place where they’re sometimes a specimen and yet they are still an individual — a sacred thing,” says Cassman, who initially became interested in the issue while studying funerary objects in northern Chile. “As a result, they’ve never quite received the same amount of curation scrutiny that, say, paintings, textiles, or other artifacts have.”

In an effort to change that reality, Cassman has developed a human remains box that meets the concerns and standards set by all interested parties, including scientists, museum managers, and Native Americans. She and a group of graduate students designed the box to be 31 inches by 24 inches by 6 inches. It allows the bones to be arranged to closely resemble the human form — a concern common among many tribes — while remaining easily identifiable and accessible — a concern among physical anthropologists. Although they met both those requirements in the design, Cassman says the box will likely evolve as additional issues arise.

“We plan to continue the intercultural and interdisciplinary negotiations and further modify design,” Cassman says.

As for now, the boxes are being produced by Hollinger Co. They were used to store UNLV’s own collection of human remains in preparation for a move into a storage facility in the new Wright Hall.

In addition, Cassman is completing one of the first comprehensive source books on the preservation of human remains. Co-edited by Cassman, Odegaard, and Joseph Powell of the University of New Mexico, the book brings together the expertise of scholars on topics such as care and handling, health concerns, field methods, storage, documentation, and museum display of human remains. It also provides an overview of state, federal, and international laws, as well as a discussion on the needs for an updated code of ethics.

While she knows she can’t remedy each of the conflicts that arise, Cassman says that the recent developments in her career have strengthened her resolve to at least reconcile some of them.

“I hope some of what I’m doing will challenge conservators to work in a new way,” says Cassman. “In the past, conservators have been seen as roadblocks to certain kinds of research, but our mission now is to find ways for people to carry out their work while minimizing the impact on the objects of study.”
By the Numbers

Campus Dining
Source: UNLV Campus Dining, Sodexo

12 Places to grab a bite on campus.
9 Food service outlets planned for the new student union and student recreation center.
2,000 Slices of pizza served per week in the Dining Commons.
9,927 Chicken Caesar wraps sold at Cyber Wraps in fall 2004. They are the second most popular item at the Union Café, after pizza.
17,916 Cups of coffee poured at the Lied Library's Book 'N Bean in fall 2004.
200,412 Meals served in the Dining Commons in fall 2004.
12 Selections on UNLV Catering's wine list.

Graduate student Sean Russell was lead designer of the “Big V” mural installed above the entrance to the Dungan Humanities Building as part of Las Vegas’ City of 100 Murals project.

UNLV Students Create Window Mural to Celebrate Centennial

UNLV students are placing their creative stamp on murals across the valley.
A major initiative of the Las Vegas Centennial Committee, the City of 100 Murals project will see the creation of more than 100 permanent and temporary murals throughout the community, reflecting the history and culture of Las Vegas in celebration of its 100th birthday.

UNLV’s “Big V,” designed by students in an art in public places class, was the third mural introduced as part of the series. The first, a mural depicting Spanish explorer Rafael Rivera’s visit to the Las Vegas Valley in the 1820s, was designed and painted by Erin Stellmon, a graduate student in art. It was installed at the Lied Children’s Discovery Museum.

“We are so excited that UNLV is helping to commemorate Las Vegas’ special milestone with this lasting art legacy,” says Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman, chair of the Centennial Committee. “This project is a wonderful example of the Centennial’s dedication to keeping art alive in the Las Vegas Valley for many years to come.”

Russell said the “Big V” represents the Roman numeral for five, a reference to both the city’s centennial dates of 1905 to 2005. The converging lines of the V also refer to the university as the point that unites the energy of the city with the drive of academia, he says.

The “Big V” design was developed by students participating in a special multidisciplinary course offered by the College of Fine Arts. It featured guest lectures by several noted artists, architects, and planners, and was sponsored by the City of Las Vegas Arts Commission. Other students who worked on the mural were Katie Anania, Natalie Imbriani, Brandon Markeel, and Melissa Bruechert.

And Don’t Miss: The “Trading Spaces” exhibit, which runs May 15 through mid-June in the Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery. Curated by art and architecture history professor Robert Tracy, it features photos and digital imagery of Las Vegas over the past 100 years.
New Magazine Feature Highlights Talents of UNLV Illustrator

"It Dawned On Smee" is a new feature that highlights the talents of David Smee, an archaeological illustrator at UNLV’s Harry Reid Center for Environmental Studies. With the focus of this issue being food and nutrition, Smee turned his paintbrush to campus dining spots.

Smee is a native of England and studied at the Cambridge College of Art. Before settling in Nevada with his American wife, he co-founded Inkblot Studios in Exeter. His many commissions have included the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Haymarket Theatre.

At the Reid Center, he uses his talents to create renderings of archaeological sites and excavated artifacts.

"Should only be another hour or so if it doesn’t cloud over.”
Books on the Kitchen Counter

Usually this space is reserved for “Books on the Bedside Table,” a feature about the great reads UNLV faculty and staff keep on their nightstands. But, because this issue focuses on food, we’re leaving the bedroom and heading for the kitchen. (Though we expect that some of the faculty who so are involved with food may well keep cookbooks on their bedside tables as well.)

John Stefanelli, food and beverage management professor: One of my favorite cookbooks is not really a cookbook, but the magazine Everyday Food. It’s “from the kitchens of Martha Stewart.” I enjoy the comfort food recipes as well as the fact that the novice can really, truly understand them. So many of the celebrity cookbooks leave out critical information or assume the reader knows a lot about food preparation. I also like The Joy of Cooking. It is very good for novices because it includes a good deal of detail that precedes the various recipe sections. It’s also good for folks who need a refresher.

Jean Hertzman, food and beverage management chef: The Joy of Cooking has all the basic recipes a person needs to know. The Pillsbury Cookbook and Better Homes & Gardens Cookbook serve similar purposes. Being from Kentucky, I also use my Southern Living Cookbook for all my home-style favorites. It is also a good idea for the home cook to purchase a basic culinary textbook, such as the one we use in class, Professional Cooking by Wayne Gisslen. It explains all the cooking processes and ingredients and has a lot of pictures of them. However, the recipes are for large amounts so it might be difficult to adjust to smaller servings. If one is interested in French cuisine, you can’t go wrong with any of the Julia Child cookbooks.

Molly M. Michelman, nutrition sciences professor: My husband and I are huge fans of most anything by Molly Katzen (of Moosewood Restaurant fame). We met and went to school in Ithaca, N.Y. The first meal Steven cooked for me — he is the superior cook — included the enchiladas from the original Moosewood Cookbook. The first meal we cooked together included the minestrone soup and the vegetarian lasagna. We also frequently use Sundays at Moosewood Restaurant: Ethnic and Regional Recipes (by the Moosewood Collective). These books contain only vegetarian recipes, but they are mainstream enough that nonvegetarians like the recipes, too.

Memories Are Made of This: Dean Martin Through His Daughter’s Eyes

By Deana Martin

With Wendy Holden

Harmony Publishing, 2004

When Deana (that’s “Dean-ah,” as you would expect of the daughter of Dean Martin) Martin started looking for photographs to illustrate the biography of her Rat Pack father, her research led her straight to the special collections department at UNLV’s Lied Library. Its vast archive of Las Vegas history includes photos and other memorabilia from the Sands Hotel, where the Rat Pack hung out.

The Sands Collection is comprised of the publicity files of Al Freeman, publicity director of the hotel for many years. Materials include business documents, correspondence, press releases, news clippings, and ads, but is particularly rich in photographs of A-list celebrities.

Dean Martin was a legend on the Las Vegas Strip, having performed periodically for decades before his death on Christmas Day 1995. Funeral services were private, but the Strip recognized its loss by turning off its lights for one minute, as it had only one other time, for Martin’s fellow Rat Pack member Sammy Davis Jr.

His daughter’s book gives a very personal look at Martin and his family with a perspective different from other family members who have written about Martin. “I was born into a struggling artist’s family,” Deana said in an interview prior to a campus book signing. “By the time my brother was born, the family was wealthy. So we don’t see things quite the same way.”

Deana Martin makes it clear that she adored her father. At the book signing, which brought many longtime Las Vegas personalities to campus, she both read from the book and told additional stories that did not make it into print.

Restaurant Marketing for Owners and Managers

By Patti Shock, John Stefanelli, and John Bowen


Rare is the person who has not dreamed of starting a restaurant, especially when consuming a meal at an eatery that lacks quality. For those who do follow their restaurateur dreams, one of their first thoughts has to be, “What am I getting myself into?”

That rhetorical question is so suitably the subtitle for the introduction of a new book aimed at people who own, manage, or want to own and manage a restaurant.

Three faculty members from the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration, Patti Shock, John Stefanelli, and John Bowen, have combined their considerable knowledge and wisdom
for a guide to the restaurant business. (Bowen has since moved to the University of Houston.)

Would-be cuisine purveyors are guided in selecting a location, doing an environmental analysis (“What Am I Up Against?”), developing menus (“What Should My Sales Kit Look Like?”), and so on through to the concluding chapter, “Technology: How Do I Surf My Way to Success?”

Although all three bring a wealth of academic knowledge to the book, they also have real-world experience. Shock, for example, is from a restaurant family. “I literally grew up in an Italian restaurant in Oakland, Calif.,” she says.

Editor’s Note: Shock and Stefanelli share more of their insights in “Feeding Evolution” on Page 18.)

**Media, Audiences, Effects:**
An Introduction to the Study of Media Content and Audience Analysis
By Paul J. Traudt
Allyn & Bacon, 2005

Paul J. Traudt, an associate professor in the Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies, has brought his 30 years of teaching and studying media content and audiences together in a book.

*Media, Audiences, Effects* looks at the impact of the media, particularly television, on their audiences in 12 key topic areas such as advertising, violence, and politics. Regardless of the area, Traudt concludes, “Mass media are a very small part of the total sphere of influence in terms of attitudes and behaviors surrounding these issues.”

He also comments, “These findings clearly contradict claims often advanced by scholars, politicians, and public interest groups.”

*Media, Audiences, Effects* examines more than 300 research studies published since 1990 and gives students not only background in the topic areas, but also a framework for understanding how researchers study media effects and the relationship between media and society.

Traudt, who came to UNLV in 1996, has also taught at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, the University of New Mexico, and the University of Iowa. At UNLV he teaches introduction to mass communication and effects of mass communication.

The “Books” section is written by Barbara Cloud, a professor in the Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies.

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**ALUM AUTHOR**

**Alanson B. Houghton:**
Ambassador of the New Era
By Jeffrey J. Matthews, ’90 MBA and ’95 MA History

The career of alumni author Jeffrey J. Matthews parallels that of his subject, Alanson B. Houghton, in that both left successful business-world lives for the public sector. Matthews went from banker to teacher; Houghton from industrialist to ambassador. Although Matthews has not yet had the international impact that Houghton did, his life is just as interesting.

UNLV professor Andy Fry, who mentored Matthews for his master’s degree in history, says his former pupil had a successful banking career, but one day came to Fry’s office, willing to give it up because he wanted to be a historian. He was particularly interested in foreign relations, Fry’s specialty.

The M.A. was completed in 1990 and Matthews went on to study the history of U.S. foreign relations at the University of Kentucky, where he earned a doctorate. He combined his business and history backgrounds and is now an associate professor in cross-disciplinary business at the University of Puget Sound, teaching courses in leadership, international business, and history.

Houghton, the subject of Matthews’ first book, was ambassador to both Germany and Great Britain during the 1920s. One reviewer called Houghton “arguably the most influential ambassador during the interwar period.” Matthews says that Houghton’s biography helps “explain the larger story of America’s rise as a dominant global power before and after the first world war.” The book is part of the series *Biographies in American Foreign Policy* edited by Fry.

Alumnus Jeffrey J. Matthews in his classroom at the University of Puget Sound.

Houghton is known not only for his service as ambassador, but also because he became highly critical of the foreign policies of the Harding-Coolidge era; that criticism is the major thrust of Matthews’ book.

Matthews continues to combine his banking background with history, and is working on a new book about the “much neglected history of black business leadership in the United States.”
Clubs Connect Alums Nationwide

Although Northern Nevada is home to that other university, Andrea Knapp, ’92 BS Physical Education and ’00 MS Sports and Leisure Studies, has carved out a little piece of Reno for the Rebels. For the past few years, Knapp has served as the area’s UNLV Alumni Club coordinator and has brought graduates together to network and have fun.

“We have a large number of UNLV alumni in Reno,” she says. “I thought (an alumni club) would be a great opportunity to meet and socialize with people who have common interests and experiences to share.”

Knapp has found the club to be an effective way to reach out to her community and suggests other graduates consider starting their own. “It is a great way to meet new friends and catch up with old ones,” she says.

Knapp says she was motivated to strengthen her ties to her alma mater because she had “a great experience at UNLV and I would like to make certain that current students will someday be able to say the same thing.”

Join A Club (or Start Your Own)

Contact the alumni regional coordinators below to find out about activities near you.

Chicago
Stephanie Fisher, ’00
773-858-6153
fishst@aol.com

Denver
Tracy Varga, ’98
303-921-6586
720-264-6321
tracyvarga@hotmail.com

Cindy Pegg Jennings, ’94
303-484-8369
cpmadison@comcast.net

Mississippi
Lori Beth Susman, ’86
228-832-7004
jackpot@digiscape.com

New York City
Sue Roller, ’00
718-781-5470
sue@nyyachtcharter.com

Northeast/Rhode Island
Albert Ginchereau Jr., ’71
866-449-4600
401-849-5323
albertginchereau@msn.com

Oregon/Willamette
Denise Phillips Beban, ’95
541-346-2101
541-461-2011
dbeban@uoregon.edu

Phoenix
Tony Zaranti, ’99
480-419-3735
480-213-4290
tonyzaranti@yahoo.com

Reno
Andrea Knapp, ’92 and ’00
775-813-4870
andrea_knapp@ml.com

Sacramento
Jennifer Zajac Winters, ’93
916-419-3788
rawjaz@aol.com
jennifer.winters@ihrco.com

San Diego
Scott Gulbransen, ’95
858-525-7594
858-481-4871
Scott_Gulbransen@intuit.com

San Francisco
Tony Llanos, ’97
415-365-0307
tllanos@theorchardhotel.com

Southern Utah
Kathy Pontius, ’99
435-867-4763
kpontius@hotmail.com

No club near you? Starting your own regional club is easy. Club coordinators are asked to plan one event per year to help reconnect alumni in their communities. For more information, contact the UNLV alumni relations office at 702-895-3621 or e-mail alumni.relations@ccmail.nevada.edu.

New Member Benefit Offers Discounted Resort Accommodations

A new travel program is now available to members of the UNLV Alumni Association. The program gives association members discounted rates on resort condo rentals, hotel accommodations, and car rentals, thanks to a partnership with Cendant Corp. and its subsidiaries Resort Condominiums International and RCI Holiday Network.

The UNLV Alumni Association receives $25 for each week of vacation booked through the program. “This program is a win-win,” says Fred Albrecht, executive director of the association. “Everyone likes to go on vacation, and these prices can’t be beat. Not only does this new agreement enable our members to enjoy a quality, fun, and affordable time with their family and friends, it helps us with revenue and scholarships for our association.”

Rentals include condos, chalets, and cottages within a network of more than 3,700 resorts in the United States and abroad. Discounts of 20 to 25 percent are available on Avis and Budget car rentals and at hotel chains Travelodge, Days Inn, Super 8, and Howard Johnson.

Prices for the resort condo rentals are just $349 for a seven-night stay at properties in the “Off-Season I and Short Notice” category. These fully furnished condos have up to two bedrooms and contain equipped kitchens. Many units include a fireplace, whirlpool tub, bar with glasses, washer-dryer, and screened-in porches or balconies, as well as on-site or nearby recreational facilities.

The $349 weekly rental price normally applies to off-season or short-notice vacations. Short notice generally refers to three days to six weeks prior to check-in. Other prices are available depending on the season, location, size of accommodations, and time of booking.

Many of the units are oceanfront or lakefront properties and normally rent for up to $2,000 a week.

“Keep in mind that flexibility is the key,” Albrecht says. “The inventory is constantly changing, so it’s best to keep checking back on the website or calling the toll-free number to see what’s available.”

For information, call 888-729-3842 or visit alumnitravelbenefits.com.

When booking, you’ll be asked to provide an association membership verification code; call the UNLV Alumni Association at 702-895-3621 to obtain the code.
Alums Build Careers One Breakfast at a Time

By Gillian Silver

For many people, networking is the key to boosting their careers, expanding their businesses, or becoming involved in their communities. And the key to networking often is finding some common ground.

Sam Lieberman, '96 BA Social Work, hopes some of the 43,000 UNLV alumni in the Las Vegas area will find common ground on campus at the Business-to-Business Breakfast Networking Group.

Lieberman, a community and political outreach specialist, and Jill Flanzraich, owner of Adventures in Advertising/LAS VEGAS, partnered with the UNLV Alumni Association to create the increasingly popular program.

The sessions, held monthly during the academic year, feature ice-breakers, business card exchanges, and a short program with speakers such as marketing professor Jack Schibrowsky, who recently presented “Everything You Need to Know about Las Vegas Demographics and Didn’t Think to Ask.”

On average, 45 networkers gather for each Business-to-Business event. They represent companies large and small in such fields as banking, floral design, insurance, real estate, and public relations. Life coaches come to share their insights, and nonprofit organizations promote their good work and seek corporate volunteers.

“The composition of the group changes with each session, which keeps it exciting,” Flanzraich says. “As more newcomers discover us and the positive word-of-mouth grows, the network becomes an even more valuable resource for establishing contacts and solving business dilemmas by connecting with talented people.”

Some participants report that the group motivated them to return to UNLV for the first time in years. “That’s one of the distinguishing elements of this program,” explains Lieberman. “It provides a comfortable way to mix and mingle with community business owners who share a mutual commitment to UNLV. Graduates and friends of the university alike benefit from strengthening resources and connections at Business-to-Business.”

Lieberman hopes more alumni visit campus to observe firsthand the dynamic changes to the university’s landscape. Graduates, he says, can also provide valuable advice to current students preparing to transition to work environments. And, if alumni make connections with each other and find a resource that benefits them professionally, all the better, he says.

Business-to-Business is a membership benefit of the UNLV Alumni Association.

Put It In Your Palm Pilot

The final Business-to-Business Breakfast Networking Group this semester is 7:30 to 9 a.m. May 13 in the Richard Tam Alumni Center. Admission is $10 for members of the UNLV Alumni Association, faculty, and staff. Nonmembers are $15. Continental breakfast is included. RSVPs are encouraged; call 702-895-3621.

About Alumni Relations

From joining the UNLV Alumni Association and mentoring a student to volunteering for one of UNLV’s many groups and programs, there are countless ways to remain part of your alma mater.

• Join the Association: The UNLV Alumni Association was established in 1967 to provide volunteer leadership, scholarship support, and resources to the campus community. Joining is easy and you don’t have to be a UNLV graduate to become a member.

• Volunteer: Your time and expertise can help build a stronger university. Opportunities include mentoring students, serving on UNLV Alumni Association committees, and speaking to current classes.

• Attend an Event: The alumni relations office sponsors numerous events throughout the year, including Young Alumni Mixers, Business-to-Business Breakfasts, golf outings, and, of course, football tailgates in the fall.

For information, call 702-895-3621 or visit alumni.unlv.edu.
Anyone who has seen him play knows that basketball player Louis Amundson is a great athlete. Look a little further and you’ll find that he is an excellent student, and in May he will have his degree in university studies to prove it.

“This is no small feat for someone juggling both classes and athletics,” says Julie Johnson, Amundson’s academic advisor.

In 2003 the athletics department formed the Rebel Athletic Fund. The fund provides student-athletes like Amundson with the resources needed to excel in the classroom and stay athletically competitive on the court.

Amundson is one of the 400 student-athletes who benefit from the Rebel Athletic Fund each year. Support for facilities is especially important to Amundson “because that’s where we spend most of our time.”

Amundson will graduate in four years, a rarity among student-athletes who, like many students with time-consuming responsibilities outside the classroom, usually take at least five years to finish their degrees.

Amundson says being a student-athlete has taught him endurance, discipline, and how to juggle responsibilities.

“Saturday morning, between classes, or after lifting weights twice a week, you might find him at the computer lab provided by the Rebel Athletic Fund to help student-athletes stay on the ball with their homework,” says Amundson.

“Students like Louis Amundson, who balance athletics, academics, and other responsibilities, are an inspiration to all of us,” says Julie Johnson.

Avid Runnin’ Rebel fans since their undergraduate days, Rich and Wightman support the university in many ways. Both are members of the Rebel Athletic Fund and the UNLV Foundation’s Planned Giving Professional Advisors Council, as well as lifetime members of the UNLV Alumni Association. Rich chairs the membership committee for the College of Business’ Alumni Association Board of Directors and is a member of the Accounting Advisory Council.

Athletics Director Mike Hamrick points to the gift as validation that momentum within the men’s basketball program is increasing.

“This gift is proof positive of a renewed excitement and commitment from our community to helping UNLV athletics move to the next level,” he says. “It’s the generosity and support of people like Mark Rich and John Wightman that will get us there.”

For information on the Rebel Athletic Fund, call 702-895-1533.
Boyd Makes Historic Pledge of $25 Million to Law School

William S. Boyd recently announced a $25 million gift to the William S. Boyd School of Law, one of the largest private donations ever pledged to the university.

“I am so proud of what the Boyd School of Law at UNLV has accomplished in such a short time,” says Boyd, who is chairman and chief executive officer of Boyd Gaming Corp. “The school is creating opportunities for Nevada’s young people that were not possible a decade ago. My gift … will help to make sure the school continues its success and has a bright future for many years to come.”

Boyd was a statewide advocate for creating the law school and, in 1997, provided the initial $5 million for its creation. Funds from the latest gift will support professorships, chairs, scholarships, and ancillary educational opportunities for students and faculty.

“A gift of this magnitude rarely comes along for any school, and for it to come from the person who played one of the largest roles in the law school’s creation demonstrates Bill’s tremendous confidence in the program,” says Richard Morgan, dean of the law school.

Morgan attributes much of the school’s success to the public-private partnerships it formed with community members like Boyd, Jim Rogers, the Thomas and Mack families, and Sonja, ’78 BA and ’82 MA Psychology, and Michael Saltman. While state funding makes the program accessible to students, Morgan says, private support is the catalyst for excellence.

Boyd practiced law in Las Vegas for more than 15 years before beginning a full-time career in the gaming industry. He and his father, Sam Boyd, were among the partners in Union Plaza Hotel & Casino and the Eldorado Casino. They co-founded Boyd Gaming and opened its first property, the California Hotel and Casino, in January 1975.
Donors Put UNLV on the Pre-Columbian Map

by Regina Bacolas

If they survive, thousands of years from now what will the “artifacts” of our culture say about us? Advertisements might express our values. Currency and cash machines might reflect our exchange system. A stage set and some costumes might show how we were entertained.

Thanks to an extraordinary alumna and her husband, students and faculty along with the general public can get answers to these questions about some ancient North American cultures by visiting the pre-Columbian and ethnographic art collections at the Marjorie Barrick Natural History Museum at UNLV.

Mannetta Braunstein, ’93 BA Anthropology, and her husband, Michael, made their first donation of pre-Columbian art to the museum in 1979. The donation launched the university’s now extensive collection of pre-Columbian art.

The couple began collecting the ancient art as tourists in Latin America during the summer of 1974. Back then, the artifacts were seen as unrefined and such collections were not fashionable. “The artifacts were readily available for purchase in native markets and specialty shops,” Mannetta says.

Ironically, its primitive nature is the reason the museum welcomes the unique and broad collection.

A large portion of the exhibit represents the visual arts of ancient Mesoamerica, an area encompassing most of Mexico and part of Central America. The area was home to such ancient civilizations as the Maya, Aztecs, and Zapotecs during the pre-Columbian era 1500 B.C. to A.D. 1500.

The collection’s Mexican masks offer a glimpse into traditions that continue in some form today. Guatemalan garments called *huipiles* show the period’s method of weaving, and oil paintings known as *retablos* illustrate the hierarchal societies.

“From the artifacts, we learn about the cultures of these people and how they lived,” Mannetta says. “We learn that their societies were very complex.”

The couple also donated their extensive book collection to accompany the art to “put into context what was going on during those times,” Mannetta says.

The Braunsteins put UNLV in their estate plans last November to ensure that the university eventually will receive their entire collection of approximately 5,000 pieces.

The collection has made the museum an international center for pre-Columbian art and is providing students and faculty with countless years of research opportunities. According to museum curator Aurore Giguet, there is still much to learn.

“It’s one of the largest collections of pre-Columbian art [in the world] and is virtually unstudied,” Giguet says.

Two undergraduate liberal arts classes are already conducting research on the collection, and plans to incorporate more educational opportunities are under way.

“We really want it to be a used collection
Scholarship donors contributed a record $8.3 million to endowments and annual fund programs through the UNLV Foundation in 2004. The year’s total is more than triple the previous year’s $2.6 million.

The largest donations came from individuals who named UNLV in their estate plans, including the Koch Living Trust for the Frank Koch Endowment and the estates of June P. Cook and Phillip Sherman.

The Hornbuckle Family Scholarship Endowment Fund, a new fund established by Bill Hornbuckle, ‘84 BS Hotel Administration, will support scholarships for graduates of the Andre Agassi College Prep Academy who seek degrees from the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration. The first recipient will be named in 2009, when the academy graduates its first class.

The Michael Tata Scholarship, named in memory of the 1996 Harrah Hotel College graduate, is fully endowed through gifts made by Green Valley Ranch Station Casino and many of Tata’s relatives and friends. Hotel administration students Matthew Wilson and Karina Herrera received the scholarship’s first two awards this spring.

Nevada Power and Sierra Pacific Resources continued their graduate fellowship awards to the colleges of Business and Engineering, and GES Exposition Services renewed its annual scholarships for 10 students who enroll in UNLV’s convention-related classes. Wells Fargo Bank Nevada continued its support for first-generation college students; Harrah’s Entertainment Foundation also funded similar scholarships this year. MGM MIRAGE, Bechtel Nevada, Southwest Gas, Caesars Entertainment Foundation, and Darden Restaurants continued their significant gifts to scholarship programs.

The Las Vegas Recovery Center will provide full tuition and books for one graduate student and two undergraduates annually under the new Excellence in Addiction Studies scholarship. The scholarship, which will be awarded this fall, seeks to “enable students to continue the advancement of a greater degree of excellence and professionalism within the addictions counseling field,” says Larry Ashley, undergraduate coordinator for the department of marriage, family and community counseling.

Privately funded scholarships are awarded using a variety of criteria, such as grade point average, national test scores, special service to the university or the community, and financial need. More than half of all students who attend UNLV require financial assistance to pursue their educations. Scholarship funds are an important investment to help ensure that all students are able to realize their dreams of higher-education degrees.

For information on scholarship giving, contact Deborah Young at 702-895-2818.
Carb Confusion

Counting calories used to be the only way to diet. Then low-fat diets came and went, only to be followed by carb counting today. But before you banish potatoes from your diet forever, learn from UNLV experts about the research behind the latest trends in nutrition.

By Doug McInnis     Photos by Aaron Mayes
For reasons that may seem baffling to the layman, broccoli, a bowl of sugar, and the baked potato are all classified as carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are one of the trickiest food types to fully understand because so many foods — some very good for you, some not — fall under that umbrella. They include fruits, vegetables, grains, and all the processed foods they go into — a can of soda, a glazed donut, or a bowl of corn flakes, for example.

Today, carbohydrates are getting a lot of attention because of the role some of them play in the national epidemic of diabetes, obesity, and heart disease — issues that UNLV professors across campus are tackling through research and education.

The fact that carbs are both good and bad for you is confusing for consumers, says Laura Kruskall, chair of UNLV’s department of nutrition sciences. “They are essential fuels for our bodies and our brains.”

Yet they are making us fatter and killing us through such food-based lifestyle diseases as diabetes. “Carbohydrates will result in weight gain if you eat more than your body can use,” Kruskall says. “If the body doesn’t burn them for energy, they will be stored as fat.”
Gaining Weight in the Mecca of Cheap Food

America’s obesity epidemic spans from coast to coast, but Nevada in particular has been pushing the scale up in recent years. Numbers from the Centers for Disease Control show the state’s obesity incidence climbing. In 1992, Nevada’s obesity rate came in at the 10 to 14 percent range. But 1996, the state hit the 15 to 19 percent range and jumped again to the 20 to 24 percent range in 2002.

“Our rate of obesity is not necessarily greater than that of other states, but the rate at which our population is becoming more obese is quite high compared to other states,” nutrition sciences professor Susan Meacham says.

The state’s brisk population growth might skew those numbers a bit, Meacham concedes. But she cites a smorgasbord of local issues that could be making Nevadans heavier.

First is the food factor. Long a destination for bargain-hunters, Las Vegas’ hospitality industry initially focused food operations on cheap meals to keep tourists in the casinos: 20-ounce steak dinners for $2.99 and all-you-can-eat buffets for $5. The market has gone upscale — pricey five-star restaurants dot the Strip and buffets targeting residents now cost $10 to $12 or more per person — but the reasonable values that lure tourists also ensnare residents.

“It comes back to the fact that the United States has the most abundant, cheapest, and safest food supply, and Las Vegas is most definitely the mecca of that,” Meacham says.

“Eating here has always been very reasonable.” And then there’s the sizable community of shift workers. Finding healthy dining choices in the wee hours can be hard.

Compounding the problem is a relative shortage of nutrition experts in local schools. Meacham worked for a school district in Virginia that had two high schools; on staff were two registered dietitians and three or four nutrition-student interns. The Clark County School District, with nearly 40 high schools and more added every year, has one registered dietitian, Meacham says.

In addition, the state doesn’t have regulations governing the collection of height and weight data from students. That makes assembling pilot data for procuring nutrition-education grants impossible. Meacham and professor Audrey McCool of the food & beverage management department are helping to write a bill for the Nevada Legislature this year that would mandate the gathering of height and weight measurements in the state’s schools. The duo also helped author school district policies on vending machine fare.

“UNLV researchers are our number one resource on nutrition policy,” says Karen Vogel, a director in the school district’s food-service department. “They’re playing a great part in helping us work together to help our students learn to make wise nutritional decisions.” — Jennifer Robison

So how do we find that critical balance that will provide us with the carbohydrates we need, while avoiding the excess consumption that can have such dire consequences?

The glycemic index, developed by researchers at the University of Toronto in Canada, is one guidepost. It assigns a numerical value to the impact each food has on blood sugar; the higher the reading, the greater the impact. Hundreds of foods have been tested for their impact on blood sugar, and the results have turned nutrition science on its head.

Let’s look, for example, at the first three carbohydrates we mentioned — broccoli, the bowl of sugar, and the baked potato. Here’s how they fare on the glycemic index. Raw broccoli skates in with a glycemic number of zero. Table sugar weighs in at 61. The baked potato is the heavy hitter — a russet baker comes in at 94 because it’s loaded with glucose, a plant-based sugar that is responsible for the level of sugar in our blood. Glucose is the building block of starches, and potatoes are a very starchy food. Carrots also have a high reading.

The solution would seem to be to load up on broccoli, go easy on the sugar, and avoid carrots and potatoes. Health experts would certainly love to see Americans eat more broccoli, and they wouldn’t care if we never ate another spoonful of sugar. But avoiding glucose completely isn’t the answer either.

For one thing, we would die without it. “Blood sugar is normally the only fuel used by the brain and central nervous system,” kinesiology professor Jack Young says. Glucose also powers our muscles. “If blood sugar goes too low, as it sometimes does in individuals with type I diabetes who overdose on insulin, you can end up comatose or dying.”

Nor do you have to give up the carrots or the baked potatoes. Kruskall says, “Carrots have a high glycemic index, but you would need to eat an enormous bowl of them to raise your blood sugar. If you throw a handful of carrots into your stir fry, that won’t raise your glycemic index. And carrots are good for you.”

What else is on your plate when you eat a high glycemic index food also matters. “If you eat a baked potato by itself, your glycemic index may rise, but if you make it part of a meal, you’ve diluted the glycemic impact. And potatoes have fiber and vitamins, and they provide energy,” she says.

Also remember that each of us is a bit different biologically from the person next to us. “One person may have his blood sugar raised by pasta, but not by orange juice,” says Kruskall. “Another person may have the reverse reaction.”

The bottom line, as in most things, is to employ moderation. Carbohydrates are essential to your diet, but don’t overdo.

So, if we now know what’s good for us and what’s not, where have we gone wrong?

For one thing, our consumption of carbohydrates has increased at a blistering pace in recent years. At one time, red
meat was believed to be the enemy of healthy living because of its suspected link to heart disease. As a result, many people cut back on steak and eggs and began to bulk up on carbohydrates — more bread, more white rice, and more potatoes. At the same time, they guzzled a lot of sugar-laden soft drinks and carbohydrate-based convenience foods.

According to researchers from Harvard University’s School of Public Health, the carbs we consume the most include potatoes, rice, pizza, pasta, pancakes, sugar, jam, french fries, soft drinks, candy, sugary fruit juices, apples, and bananas. Not all of them are the best choices.

And what has been the result of this unprecedented carbohydrate consumption?

Not surprisingly, as our consumption of carbohydrates has shot upwards, so has the instance of type II diabetes.

In the 1980s, experts began to look not just at the number of calories various carbohydrates delivered, but at the impact they had on blood sugar levels. Wild swings in this critical benchmark can help destroy the pancreas, which produces insulin, an essential hormone. When your pancreas fails, you become diabetic.

Unfortunately, our modern diets cause rapid spikes in blood sugar, which induce the pancreas to produce big shots of insulin to help the body process its food.

Carbohydrates stimulate insulin production more than fats or proteins, and certain carbohydrates force insulin production into overdrive. This endangers our health two ways. High insulin production can cause heart disease and lead to type II diabetes.

The type II diabetes epidemic is particularly alarming because it has hit so many young people. “Type II used to be called adult onset diabetes because we rarely saw it in people under age 35,” Young says. “Now we see it in children as young as 8, 9, and 10.”

Part of the blame for the surge in type II cases lies with obesity. Though the mechanism isn’t fully understood, doctors have long observed that obesity and type II diabetes often occur in tandem. And it’s no secret why many of us gain weight — we often slug down huge amounts of high-calorie foods from the supermarket, from vending machines, and from the fast food restaurants that serve us big portions at a low price.

“Kids are eating more and more fast food,” says Kruskall. “Often fast food franchises are in school lunch rooms. At dinner, in households where finances and time are limited, you can get a lot of calories for three bucks at a fast food restaurant, and for another 39 cents you can upgrade your meal size and get another 1,000 calories.”

But, she says, the actual volume of food in these high-calorie meals isn’t large. A cheeseburger, fries, and a soda aren’t going to give you the same feeling of fullness as a nutrient-rich meal of chicken, green beans, brown rice, and milk. “So you may eat even more of the junk food,” Kruskall says.

As type II diabetes begins to develop, the problem snowballs. “The body continues to produce insulin, but the body’s tissues refuse to recognize that it’s there,” Young says. “So the pancreas produces more and more insulin trying to get the job done. Eventually, the pancreas can burn out.”

So what’s the solution?

Exercise is critical, and common sense would say to go easy on the carbohydrates that are likely to tax the pancreas and put on the pounds — a jelly donut with powdered sugar on top, for example.

But Young and Kruskall maintain that a healthy lifestyle does not need to be draconian.

Once again, moderation is key. Fast food doesn’t have to go completely, and we don’t have to sweat three hours a day on a treadmill.

“Incorporate physical activity into your lifestyle,” Young says. “Walk to the Starbucks instead of hopping in the car.”

And scale back on those portions. “You don’t need to have the three-taco lunch with the giant drink,” Kruskall says. “Try one taco and a diet drink.

“Even small changes can produce noticeable results.”

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The Atkins Diet: What’s at Steak?

Diet guru Dr. Robert Atkins was widely reviled in the medical community for his theory that a high-protein, high-fat diet was a healthy way to lose weight. His notion flew in the face of the standard wisdom that such a diet was a pathway to weight gain and clogged arteries. Now the diet is being taken more seriously amid preliminary indications that Atkins may have been right, at least in part.

Few studies have explored the science behind the apparent positive effects of the diet, kinesiology professor Jack Young says. “The diet works in the short term; everybody accepts that. But nobody has looked at the consequences over the long term.”

Young has teamed with Laura Kruskall, chair of the department of nutrition sciences, to see how a high-protein, high-fat regimen impacts the mechanism that controls the buildup of blood sugar from the food we eat. “We’re trying to see if the Atkins diet will, over a long period of time, negatively impact this mechanism,” Young says.

When things work right, the pancreas secretes insulin, which removes the excess sugar in the blood to produce energy or to be stored in the body. When our bodies don’t work right, it takes more insulin to regulate blood sugar. In a worst-case scenario, the high insulin production increases the risk of coronary artery diseases and burns out the pancreas, leading to full-blown diabetes and the need to take insulin injections to stay alive. “We were curious to know if a very high-fat, high-protein diet would lead to that,” Young says.

To test this, Kruskall and Young will feed rats a diet of 65 percent protein, 35 percent fat, and no carbohydrates for six weeks. “Then we will give the animals a dose of sugar, and see how long it takes to be removed from the blood, compared to a group of rats fed a normal diet. If it takes longer than normal, it means they’re on the road to getting type II diabetes.”

— Doug McInnis
It’s in the Genes
The unusual hardiness of the Pima Indians of Arizona is now the same trait that threatens their lives. Their genetic makeup enables them to store fat efficiently, something that served them well when extreme privation was common in the barren Southwest. But when the Pima began to adopt modern diets, their survival mechanism backfired. Researchers believe their efficient fat-storage mechanism resulted in obesity and an alarming rise in type II diabetes.

Now, two UNLV biology professors are researching the specific genes that promote fat storage. Deborah Hoshizaki and Allen Gibbs are working with fruit flies, which are ideal candidates for genetic research because they breed quickly and have short life cycles. “With flies, we get a new generation every three weeks,” says Gibbs.

In the first phase of their research, Gibbs fed the flies water, but no food. The flies that survived longest on the starvation regimen were then mated to each other to produce super-starvation-resistant flies. Not surprisingly, the flies became obese when fed a normal regimen. This process enabled Gibbs to locate the genes in the flies that appear to act together to produce the same kind of starvation resistance seen in the Pima.

“Now that Allen has identified the genes that might be important, I will be involved in testing each gene to see which ones are really at work here,” says Hoshizaki.

The next step, which will be left to other researchers, would be to find human counterparts to the starvation-resistant genes found in the flies. “If we understand the pathway that is leading to this over-storage of fat in people, then pharmaceutical companies can design drugs that could counteract the predisposition to gain weight,” she says. “These drugs might not only help the Pima, but they might also help others in the general population who have a milder version of the same problem.”

The Link to Malnutrition
For decades, scientists have theorized that genetics play the critical role in the epidemic of type II diabetes among the Pima Indians, where more than 50 percent of the adults over age 35 have the disease.

“These are the highest type II rates in the world. The question is, ‘Why?’” anthropology professor Daniel Benyshek says. “The answer so far has been this thrifty gene idea. In my view, genes likely play some role, but I think something else of equal — if not greater — importance is at work too.”

The evidence for Benyshek’s theory comes from animal and human studies done since the early 1990s that suggest malnutrition among pregnant mothers can predispose their offspring to the disease. He believes the malnutrition sets in motion a cycle in which the predisposition to type II diabetes can be transmitted from generation to generation.

Low birth weight is a sign of maternal malnutrition. Benyshek cites a study on British adults who were underweight when they were born in the 1930s and ’40s. Researchers later found they had a high incidence of type II diabetes. Studies with
rats, in which pregnant mothers were malnourished, also found a high incidence of type II diabetes in their offspring.

For subsequent generations, Benyshek thinks a different mechanism is at work. Diabetic mothers have high blood-sugar levels if the disease is not controlled, and this can affect the biological development of fetuses and predispose them to get type II diabetes, he says. “Once it gets started, it can be propagated from generation to generation. That’s the bottom line.”

With the Pima, he suggests the malnourishment occurred during the period of extreme privation that followed the late 19th century settlement of the American West. The Pima had been successful irrigation farmers in Arizona, but when the settlers arrived, the Pima lost much of their land and almost all their irrigation water. This plunged the tribe into economic darkness, Benyshek says. “They couldn’t grow their food and they couldn’t afford to buy it. People were literally starving to death.”

When the deprivation began to end in the 1950s, he says, the pendulum swung toward obesity, a high risk factor for type II diabetes, and incidence of the disease began to soar. Benyshek theorizes that it may be possible to break the cycle by controlling blood-sugar levels during pregnancy through diet, exercise, and medication. He is now testing his thesis on rats. “We’ll know the results in December,” he says. “If the animal tests are promising, the next thing to do is find a way to test it with humans to see if we can end the cycle.”

—By Doug McInnis

Anthropology professor Daniel Benyshek believes malnourishment among Native Americans in the 19th century plays a role in today’s diabetes problem.
The Cost of Convenience

Cake mixes, casserole starters, and the nation’s highway system have reshaped the diets that served us well for centuries. Unfortunately, our biological evolution hasn’t kept pace with our dietary shifts.

By Jennifer Robison  Photos by Aaron Mayes

If you’re like most people, you don’t think deep thoughts about nutrition. You might give it cursory attention when deciding what to serve tonight, but the complex interplay between your diet and the nutrients your body needs probably isn’t fare for dinner-table discussion.

“People spend more time looking around for cheaper gas than they spend looking for the best, most affordable, nutrient-dense foods at the grocery store,” nutrition sciences professor Susan Meacham says. That dietary short shift has cultivated an American health crisis of epic proportion. Obesity and the roster of accompanying diseases — including heart disease, diabetes, and cancer — are now at record levels.

Nourishing our bodies is a complicated matter combining taste, emotion, culture, economics, and even evolution. While consumers maintain a disconnect between their eating habits and their vitality, nutritionists and other experts at UNLV are searching for ways to improve the relationship between people and food.
A Brief History of Food

The foundation for today’s human diet was laid eons ago, when our earliest ancestors subsisted on a wide variety of plant materials. Anthropology professor Daniel Benyshek says the emergence of the genus Homo around 2.5 million years ago forced nutritional changes that still direct what people consume.

“As the species evolved, our brains grew, and big brains have voracious appetites,” Benyshek says. “Our caloric needs shot through the roof.”

That’s when diets shifted from the gatherer fare of berries and nuts to calorie-rich meats. “There’s no way Homo sapiens would have evolved without access to animal-based foods,” Benyshek says. “They fueled our evolution, in a sense.”

By about 35,000 years ago, humans were expert hunters and gatherers, wandering far and wide in constant search of sustenance. Researchers speculate diets consisted of about 35 percent animal-based foods, with the remainder devoted to plant-based foods. Centuries went by without much change in human diets.

Cultural and economic factors in the 20th century, though, reshaped the diets that sustained us well for thousands of years. Audrey McCool, a food & beverage management professor in the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration, traces the changes to World War II, when men went to the battlefield and women left the kitchen for the factory.

The result: Food companies began to develop convenience foods — cake mixes, canned soups, casserole starters — for time-pressed moms. The booming post-war economy kept women in the workforce, yielding the harried two-income families prevalent today — and sustaining the market for quick mealtime solutions.

Also key, says McCool, was the development in the 1950s of the nation’s interstate highway system. Mobile Americans, en route to vacation destinations and drive-in movies, hungered for handy meals; the hospitality industry satisfied that demand with fast-food restaurants. The eateries evolved into teen “hangouts,” and “we began to develop a culture of people who liked drive-throughs,” McCool says. “We became accustomed to that kind of food.”

The fast-food habit is now hard to break. McCool lists a litany of social factors that keep Americans hooked on convenience. Not only do most women work, but children now mirror their parents’ hectic lives through participation in myriad after-school sports, activities, and lessons. And though awareness of the health detriments of fast food is increasing, millions of Americans gravitate toward burgers, fries, and other packaged foods every day.

“People say, ‘We all know what the consequences are of a fast-food diet — why in the world do people eat it?’ The answer is simple: We eat it because it’s fast, it’s convenient, it’s cheap, and it tastes really good,” Benyshek says. “Those are really good reasons to eat it.”

Fast food might be cheap in the short-term, but dietitians insist Americans are paying a hefty price for their convenience chow. The U.S. Department of Health

Today’s Chefs Pulling More Out Of Their Hats

The public sector isn’t alone in its effort to promote dietary health. Chefs and restaurant owners feel a growing responsibility to help consumers make sound nutritional choices — a challenging task given the changing nature of the dining industry.

“Chefs are dealing with a more knowledgeable customer base,’’ says Jean Hertzman, director of food service management in UNLV’s department of food & beverage management. “Guests know more about food, and they’re asking for more nutritional options. When (restaurateurs) read about McDonald’s getting sued over obesity, they develop a bit of a preventive response. They figure they need to offer healthier alternatives.”

Technology is helping that effort. Patti Shock, chair of UNLV’s tourism & convention administration department, says handheld computer devices loaded with nutritional data aren’t the only advances poised to make eating out a healthier experience. A better understanding of genetics will soon enable doctors to create specific diets targeted to an individual’s DNA profile — a development that will require even greater nutritional knowledge among chefs.

“Chefs have to constantly educate themselves, paying attention to the newest products and techniques available,” Hertzman says. “With globalization, people are much more familiar with foods that might have been considered exotic 10 years ago. But chefs need to learn how to use those products more to create menu variety.”

That’s a daunting task even when cooks can focus exclusively on culinary innovation. Most executive chefs today, though, must spend more time outside the kitchen than in it. The line between managers and chefs is blurring, Hertzman says, as chefs take a more active role in front-of-the-house functions such as greeting guests. As restaurants tie their fortunes to prominent celebrity chefs, public relations becomes more essential a role than cooking.

“An executive chef at a restaurant in a Las Vegas casino doesn’t do any cooking, other than for very special occasions,” she says. “Their biggest emphasis now is on the business side. A knowledge of accounting, financing, and computer systems is more important than ever. Executive chefs are the business managers of their operations. They need to understand inventory, cost control, and human-resources issues.”

—Jennifer Robison
We’ve lost sight of the real purposes of food: fuel and health maintenance.

— Susan Meacham
nutrition sciences professor
and Human Services estimates 64 percent of Americans weigh too much. Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control show the country’s rate of obesity — defined as weighing 20 percent more than one’s ideal — rose from 12 percent in 1991 to 20 percent in 2000.

“Over the last 40 years, our tastes have been shaped by the fast-food industry,” Benyshek says. “It was born in the United States on the West Coast, and now it’s being exported. We’re a fast-food nation, and that has remarkable ramifications.”

Rapid Changes, Profound Consequences

To understand the implications, hark back to those earliest humans. The need for brain-fueling, calorie-dense foods that led our species to meat millions of years ago translates today into cravings for sweet, salty, and fatty edibles, Benyshek says. The hit-or-miss nature of foraging in the Pleistocene Era encouraged gorging on calorie-rich foods in good times to prepare for lean months.

“It makes sense evolution would select for those desires,” Benyshek says. “We acquired a taste for fatty foods because they have more calories per gram, and (sweetness) is a good general signal nature gives that a product is a high-calorie food.”

But rapid changes in diets and lifestyles over the last half-century have made such nutritional cues obsolete. There is no feast-or-famine. Americans now enjoy unrestricted access to foods at the same time their bodies need fewer calories than ever. The consequences are profound.

“We really don’t have to work at all to access food,” Benyshek says. “What created a balance for our forebears was not only famine, but that they had to work hard to grow, collect, or somehow obtain food. Today, most of us sit at computers all day and drive cars everywhere. We’re not burning calories or challenging our aerobic capacity. People don’t realize how modest our caloric needs are. They still insist on three good-sized meals a day, plus two or three lattes with sugar, as well as a couple of snacks.”

In short, says Meacham, modern-day humans have “lost sight of the real purposes of food: fuel and health maintenance.”

Americans in particular seem to have a go-go culture that has disengaged people from understanding good nutrition. “In the United States, we eat on the run,” McCool says. “We don’t pay attention to what we eat. And one way to eat too much is to not pay attention to what we’re eating.”

Also a casualty of convenience foods is the social aspect of dining, says Patti Shock, chair of the tourism & convention administration department in the Harrah Hotel College. Eaters in other parts of the world tend to take their time eating and relish food as part of the social fabric, she says. And taking your time at lunch or dinner means you’ll eat more slowly — and reach satiety with less food.

Meacham also suspects Americans’ fast-paced lifestyles generate a chronic, everyday level of job and family stress that has led to subtle hormonal changes that affect weight. For example, the stress hormone cortisol has shown a propensity to boost fat storage to prepare the body for famine — useful in humans a century ago but harmful amid today’s abundance. Meacham even points to studies revealing a link between too little sleep and susceptibility to weight gain. “We don’t value a slower, more serene lifestyle,” she says. “We’re going all week and all weekend.”

Pushing Junk Food in Schools

Especially alarming are transformations in children’s lifestyles and the accompanying spike in weight gain. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 16 percent of children ages 6 to 19 were overweight in 2002, up from 11 percent in 1994. Meacham traces the increase back to the early 1980s, when computers, television, and video games supplanted outdoor activities during leisure time.

Children parked in front of the TV aren’t just missing out on fresh air and physical activity; they’re also subjected to a barrage of cartoonish ads from processed- and fast-food companies. Children as young as 2 possess basic food-brand awareness. To impressionable youngsters, a trip to the corner burger stand is packaged as a fun excursion. “Children today also significantly influence the family’s grocery store purchases, and they know the products they want — the ones they have seen in the ads on TV,” McCool says.

Numbers bear out the increased interest food companies have in capturing market share. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, marketing costs in 2000 accounted for 81 percent of total consumer food spending, compared to 76 percent in 1990. The USDA asserts marketing services are the “primary cause of higher food expenditures.” Marketing costs among food companies rose nearly 7 percent from 1999 to 2000, accounting for virtually all of the increase in domestic consumer-food spending. By contrast, the cost of farm products rose less than 1 percent in the same year.

Ever on the hunt for a greater market share, food companies haven’t merely dropped cash on more advertising. They’ve also unleashed an avalanche of new products. The country’s agriculture system is dominated by a handful of massive corporations that own processing, packaging, and distribution companies in addition to farms; such companies constantly seek new avenues of demand for their goods, McCool says. The end result? More processed foods on the table.

It’s also meant more prepackaged foods in schools. Twin developments in the 1980s — food companies’ appetites for greater market share and schools’ needs for boosted revenue — gave rise to vending machines stocked with candy bars, cookies, sodas, and chips. Some proceeds have gone to useful items, including diplomas and band uniforms, Meacham says, but the trade-off isn’t healthy for society.

“Here we are educating individuals to be productive citizens, but they’re going to put all their time and effort into paying their medical bills instead of producing to the benefit
Children ... significantly influence the family’s grocery store purchases, and they know the products they want — the ones they have seen in the ads on TV.

— Audrey McCool
food & beverage management professor
Lifting the Burden

Amid such troubling trends, nutrition experts see indications that Americans are beginning at last to get serious about dietary health.

“The burden of chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes is becoming so great that we have to change,” Benyshek says. “It’s not just a burden on families, but on the economy and our health-care system.” He cites policy recommendations from the federal government — such as revisions to food guidelines and the 10,000 Steps a Day program to promote physical activity — that “are all falling in line with what experts have been saying we should do.”

McCool hopes such efforts aren’t limited to public policymakers. Pointing to the imbalance between the marketing resources fast-food companies can marshal and the funds the government has to advance good nutrition and exercise, she says the food industry must modify its advertising.

Ultimately, though, consumers bear the responsibility. Meacham believes that regardless of humans’ innate preference for fatty, salty, and sweet treats, people can slowly reorient their taste buds toward healthier foods. And she says any successful weight-awareness program will highlight the essential equilibrium between calorie intake and expenditure.

Last summer, Meacham and McCool helped forge such a policy for the Clark County School District. The guidelines, which went into effect July 1, govern standards of foods and drinks sold in student stores, vending machines, and school-sponsored fund-raising and concession activities. Among the changes: Carbonated beverages have been banned from vending machines and exchanged for water, milk, and healthy juices, and wholesome snacks such as baked chips, yogurt, trail mix, and fresh fruits have replaced high-fat candies and savories. Even nonfood items, such as stickers and pencils, are appearing in vending machines.

“This is not a flimsy policy,” Meacham says. “We’re making a strong statement that we really care about the health and welfare of children in the district. Children are required to attend school 180 days a year. Because they’re forced into that environment, we’re responsible as caretakers and educators for making sure they have an environment that’s healthy.”

Karen Vogel, a director in the school district’s food-service department, agrees: “Just as we would not put books in our school libraries that would not be appropriate to children, we should not make inappropriate food products available to our students.”

But providing healthy options is just one component of the district’s new program. Administrators also plan nutrition instruction for all grades. “If we don’t go beyond the choices and provide education about why those choices are there, then students’ first stop after school will be for a burger and fries,” Meacham says.

The rules are already bearing fruit: Meacham says teachers and administrators have noticed a decrease in behavioral problems, a decline she attributes to students “just feeling healthier.” As for vending-machine revenue, principals who’ve checked in with Meacham say sales haven’t dropped — proving kids can adjust to healthier choices.

Meacham and McCool are working on similar guidelines for schools statewide. In addition, Meacham and other professors developed a continuing education course for school district personnel — ranging from teachers to bus drivers — who work with high-schoolers. The idea is to foster districtwide awareness of good nutrition.

“I do think nutrition and education efforts are beginning to take hold,” Meacham says. “The health crisis has forced us to connect the dots. We’ve let ourselves run amok. But when I survey students in classes about how many of them consciously think about nutrient content, more do so now than did in the ’70s and ’80s. I’m hoping we’re becoming more reasonable about taking responsibility for our food choices.”

For the dental school’s Mobley, nutrition education is an integral part of heading off health issues down the road. She’s an investigator in a National Institutes of Health study looking into school-based prevention in seven schools around the country.

“We’re testing a multiphase intervention that involves an increase in physical activity at school, improvements in offerings through school food service, and the addition of a behavioral component involving classroom activities that promote healthy eating and active lives,” Mobley says. “We’re hoping to demonstrate that by introducing such intervention, we could impact changes in body weight that are occurring in kids.”

Even nature could advance such efforts. The same
prehistoric nutritional profile that conferred on us a taste for calorie-laden foods also gifted us with dietary flexibility — a strong interest in trying many new foods. UNLV’s experts believe that exposing yourself to healthy foods multiple times can help you develop a taste for them.

Our gustatory curiosity has engendered greater mainstream interest in ethnic foods, many of which can be both healthy and easy to prepare, McCool adds. Though not as quick as popping open a can, ethnic one-dish meals like stir-frys and soups feature more healthy and inexpensive vegetables and beans than mainstream American convenience foods.

Shock, of the tourism department, already sees consumers inspiring local changes. Diners are demanding fresh regional produce and pesticide-free foods. In addition, the organic food market is growing 25 percent a year. Today’s food-industry buzzwords include “fresh” and “pure,” Shock says, and restaurants are ditching harmful, hydrogenated trans-fats in favor of healthier fats such as olive oil. Some restaurant owners are even customizing handheld organizers that wait staff can use to access extensive nutritional information on menu items.

The changes might be small, but for Shock, incremental improvements are the best kind. “People may not want to be health-food nuts, but they do want to eat healthier. I don’t see people going straight from donuts to celery, but to any degree that our diets improve, that’s positive. Radical changes don’t last.”

He’s just started his studies in hotel administration, but Brett Ottolenghi already has access to some of the city’s top chefs. The UNLV freshman is their truffle connection. Though just 19, he’s a veteran in the business of marketing this prized and pungent delicacy.

Ottolenghi could have stayed closer to his hometown of Gettysburg, Penn., for college — he was accepted at Cornell and Boston universities. But ultimately he chose UNLV, both for its acclaimed hotel curriculum and for its location.

“There are so many upscale restaurants in Las Vegas,” he says. “I believed there was a lot of potential to do business here.”

He launched the Truffle Market as a website when he was just 13 years old. He had sampled truffles for the first time at a San Francisco restaurant and wondered why they were so expensive.

The boy with a preternatural mind for business — he bought Ben & Jerry’s stock in second grade — enlisted the help of his father, Arturo, to invest in a few thousand dollars’ worth of truffles and sell them online. “It was a hobby, an experiment,” Ottolenghi says. “I wanted to learn more about business and see if I could actually do it.”

A little research into the aromatic tubers only fueled his fascination. Truffles are a fungus that grows on tree roots, mostly in Italy and France, and only under precise conditions. A pound of fresh black truffles goes for about $700 this season, while the same amount of the delicate white winter truffles costs more than three times as much.

At those prices, Ottolenghi’s “experiment” grossed about $120,000 in sales last year. He’s expanded his offerings beyond fresh and jarred truffles to include oils, vinegars, butters, and juices made with the tuber, as well as fresh goat’s cheese.

His customers are largely home gourmets, Ottolenghi says, but he has started branching out to wholesale. His client list has grown to include luminaries on the Las Vegas dining scene and beyond, such as vintner Robert Mondavi and the chefs at the MGM Mansion.

Ottolenghi recently had the thrill of meeting chef Thomas Keller of the new Bouchon at the Venetian, calling him “a big inspiration.” Keller’s chefs are especially discriminating, he says.

“They don’t want to just buy truffles,” Ottolenghi says. “They say, ‘Call us if you get something in that’s the best you’ve ever seen.’”

A truffle transaction is a discreet affair, Ottolenghi says. “Once in the kitchen, I open the box and lay it out with a scale next to it. It seems like something illicit. Very often we don’t even discuss the price. I just remember what the chef picked out.”

Ottolenghi’s interest in food goes beyond business. He’s taking courses in biology and studies the science of food on his own, particularly new methods in mushroom and truffle cultivation. He’s now experimenting with winemaking; with the return on his Truffle Market investment, he planted a 1.5-acre vineyard at a family apple orchard in Pennsylvania.

But he’s not ready to leave his core product behind yet. “I see the business expanding beyond truffles, but they’ll certainly remain a part of it,” Ottolenghi says. “I’d like to have a company that people can trust to monitor the quality of all the products.”

More Info: www.trufflemarket.com

More Info: www.trufflemarket.com

Oils and butters are some of the truffle-based products Brett Ottolenghi sells via his website, which he operates from his South Complex residence hall room. He offers the fungus fresh when in season.
Reality Check

Daniel Allen has just the kind of soft-spoken voice you expect of a psychologist. He originally thought he’d be a counselor — “It’s a cliché to say, but I chose psychology because I wanted to help people.” But in graduate school his fascination with how the brain works took hold and he found another way to help people. He’s now director of the UNLV Neuropsychology Research Program and is garnering national awards for his research, much of which focuses on people with schizophrenia. He hopes his work will lead to medications and rehabilitation techniques that target the specific parts of the brain affected by the debilitating mental disorder. At the same time he oversees the work of 11 doctoral candidates and teaches testing and abnormal psychology classes.

The heartbreaking thing about schizophrenia is that it afflicts people who seem to be developing normally. It hits them just when they’re starting their lives.

As many as 10 percent of those with schizophrenia fully recover and 30 percent need institutionalization. The rest, we believe, can lead productive lives with proper support and treatment.

It can be hard to see the individual behind the mental illness. You have to remember there’s a person in there. They have goals and aspirations. They have all the elements of humanity.

Most people think of schizophrenia as having a split personality. The word actually comes from the thought that the mind is splitting from reality, not into personalities.

Those with schizophrenia may make general things very personal. They’ll see an invention on TV and have a sense they thought of the idea, so they’ll rationalize that someone has stolen the idea out of their heads. They’ll see their neighbor driving to work and somehow interpret that as the government spying on them. Of course, it’s only a delusion if the FBI really isn’t spying on you.

About the only time you see a person with schizophrenia on TV is when they have committed a crime, so people often think that schizophrenia equals danger. As it turns out, only a small percentage actually commit violence.

A Beautiful Mind was an interesting movie because it allowed the general public to see a person with schizophrenia who was not a violent criminal. If you have seen the movie, you can imagine how terrifying the disorder is for people who aren’t geniuses and who don’t have people to support them.

Unlike with cancer and heart disease, the person with schizophrenia deals with their problem for decades because it starts at a young age. Developing treatment and support structures is not only the humane thing to do, but it’s also cheaper for society to help them lead productive lives than it is to treat them as criminals.

In the 1950s, there was a big treatment breakthrough with the introduction of chlorpromazine. As a result there was this huge discharge from mental institutions. The idea was that the funds for the institutions would be transferred to community-support programs. But the money didn’t follow the patients.

Nevada is not a good state in which to develop a mental health problem. The funding for services historically has been very low.

Las Vegas ERs often have six-hour waits in part because patients with mental health needs have had nowhere else to go. But, we are making progress. The new mental health hospital and the new VA hospital will help. And there’s now a mental health court that enables judges to mandate treatment rather than community service or jail time.

Schizophrenia is clearly genetically linked, but other factors must play a role, too. If one identical twin has it, the other has a 50 percent chance of developing it. That’s high, but the amazing thing is that it’s not 100 percent — they have the exact same DNA and were raised more or less the same. So what sets the disorder off in one but not the other?

Medicines tend to treat the most visible symptoms — bizarre behaviors, like talking to people who aren’t there, the things that scare other people. But for those with schizophrenia, it’s the things that aren’t there — like the ability to negotiate social environments — that so dramatically affect their ability to be productive individuals.

One of the key things humans do is accurately interpret the emotions of others. A schizophrenic person can’t seem to do that. If they can’t distinguish between sarcasm and a compliment when someone says “Good job,” they can’t respond appropriately.

In our lab, we’re trying to figure out just where the breakdown happens. Is it because they can’t pick up on the visual cues or the auditory cues, or is the problem with the integration of the two?

Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) lets you see exactly what part of the brain is active when you give someone with schizophrenia a task compared to the “normal” population. I hope to work with other units on campus to bring an fMRI here. In brain research, it’s “the bomb.”

Of course, we all misperceive reality at times. I ask my intro to psychology students to raise their hands if they are better-than-average drivers. Most of them do. By definition, they can’t all be better-than-average.

And sometimes those with mental disorders have more accurate perceptions. Depressed people tend to perceive things more accurately than happy people. Happy people tend to be overly optimistic; they think things are better than they really are. It’s called the sadder but wiser effect.

—As told to Cate Weeks
The brain is a cold, ugly looking thing. I think that’s why it can be easy for researchers to forget about the people. Clinical work brings it all back.
Contemporary but traditional. Exciting but relaxing. Public but private. Catch a snippet of the conversation as interior architects Ken Kulas and Ann Fleming describe their spaces and you might be confused by the antonyms used in the same breath.

Their work as the owners of Cleo Design often requires them to create two things at once. Use the refurbishment of the casino and bar areas of the Las Vegas Hilton as an example.

“The lounge is very contemporary and exciting, but it’s inspired by many elements from old Las Vegas hangouts like the Peppermill,” says Kulas, '80 BA Art History. “We want that contemporary twist so it appeals to a broader market, but we’re also trying to bring back the historic glamour of old Las Vegas. The traditional makes people feel comfortable, but contemporary makes it an exciting place to be.”

The act of dining in a restaurant itself involves contrasting elements, Kulas says. “Part of eating out is that it’s something you do in public; you do it in part to be with other people. But at the same time, you’re also looking to have an intimate experience with the people you’re with.”

They often use architecture to create intimate vignettes in their large dining rooms, creating both public and private spaces simultaneously. Kulas and Fleming describe their work as a blend of old and new, combining the best of both worlds to create spaces that are both accessible and exclusive.

Study in Contrasts: Ann Fleming and Ken Kulas, interior architects

1970s

Douglas E. Jensen, '71 BS Hotel Administration, is senior director of finance for Kerzner International Bahamas. He and his wife, Karen, have one daughter, Lillie Grace. Lillie Grace was born in the People’s Republic of China, Hunan Province, and adopted by the couple when she was 8 months old. The family lives in Winter Park, Fla.

Caryn Dibble, ’75 M.Ed. Elementary Education, retired from the Clark County School District last June after 35 years of teaching in elementary schools. She wrapped up her career teaching third grade at Vanderbilt Elementary School. She plays golf and bridge, reads avidly, and does volunteer work.

Michael D. Boyd, ’79 BS Hotel Administration, was promoted to director of volunteer services for Methodist Hospital in San Antonio. A five-year employee, he coordinates the efforts of the hospital’s 800 volunteers. Previously, he was a manager for the Luby’s restaurant chain.

1980s

Howie Basuk, '80 BS Business Administration, is founder and president of Barry Metals Co., a scrap metal recycling company located in Phoenix since 1988. In 2000, the operation expanded into Mexico under the name Barry Metals International. He named the company after his brother, who died of leukemia. He enjoys working out, playing golf, and returning to Las Vegas for UNLV events.

Mike Masterson, ’84 BS Hotel Administration, is president of ISOTECH Pest Management, a Los Angeles commercial pest management company specializing in the hospitality industry. He also is the inventor and manufacturer of the Termiscope, an early warning system for detecting subterranean termites. He and his wife of 18 years, Roberta, are the parents of Sean and Ashtyn. They live in Covina.

Bruce Ford, ’86 BS Business Administration, recently was hired by Community Bancorp as executive vice president and chief credit officer for its wholly owned subsidiary, Community Bank of Nevada. He oversees the growth of loan production throughout the bank and provides direction to the loan officers. He has more than 21 years of banking experience and previously served as the senior regional credit officer for Wells Fargo Bank.

Douglas Osborne, ’86 BA Hotel Administration, owns the Tailspin Bar and Grill in Las Vegas.
spaces. At the Carmel Room, the Ram-part Casino’s gourmet restaurant, they used arches and drapes to create nooks. At one end of the restaurant, behind glass doors, is the “library” room. The settees, which are flanked by end tables along the walls, are meant to feel like living room sofas rather than banquet seating. The use of a warm, monochromatic color scheme ties it all together.

“We try to create different settings within one restaurant so diners have subtly different experiences,” says Fleming. “People will remember if they dined in the ‘library’ or they’ll tell their friends to request a table behind the draped nook. It’s all about creating a variety of experiences.”

Fleming and Kulas met when both were in-house designers for Mirage Resorts. There they had designed public spaces for Treasure Island, Golden Nugget, and the Mirage. At the Bellagio, Kulas was primarily responsible for the convention, high-stakes gaming, and showroom areas. Fleming worked on the Tower suites, Jasmine restaurant, and baccarat areas.

After MGM bought Mirage Resorts in 2000, the pair decided to launch their own firm. Cleo Design now has nine employees working for residential and commercial clients around the globe, including Hard Rock properties in Florida and the Wynn Macau.

In their hometown, they’ve designed the interiors of Fusia restaurant in the Luxor, Twin Creeks Steakhouse at the Silverton, and local La Salsa Mexican Cantinas. At Mandalay Bay, their list of clients include Café Giorgio, The Chocolate Swan, Nike Golf Store, The Reading Room, and The Art of Shaving.

“Hospitality is very exciting because it’s make-believe,” says Fleming.

Still, they can’t sacrifice function when coming up with an over-the-top design. So, while the Carmel Room’s serving stations are tucked out of diners’ sight, they’re not so far back that the wait staff has trouble serving the guests.

The latest trends in restaurant design actually place function at the heart of the room. “Dining now is much more than the food,” Kulas says. “Open kitchens and tableside preparation of elegant bananas foster or simple guacamole bring drama to the whole experience. And it somehow makes the food more ‘home cooked’ than when meals just arrive on a plate like banquet service.”

Accomplishing the sometimes competing goals of the restaurant owner and the chef can be tough, they both say. And the bigger the project, the more complicated the design choices become. “Everybody has an opinion, including the guests,” Kulas says.

“People just know when a design is somehow wrong — when the lighting is just a bit off or the tables are a bit too close,” Fleming says. “But when all the pieces come together, they don’t just know it, they feel it.”

—Cate Weeks

Kirk Cresto, ’88 BS Business Administration, has worked for Sierra Pacific Resources and its Nevada Power subsidiary since 1994. He is now director of risk control for all of Sierra Pacific Resources. Previously, he served as the business unit controller for Nevada Power and as the chief administrative officer of Sierra Pacific. He is a 2003 graduate of the Leadership Las Vegas program. He and his wife, Janina, have five children. Their oldest son, Bryce, is a freshman at UNLV.

Suzanne Gradisher, ’88 BS Business Administration, is a lawyer with the firm Amer Cunningham in Akron, Ohio. She practices in the areas of individual and corporate tax law; business and corporate law; wills, trusts and estate planning; probate; and real estate. A certified public accountant, she earned her law and master of taxation degrees from the University of Akron and her MBA from Kent State University.

Bryan K. Scott, ’88 BS Business Administration, was elected president of the Clark County Bar Association in January. He is the first African-American elected to that position in the association’s 50-year history. An attorney for 14 years, he has spent the past eight years as a Las Vegas deputy city attorney involved with land-use law and litigation.

Charles Conti, ’89 BS Business Administration, is a Realtor at Coldwell Banker Wardley Real Estate in Henderson.

Susan Gieck Trautmann, ’89 BS Business Administration, ’01 J.D., works as legal counsel for Nevada Power Co. She was a member of the first graduating class of UNLV’s William S. Boyd School of Law.

1990s

Bruce Claver, ’90 BS Hotel Administration, recently joined the Union League Club of Chicago as front office manager. Established in 1869, the club has 190 guest rooms. He and his wife, Amy, are expecting their second child in June. They live in Glenview.

Gary Seideman, ’90 BA Communication Studies, is the chief executive officer of DigiMedia Services, a video production company specializing in corporate and broadcast videos. As a member of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society’s Team in Training for the past four years, he has helped raise more than $10,000 to find a cure for blood-related cancers. He enjoys mountain biking, road cycling, snowboarding, hiking, and adventure travel. His latest adventure took him to Italy, where he biked more than 200 miles through Tuscany in six days. He lives in Escondido, Calif.

Matthew J. Engle, ’91 BS Business Management, runs two offices as an area manager for AAA Nevada in Southern Nevada. He was selected the 2004 AAA Volunteer of the Year for Nevada and Utah, having coordinated several volunteer opportunities for employees. His hobbies include working out, attending concerts, and following the Rebels. He also is a soccer coach and serves on the board of directors for the Summerlin-area American Youth Soccer Organization. He and his wife, Elizabeth, have two daughters, Tabitha and Madison.

Al McDonald, ’91 BA Criminal Justice, earned a law degree from the University of Arizona in 1995. He has his own law firm and is the first court-appointed conflict lawyer for the Pascua Yaqui Tribe. He is a lifetime member of Kingston’s National Registry of Who’s Who in American Law and a member of the United Registry of Who’s Who in National Jurisprudence. In 2003, he was selected Businessman of the Year by the Business Advisory Council of the National Congressional Committee. Before opening his own practice, he was a partner in Trezza and McDonald, one of the largest criminal defense firms in southern Arizona. He lives in Tucson.

Brian Costanzo, ’92 BS Hotel Administration, last year started his own meeting and event company, Vision Hospitality, in San Francisco.

M. Dean Dupalo, ’92 BA Communication Studies, ’93 BA Political Science, is a lecturer in the political science department. He also serves as chair of the Community Development Review Board, which makes funding recommendations for some 90 nonprofit organizations in Southern Nevada. Previously, he served in the U.S. Air Force.

Michelle Lorenzo, ’92 BS Business Administration, works as a sales executive for Panorama Towers, a Las Vegas high-rise condominium project. Her hobbies include snowboarding, kickboxing, running, weight lifting, yoga, and tennis.
Another Completion: Randall Cunningham, recent graduate

It had been nearly 20 years to the day since Randall Cunningham last heard the cheers of UNLV fans. But on Dec. 20, the two-time All-American quarterback and former NFL star once again brought fans, friends, and family to their feet for what he considers to be one of the most important completions of his career: his college degree.

“I’ve done a lot of things on and off the football field, but this was just something left undone that I felt was very important for me to finish,” says Cunningham. “My MVP awards are something I got because I had teammates that helped me out. Earning a college degree is much more of an individual accomplishment. Other people help you get there, too, but it’s ultimately something you have to go and do for yourself.”

When Cunningham left Las Vegas for the NFL in 1984, he was just 20 credits shy of earning his bachelor of arts degree in leisure studies from UNLV’s William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration. He re-enrolled in spring 2004 after some urging by Janice Henry, athletic academic advisor for UNLV’s football team. He completed the remaining credits by taking a combination of traditional and online courses.

“Janice was very inspirational to me and was also very determined to get me to finish,” says Cunningham. “She absolutely loves to see student-athletes come back to earn their degrees.”

At the commencement ceremony, Randall’s family — including his wife, Denise; son, Randall; and daughters, Vashti and Grace — cheered the loudest as UNLV President Carol C. Harter read aloud some of his accomplishments and recognized him as an “outstanding graduate.”

“They were up there hollering and all excited,” Cunningham says. “But I think they got more joy out of just being at the event and seeing what a beautiful job UNLV did at honoring all the graduates.”

Despite all his successes both on and off the field (he was recently ordained a minister and will be opening his own church soon), Cunningham remains a modest man, preferring these days to define success through his family and his faith.

“I’m pretty much just like everybody else. I wanted to do it for myself and my family, and for other athletes at UNLV as well,” he says. “It was also very important for me to be officially considered part of the alumni of my university.”

—Gian Galassi

Lyra Beck, ’93 BS Hotel Administration, is working for Boyd Gaming Corp. as corporate director of hotel yield/teleservices. She returned to Las Vegas from Northern Nevada where she worked for another company in a divisional role. Before that, she helped open a Harrah’s property in Louisiana.

Ron Pepper, ’93 BS Hotel Administration, owned and operated a martial arts school until deciding to fulfill his dream of living abroad. In Spain, he started a photography business specializing in panoramic “virtual tour” photography. More recently, he moved to San Francisco and launched www.panoramnetwork.com, which keeps him involved with the hospitality business. He also works as a bartender on the weekends.

Sari F. Utschen-Ayalon, ’93 BS Hotel Administration, returned to Las Vegas recently after 10 years away. She opened her own staffing service called Culinary Pros, which provides culinary services to hotels, country clubs, and those hosting special events.

Diane Watanabe, ’93 BS Hotel Administration, moved from New Jersey to Scottsdale, Ariz., where she is an event manager for WorkatWork, an association for human resources professionals. Her husband, Jonathan Ukeiley, ’91 MBA, will join her in Scottsdale this spring.

Jim Geoffroy, ’94 BS Finance, recently was promoted to associate director of finance with Verizon Wireless, resulting in a transfer to Denver. He and his wife, Sherry, had a daughter, Kaitlyn Jane, on May 24, 2004. They live in Castle Rock.

Tara Pike, ’94 BS Environmental Studies, is celebrating her 10th year as solid waste and recycling manager for UNLV’s Rebel Recycling program. She was married Oct. 23, 2004, to Nick Nordstrom in Zion National Park. They own Millwork Creations Ltd., a custom cabinet door manufacturing company. Her hobbies include caring for her dogs, reptiles, and fish.
Brewing Up a Business: Scott Plail, coffee company owner

As an executive in charge of divisions at such companies as Revlon and Colgate-Palmolive, Scott Plail, ’79 BS Hotel Administration, had spent a lot of time flying from his California home to various points across the country. On one of those weary trips, he slurped a coffee so good that it inspired him to start his own company.

“I was tired of the corporate grind,” says Plail, no pun intended, “so I decided to venture off on my own. I discovered a coffee product on the East Coast that no one on the West Coast had.”

Coffee became the central product for the specialty foods distribution company Plail launched in 1991 by combining his experience in the hospitality and consumer products industries with an entrepreneurial drive. But just as he was building a customer base for the premium cup of joe, the manufacturer’s quality began to dip. “I just couldn’t accept that. I knew I could do better.”

After a year’s worth of research into growing, roasting, flavoring, and packaging coffee, Plail launched Black Mountain Gold Coffee Co. in Lake Forest, Calif. It now has nearly 60 regular employees and sells its product in more than 6,500 grocery stores in North America. In 2004, it was the top-selling coffee product on Amazon.com, and sales from the company’s own website are brisk, with regular customers in countries around the globe.

To carve out a niche apart from the billion-dollar giants, the company focused on two things: cutting-edge packaging to preserve freshness and proprietary flavorings that truly taste like the foods they’re meant to evoke, such as “cinnamon crumb cake” and “Southern pecan.”

The flavoring for the café mocha variety was actually based on Plail’s own recipe for tiramisu. “It took me 15 years to perfect my recipe,” says Plail, who at one time thought he would be a chef. “Once I had it down, I actually made it from scratch and shipped it to my flavoring maker. The flavor has to be perfect if you want to keep the customer.”

He’s also built a loyal following through packaging in one-pot portions that seal in the fresh, batch-roasted Arabica beans. “Coffee is very much parallel with wine making,” Plail says. “The flavor of the coffee goes back to how and where it’s grown, the soil conditions, how it’s harvested. Then it has to be processed properly. The smallest difference, like the moisture in the air when the coffee’s roasted, can be a huge factor in the flavor.”

But, unlike wine, coffee does not get better with age. Those beans in the bins at the grocery store? They’re well on their way to becoming rancid, Plail says. And the stuff in the can is no better — it’s stale before you even get out the can opener. “The difference between stale and fresh coffee is tremendous,” he explains. “Most people don’t realize that they’re drinking stale coffee.”

This year, Black Mountain Gold Coffee introduced its one-cup “pod” product as well as a corporate coffee-service program for companies because “there’s no reason that employees should be complaining about how terrible the coffee is at work.” And soon the company will launch a custom coffee-service program for a major resort company. Plail developed that program using connections he made in the hotel industry soon after earning his degree from UNLV’s William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration.

Next on the horizon is a patented process for preserving the antioxidants in the raw coffee beans. “Coffee has the highest level of antioxidants of any substance on earth, but when you roast it at 450 degrees, those wonderful antioxidants are destroyed,” Plail says.

This spring he also spent time traveling to Africa to help local villagers market their products. Plail hopes to promote native crafts through coffee gift baskets and in the future wants to establish processing plants in the countries from which he buys coffee. That, he says, will not only improve the quality of the coffee, it will provide a higher level of living for the growers.

The San Clemente resident also sits on the board of directors for a men’s ministry and works with the Salvation Army to employ homeless people.

“As a company, we try to be good corporate and global citizens — and that goes beyond making sure the local villagers get a fair price for their coffee beans,” he says. “My experience in the coffee industry has shown me firsthand the plight of people. Going to a village in Chiapas (Mexico) or seeing how AIDS has affected villagers in Africa grabs at your heart. They live on so little. You can’t see that and then not use your resources to help.”

—Cate Weeks
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and serving as a “foster mother” for abandoned and abused cats. She also is active in efforts to preserve threatened ecosystems around the world.

Joanne Barrios Wildenhain, '95 BS Hotel Administration, works as senior sales manager for Marriott Hotels and Resorts International at the Renaissance Los Angeles Hotel. She lives in Redondo Beach.

Allie Smith, '96 BA Communication Studies, is executive director and editor of CLASS! Publications, which produces a monthly magazine for, for, and about Clark County high school students. She is also involved in environmental, political, and human rights issues.

Rachel Ego Conneely, '96 BS Hotel Administration, moved from Boston to Wyoming, changed jobs, and got married — all in six months’ time. She now works for the Powder Horn Ranch, a new golf community in Sheridan.

Mark Benjamin, '97 BS Hotel Administration, is director of operations for net.insights, a marketing company that designs websites and provides web management services to hospitality companies. He also heads Las Vegas Restaurants Online, an online restaurant reservation bookings company.

Hilaire Pressley, '97 BS Biology, earned a doctoral degree in optometry from the University of Houston in 2001. She then completed a residency in ocular disease and refractive and ocular surgery. She now practices in Las Vegas.

Kyle Horvatis, '98 BS Hotel Administration, is a physical education teacher as well as baseball and volleyball coach at Kenmore East High School in Buffalo, N.Y. He has been teaching for four years. He lives in Lockport.

Tony Letendre, '98 BS Hotel Administration, was elected to PGA membership as a class “A” member in May 2004. He is the head golf professional at the new Toscana Country Club, a high-end private club with two Jack Nicklaus signature courses. He lives in La Quinta, Calif.

Candace Jones Severson, '98 BS Nursing and BS Health Education, received a master of public health degree from Emory University in 2000. For the past three years, she has worked as a pediatric nurse at Emanuel Children’s Hospital in Portland, Ore. On Sept. 5, 2004, she married David Severson at Portland’s First Christian Church.

Elliot Dubin, '99 BS Hotel Administration, recently became director of hospitality services for Jani-King of Illinois. Jani-King is the world’s leading commercial cleaning franchise company with more than 10,000 franchise owners worldwide. He lives in Niles.

Rodney Woodbury, '99 Bachelor of Music, is in his sixth year as director of bands at Century High School in Pocatello, Idaho. He recently was included in an article for School Band and Orchestra magazine titled “50 Directors Who Make A Difference.” He serves as a worship team leader at his church. He and his wife, Cassie, are the parents of Maisy, 3, Asher, 5, and Nathaniel, 6 months.

- 2000s

Nicole Klein-Richter, '00 Master of Education, is director of the Midbar Kodesh Early Childhood Center. She is pursuing a doctoral degree in multicultural education. Her husband, Jeremy Richter, '97 BS Physical Education, is a corrections officer at the Clark County Detention Center. They have two children, Abigail, 2, and Mabel, who was born Feb. 25.

Scott Ramin, '00 BS Hotel Administration, '04 MS Hotel Administration, is pursuing a doctoral degree at Oklahoma State University. He also works as a graduate assistant/chef instructor at the State Room Grill in the Atherton Hotel, which is run by the university’s hotel department. He lives in Stillwater.

Michael Bobersky, '01 M.Ed. Special Education, works with special needs students in grades four through six at Southern Columbia Middle School in Catawissa, Penn. He works with students and their teachers to ensure that special-needs students can remain in traditional classrooms. Before moving to Pennsylvania he spent several years teaching for the Clark County School District. He and his wife, Laura, had their first child, Jacob Walter, on Nov. 11, 2004. The family lives in Benton.

Geetha Sendhil, '01 Master of Public Administration, is assistant director of information technology at UNLV’s Center for Academic Enrichment and Outreach. Traveling is her hobby. She and her husband, Sendhil Kolaandivel, have two children, Selvam, 7, and Aasha, 2. They live in Henderson.

Julianna Ormsby, '02 Master of Social Work, is program manager for the Women’s Research Institute of Nevada, located at UNLV. She also teaches part time in the women’s studies department.

Norma Wood, '02 BA Dance, is a dancer and assistant to magician Kenneth Havard aboard Holland America Cruise Line’s M.S. Rotterdam. Previously, she danced for more than three years in “Jubilee!” at Bally’s Hotel and Casino.

Joseph Donaldbai, '03 MA Political Science, was promoted to major in the U.S. Army and selected to attend the Joint Military Intelligence College at Holloman Air Force Base in Washington, D.C. The yearlong program involves earning another graduate degree and is fundamental training for duty in the strategic intelligence field. He currently is stationed at Fort Riley, Kan. He and his wife, June, have two sons, Jacob and William Wallace. They live in Junction City.

Cesar Hernandez, '03 BS Hotel Administration, was promoted within the Hilton Hotel Corp. to director of revenue management at the Hilton Cancun Beach and Golf Resort in Mexico. Previously, he was assistant director of revenue management with Hilton in New Orleans.

John L. Mendez, '03 BS Business Administration, received an MBA with an emphasis in entrepreneurship from Loyola Marymount University last May. His thesis concerned successful balanced thinkers. He plans to pursue a law degree while continuing to use his real estate license. He is associated with Internet Realty Inc. His hobbies include traveling and building his real estate portfolio.

Theron Jeppson, '04 M.Ed. Health Promotion, is a health program specialist for the Utah Department of Health. His hobbies include biking, mountain biking, camping, and fishing. He and his wife live in Salt Lake City.

Tim Lam, '04 BS Hotel Administration, recently became vice president of operations for Hospitality Experts Consortium in Las Vegas. It provides consulting services and legal expert witness sourcing for the global hospitality industry. He previously worked as housekeeping manager at Caesars Palace.

Ralph Piccirilli, '04 BS Hotel Administration, is an employee of Boyd Gaming Corp. He recently transferred from Sam’s Town Hotel & Casino to the California Hotel & Casino. He plans to attend law school.
It was Sunday, and Sam-Erik Ruttmann, ’82 BS Hotel Administration, wanted to sleep in. It’s one of the few respites he gets as general manager of Dusit Laguna, a lush tropical resort on the Thai island of Phuket.

But about 8:30 a.m., a light tremor shook the apartment Ruttmann shares with his wife at the center of the resort. He woke long enough to get online and learn there had been an earthquake off the coast of nearby Sumatra. Then he went back to bed.

“Around 10 a.m. I got up again and looked out, and to my horror I saw the garden filled with water,” Ruttmann says. “It was a very unusual situation. The only time we had water in the garden was during the monsoon season, with heavy winds blowing straight into the resort.

“Now there was not any wind, and it was a clear and sunny day, but very quiet. I could not figure out what happened.”

Ruttmann’s day off instantly dissolved into chaos. It was Dec. 26, 2004, and the quake that woke him had unleashed a devastating tsunami on South Asia, smashing into the countries that rim the Indian Ocean and killing more than 300,000 people.

The disaster was unlike anything Ruttmann had faced in a hotel-management career that spans two decades on three continents. The Finnish native came to the United States in the mid-1970s as a management trainee for a Playboy club in Wisconsin, then enrolled at UNLV a few years later. After he earned a bachelor’s degree in hotel administration in 1982, Hyatt International recruited him and later placed him at a hotel in Jakarta.

He advanced to management positions in Kuwait, Indonesia, Bali, South Korea, and Finland before coming to Thailand in 1992 and taking the helm of Dusit Laguna in 2000. He speaks some Thai, as well as five other languages, but business is always conducted in English. “It is important to learn the local language,” he says. “It signals your sincere interest to your staff that you care about their culture.”

While the tsunami took him by surprise, he quickly understood his responsibility to protect his staff of 150 and some 450 guests. Ruttmann still didn’t know what had forced the ocean over the land that morning when he and a few of his managers started going room to room with master keys to see if anyone was injured. “Luckily no one was, but everyone was in panic,” Ruttmann says. “I shouted to the guests who were trying to pack their bags to leave their belongings behind and go to the lobby (on the second floor) right away.

“I proceeded to the beach and realized, to my horror, that guests had gathered with their cameras to take pictures of the scene.”

Then someone screamed that another wave was coming. Hotel employees rushed everyone away from the beach.

“Once I got all the guests away from the garden, I turned around and saw the entire sea level rising,” Ruttmann says.

He followed the hotel’s evacuation plan as he dealt with unforeseen issues. The mobile network went down and stayed down for three days, and the extra walkie-talkies and megaphones were locked up — a manager had taken home the only key. And the guest service phones went unanswered for 20 minutes because the operator panicked and ran.

Dusit Laguna was the hardest hit of the five properties that make up the Laguna Phuket resort, but it resumed normal operations within a few days, Ruttmann says. Water inundated 24 beachfront rooms and two restaurants were destroyed. Ruttmann expects all repairs to be completed by July.

Still, Ruttmann’s property fared far better than many; hotels were demolished all along the hard-hit beaches of Patong and Kamala to the south. But the entire island is sharing in the economic aftershock. About 20,000 jobs were lost on Phuket, he says, and hotels lost hundreds of millions in potential earnings because the first quarter is peak season, due in part to Asian New Year celebrations.

“I would normally have had guests from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Korea, but they decided against coming to Phuket because of the fear of ghosts,” he says. “The belief is that for the lunar New Year, one should be in a place that will bring good luck.”

Although Ruttmann enjoys living in Asia, he is about to pull up stakes again. He and his wife of 20 years, Yong-Ran, are soon moving to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where he will become a regional vice president for Dusit hotels and oversee the company’s Middle East expansion.

—Erin O’Donnell
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April

1 MBA Info Session: 5:30pm. Moyer Student Union, Fireside Lounge.
2 Nevada Ballet Theatre: School Matinee. 10:30am. Ham Concert Hall.
3-17 Theatre: Spring Ten Minute Play Festival. 8pm, April 1-2. 2pm, April 3. Ham Fine Arts Building.
2-3 Nevada Ballet Theatre: Joplin & Classic Crossings II. 8pm, April 2. 2pm, April 3. Ham Concert Hall.
3 Baseball: vs. San Diego State. 1pm. Wilson Stadium.
3 Music: Pipe Organ Recital Series: Organ and Trombone. 7:30pm. Beam Music Center.
3-17 Nevada Conservatory Theatre: Wit. 8pm, April 1-2, 6-9, 13-16. 2pm, April 3, 9-10, 16-17. Black Box Theatre.
4 Music: Aurora Trio. 7pm. Beam Music Center.
7 Baseball: vs. BYU. 6:30pm. Wilson Stadium.
7 Barrick Lecture Series: Documentary filmmaker Ken Burns. 7:30pm. Ham Concert Hall.
7 University Forum Lecture Series: "From Almonds to Zhoof." A reading by Richard Stern, fiction writer and University of Chicago professor emeritus. 7:30pm. Barrick Museum Auditorium.
8 Baseball: vs. BYU. 6:30pm. Wilson Stadium.
8 Softball: Doubleheader vs. BYU. Noon and 2pm. Eller Media Stadium.
9 Baseball: vs. BYU. 2pm. Wilson Stadium.
9 Las Vegas Philharmonic: "A World in Harmony." 8pm. Ham Concert Hall.
10 Music: UNLV Concert Singers plus Women's Chorus and Varsity Men's Glee Club. 7pm. Green Valley Presbyterian Church.
11 Music: UNLV Jazz Ensemble I and Jazz Faculty with Richard Perry. 7:30pm. Ham Concert Hall.
13 Music: UNLV Community Concert Band II. 7:30pm. Ham Concert Hall.
15 University Forum Lecture Series: Poetry reading by Marilyn Chin, professor of English, San Diego State University. 7:30pm. Barrick Museum Auditorium.
15 UNLV Opera Theatre: The Crucible. 7:30pm. Beam Music Center.
15 New York Stage and Beyond: Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. 8pm. Ham Concert Hall.
16 Softball: Doubleheader vs. San Diego State. 5 and 7pm. Eller Media Stadium.
18 Music: UNLV Jazz Ensemble II and III. 7:30pm. Black Box Theatre.
19 University Forum Lecture Series: "Is Manliness Obsolete?" Harvey C. Mansfield, professor of government, Harvard University. 7:30pm. Barrick Museum Auditorium.
21 Music: Nextet. 7:30pm. Beam Music Center.
22 Baseball: vs. New Mexico. 6:30pm. Wilson Stadium.
23 Rebelpalooza: All day. Intramural fields.
23 Baseball: vs. New Mexico. 2pm. Wilson Stadium.
23 UNLVino: 2pm. Bally’s Event Center.
24 Baseball: vs. New Mexico. 1pm. Wilson Stadium.
26 Baseball: vs. University of California, Riverside. 6:30pm. Wilson Stadium.
26 Music: Cerberus Trio Faculty Concert. 7:30pm. Beam Music Center.
26 Music: UNLV Symphonic Winds. 7:30pm. Ham Concert Hall.

The Performing Arts Center caps the 2004-05 season on May 17 with a solo performance by Bobby McFerrin at 8 p.m. in Ham Concert Hall. Although best known for his 1980s pop hit “Don’t Worry, Be Happy,” McFerrin is noted for his four-octave range and his unique blend of vocal styles, including jazz, folk, and world music. Tickets are $40, $55, and $85. Call 702-895-2787.

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION EVENTS

April 1 Business-to-Business Networking Group. 7:30-9 a.m. Includes breakfast. Tam Alumni Center.
April 8 Alumni Scholarship Luncheon. Noon. Tam Alumni Center.
May 6 Emeritus Breakfast. 8:30 a.m. Tam Alumni Center.
May 13 Business-to-Business Networking Group. 7:30-9 a.m. Includes breakfast. Tam Alumni Center.

And don’t miss: Young Alum Mixer, an event created specifically for alumni who are 35 and under. Date TBA. Call for more information.

For event information & reservations, call the UNLV Alumni Association at 702-895-3621 or 800-829-2586 or visit alumni.unlv.edu

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Events are subject to change

### May

1. **Dance:** Black Box Dance Concert. 2pm. Black Box Theatre.

2. **Music:** UNLV Concert Singers plus Women’s Chorus and Varsity Men’s Glee Club. 4pm. Beam Music Center.

3. **Nevada Conservatory Theatre:** You Can’t Take It With You. 8pm. (Continues May 1 and 5-8.) Judy Bayley Theatre.

4. **Bard’s Birthday Bash**

Celebrate William Shakespeare’s 440th birthday April 23 with the Performing Arts Center, Nevada Conservatory Theatre, and the Utah Shakespearean Festival. Actress Claire Bloom performs her one-woman show, *Shakespeare’s Women*, at 8 p.m. in Ham Concert Hall. It will feature portraits of the bard’s greatest female roles. Las Vegas Academy theater students will perform in the lobby before the show. Afterward, meet Bloom and Shakespearean Festival founder Fred Adams at a dessert and champagne reception, with music from the Green Valley High School Madrigal Singers.

Tickets to *Shakespeare’s Women* are $25, $35, and $55; reception tickets are $25. Ask for the “Bard’s Birthday” package. Call 702-895-2787.

5. **UNLV/CSUN Lecture Series:** New York Gov. George Pataki. 7pm. McDermott Complex.

6. **Music:** UNLV Choral Ensembles Spring Concert with the UNLV Children’s Chorale. 7:30pm. Ham Concert Hall.

7. **University Forum Lecture Series:** “Should We Replace the Federal Income Tax with a National Sales Tax? Will We?” Steve Johnson, E.L. Wiegand professor, Boyd School of Law. 7:30pm. Barrick Museum Auditorium.

8. **University Forum Lecture Series:** “A round the World Under the Sea.” Carl Roessler, author and underwater photographer. 7:30pm. Barrick Museum Auditorium.

9. **University Forum Lecture Series:** “Around the World Under the Sea.” Carl Roessler, author and underwater photographer. 7:30pm. Barrick Museum Auditorium.

10. **Softball:** Doubleheader vs. Colorado State. 5 and 6pm, April 29-30.

11. **Softball:** Doubleheader vs. New Mexico. 1 and 3 pm. Eller Media Stadium.

12. **Music:** Pipe Organ Recital Series: Bede Parry. 7:30pm, Beam Music Center.

13. **Nevada Ballet Theatre:** School Matinee. 10:30am. Judy Bayley Theatre.

14. **Greenspun Lecture Series:** New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman. 7:30pm. Ham Concert Hall.

15. **Music:** UNLV Children’s Chorale Spring Concert. 4pm. Ham Concert Hall.

16. **Baseball:** vs. Western Illinois. 6:30pm. Wilson Stadium.

17. **Nevada Ballet Theatre:** Dance concert. 5pm. Ham Concert Hall.

18. **Baseball:** vs. Utah. 6:30pm. Wilson Stadium.

19. **Desert Chorale:** Memorial Day Weekend Concert. 7:30pm. Ham Concert Hall.

### June

1. **Nevada Ballet Theatre:** Academy of Nevada Ballet Theatre Annual Recital. 7pm. June 4. Noon and 4pm, June 5. Ham Concert Hall.

2. **Las Vegas International Hospitality & Convention Summit:** 8am. Stan Fulton Building, Room 120.

3. **Theatre:** Bee-Luther-Hatchee. 8pm, June 8-11. 2pm, June 12. Ham Fine Arts Building.

4. **Dance:** Black Box Dance Concert. 8pm, April 29-30. 2pm, April 30. Black Box Theatre.

5. **Dance:** Black Box Dance Concert. 8pm, April 29-30. 2pm, April 30. Black Box Theatre.

6. **Dance:** Black Box Dance Concert. 8pm. May 1, 8, 8pm. May 5-7. (Also showing April 29-30.) Judy Bayley Theatre.
Sipping for Scholarships

UNLVino, a fund-raising event sponsored by Southern Wine & Spirits of Nevada in partnership with the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration, has certainly grown since these undated file photos were taken. Last year’s event drew some 9,000 attendees and featured more than 300 wineries.

Since the event was created in 1974 by Larry Ruvo, senior managing director of Southern Wine & Spirits of Nevada, it has become one of the largest sources of scholarship funds for the Harrah Hotel College.

This year’s Grand Tasting is 2-6 p.m. April 23 at Bally’s Event Center. Advance tickets are $50, $75 at the door.

Related events include Auss-Some and Then Some!, a tasting of Australian, New Zealand, and South African wines at Bali Hai Golf Club; Bubble-licious, a champagne tasting poolside at the Hard Rock Hotel; and the popular art and wine auction.

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