Exotic Travels, Serious Research

Also: Food for Thought

Plus: Taming the Dust in the Wind

UNLV political science professor Steve Parker
Through their participation, support, and advocacy, alumni and friends strengthen UNLV immeasurably. This fall, Rebel Ringers will be calling on you to further your involvement with UNLV. They’ll invite you to engage more fully in the life of your University, and to support academic excellence by contributing to the UNLV Annual Fund. When students dial your number, answer the call with Rebel Spirit.

For more information contact the UNLV Foundation at (702) 895-3641
UNLV's engineering professor David James' study on the effectiveness of dust suppressants shows one of the ways engineering research can solve real-life problems.

BY BARBARA CLOUD

Mike Upchurch may have started out as a student of comedy, but it didn't take him long to turn pro. The UNLV alumnus now has an Emmy Award to show for his years of dedication to the art of comedy writing.

BY SUZAN DIBELLA

Political science professor Steve Parker's travels to some of the world's most idyllic settings have produced some of his field's most revealing insights into the ecotourism industry.

BY DIANE RUSSELL

UNLV's nutrition sciences program director Susan Meacham is hoping her new program and its graduates might be able to offer some food for thought to consumers about what good nutrition means.

BY DONNA MCALEER

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UNLV is an AA/EEO institution.
Women's Athletic Programs Receive $3 Million in Gifts

UNLV women's athletic programs have received more than $3 million in gifts from four generous Las Vegas donors. The donor is the Donrey Media Group; James Rogers, president of Sunbelt Communications; Jerry and Sue Lykins; and the Las Vegas Founders Club. The private financial support will provide nearly $1.9 million of a total construction cost of $2.1 million for a new women's softball stadium and a $1 million endowment to establish a new women's golf program, as well as operating support for that program.

"This tremendous support for softball and the new women's golf team is vitally important and will help us move UNLV even closer to true equity between men's and women's athletics programs," said UNLV President Carol C. Harter.

The Donrey Media Group, a subsidiary of the Stephens Group Inc. of Little Rock, Ark., has made the largest gifts for the two programs. Those donations include $1.25 million for the softball stadium and a $1 million charter gift to establish a women's golf endowment. James E. Rogers and the Rogers family have also provided $500,000 in support of the construction of the softball stadium. The Rogers family has been extremely generous to UNLV and particularly the William S. Boyd School of Law; the Rogers' gifts provided additional funding to the women's golf program.

The new softball stadium will be located on the northeast corner of Harmon Avenue and Swenson Street on the west side of the UNLV campus. The facility is expected to be completed in time for the 2001 women's softball season. The facility will be built by the UNLV Foundation, to whom these gifts are being made.

Alumni Association's Campus Improvements Under Way

The efforts of the UNLV Alumni Association to beautify and improve the university are visible in several projects currently under way across campus. A new Alumni Court has been developed on the east-west academic mall near the Thomas T. Beam Engineering Complex. Six picnic tables, a kiosk, and a bike rack are visible in various locations on the 335-acre campus. The clocks will be computerized and linked to a central university system so that all will be synchronized.

"This gift to the university is for UNLV students and is a perfect example of how the association is looking not only at major projects, but also at little things it can do to make the university a better place," said Jim Kirkwood, a member of the alumni association board and chairperson of its marketing committee.

Additionally, the association has purchased 100 clocks to replace those not working in classrooms across campus. The clocks will be placed at various locations on the 353-acre campus.

Music Professor Virko Baley Named Distinguished Professor

UNLV has awarded the title of distinguished professor to longtime music faculty member Virko Baley. An internationally known conductor and composer, Baley has been a member of the UNLV faculty since 1970. Among his many accomplishments has been the founding of the Nevada Symphony Orchestra. He was named distinguished professor based on the recommendation of a university committee and pledges of future support to UNLV academic and athletic programs.

"Virko Baley's contributions to the arts in Las Vegas have been immense and we are happy to recognize him with this prestigious award," said UNLV President Carol C. Harter.

"Jerry and Sue Lykins are longtime donors to UNLV academic scholarships and athletic programs. The Las Vegas Founders Club has provided additional funding to the women's golf program. The new softball stadium will be located on the northeast corner of Harmon Avenue and Swenson Street on the west side of the UNLV campus. The facility is expected to be completed in time for the 2001 women's softball season. The facility will be built by the UNLV Foundation, to whom these gifts are being made.

University Receives Reaffirmation of NASC Accreditation

UNLV has received notification that the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges has reaffirmed accreditation of the entire university, UNLV President Carol C. Harter announced recently.

"It is our responsibility to be sure that the university is making progress toward achieving its goals," said Harter. "Our goal is to have UNLV recognized as a major research university."
Bowers Receives Association’s Outstanding Faculty Award

Michael Bowers Receives Association’s Outstanding Faculty Award

Michael Bowers, acting vice president of the university’s Alumni Association, received the Outstanding Faculty Award from the University of Nevada Alumni Association at the association’s annual meeting last week.

Bowers has been here at UNLV for 11 years as the associate dean of UNLV’s College of Liberal Arts, has received many honors during his time at the university. Among those have been the William Morris Award for Teaching Excellence in the College of Liberal Arts, two research fellowships from the Nevada Humanities Committee, and the Liberty Bell Award, presented for outstanding contributions to the law by the Clark County Bar Association.

Bowers said he is delighted to have received the award. “It would be an understatement to say that I was stunned by this very generous honor being bestowed upon me,” he said. “We have many wonderful faculty at the university. To be recognized within such an outstanding and distinguished group is truly a pleasure and provides me with a great sense of accomplishment.”

Added Benefits Available to Alumni Association Members


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New State-of-the-Art Lied Library To Open January 2001

Some things are waiting for them, and the new five-story, $55 million Lied Library is one of them. Several construction delays have resulted in the postponement of the move into the state-of-the-art facility. It is now set to occur in December and early January to accommodate the lengthy, two-part process of “commissioning” the building into service.

The commissioning of the building – which will involve both physically moving the library collections (some 40,000 boxes of materials), as well as preparing and installing its remarkable electronic infrastructure of computers and other equipment – is expected to require some $70,000 staff hours.

“A physical move at any time other than the summer or winter breaks would seriously undermine the educational experience of UNLV’s students and faculty,” said Ken Marks, dean of libraries at UNLV. “It would mean that the library would not be available for use for a substantial amount of time.”

Marks added that it is the goal of the university to open the facility only when it is 100 percent ready for use by students, faculty, and the community.

“We feel we owe it to the campus and community to open the Lied Library in a time frame that allows us to provide all of our constituents with the sophisticated, high-quality educational facility that the library was designed to be,” he said.

This is a new column designed to note a variety of developments in the university community, including promotions, awards, resignations, deaths, and other events pertaining to UNLV faculty, administrators, and staff.

- UNLV has hired Anthony Flores, the former associate vice chancellor for business and finance at the University of California, Davis, as the new vice president for finance. Flores had held the associate vice chancellor position at UC-Davis since 1996. Prior to that he was Davis’ assistant vice chancellor for finance and director of fiscal operations at California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo.

- UNLV Provost Douglas Ferraro has resigned his position to join the faculty in the psychology department. Ray Alden, dean of the College of Sciences, has been named interim provost while a national search is conducted.

- UNLV has hired the former director of public safety at the City University of New York to lead its department of public safety. Jose Elique had been director of public safety at the 200,000-student CUNY since 1991. CUNY’s public safety officers number some 800. From 1970 to 1991 he held increasingly responsible positions with the Port Authority Police of New York and New Jersey.

- Vice President for Student Services Robert Ackerman has announced that he is stepping down from his post to take a position as clinical associate professor of educational leadership in UNLV’s College of Education. Ackerman came to UNLV in 1986 from Saint Leo College in Florida, where he was vice president for student affairs for 11 years.

- Rebecca Mills, the former senior advisor to the president at UNLV, has been appointed interim vice president for student life.

- Mills has been a member of the College of Education faculty since 1987. She was named special assistant to the president in 1995 and senior advisor to the president in 1998.

- UNLV Communication studies professor Richard Jensen has been named senior advisor to university President Carol C. Harper. Jensen, who joined the UNLV faculty in 1992, previously taught at the University of New Mexico. He also has taught at Indiana University, California’s Humboldt State University, and the University of Oregon.

- Carl Cook, assistant director of Alumni Relations, has accepted the position of executive director of Alumni Affairs at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.

- Ronald L. Sack, the former director of the School of Civil Engineering and Environmental Science at the University of Oklahoma, has been named dean of the Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering.

- Longtime Antarctic researcher Margaret (Peg) Rees has been named UNLV’s new associate provost for academic budget.

- Rees, a professor in the geoscience department, joined the UNLV faculty in 1985.

- Four UNLV professors were recently honored for their outstanding efforts in the field of scholarship.

- Christopher Kearney, associate professor of psychology, and Carol Kimball, professor of music, each received the Barrick Distinguished Scholar Award, which carries with it $5,000. Assistant professor of mathematical sciences 2000 Scholar and associate professor of philosophy Paul Scholsmeier were presented with Barrick Scholar Awards and $2,500 each.

- UNLV English professor John Bowers has been awarded a prestigious fellowship by the Guggenheim Foundation.

- Bowers, who is an expert on Medieval literature, will use the fellowship to work on his next book while on sabbatical from UNLV during the 2000-01 academic year. The book will explore the early potential development of English literature.

- Death: Thomas Cassese, 65, who retired in 1994, died Feb. 26. He began his UNLV career in 1969 in the College of Education and later served as vice president of University College. He also served as a counselor in both the College of Education and the Career Planning and Placement Office.

IT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU GRIT YOUR TEETH—literally.
If you've lived in the Las Vegas valley more than six months, you've learned to dread those days when the wind picks up and a veil of dust obscures the surrounding mountains.

Some say the dust is the price of living in the desert, where the soil is almost always dry and thus easily airborne.

Not necessarily so, say others, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Clark County Health District, who insist that we don't have to pave the desert to reduce dust and improve visibility on a windy day.

Some 85 percent of the air pollution in Southern Nevada is attributed to what is called "fugitive dust," and much of it escapes from the numerous construction sites and vacant lots in the valley.

where the soil has been disturbed.

Contractors and landowners agree that capturing this "fugitive" is highly desirable but insist that controls must be cost-effective or they will impact Southern Nevada's booming economy. However, federal, state, and county officials are demanding action to improve air quality.

While the policymakers and contractors debate, researchers in UNLV's Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering have been using their expertise to seek ways to reduce dust levels.

David James, associate professor and chair of the department of civil and environmental engineering at UNLV, is one of those researchers.

James recently completed a comparative study of dust suppressants — products that can be applied to loose soil to prevent, or at least inhibit, it from being blown into the air with a gust of wind. These products are becoming increasingly popular, he says.

"A lot of companies are seeking to supply dust suppressants," James explains, "and there are likely to be more because of new dust control rules that have been submitted by Clark County to the state of Nevada and the Environmental Protection Agency for approval."

However, finding the ideal suppressant is somewhat difficult, James says, in that it should "last forever; be non-toxic to plants, humans, and animals; and shouldn't cost very much."

So, working in cooperation with several local agencies, James and two of his faculty colleagues, Barbara Lake and John Gambatese, developed a research project to compare the effectiveness of nine dust suppressants.

"We were interested in providing contractors, landowners, and regulators with more information about the suppressants so they can make informed decisions about which one will work best," says James, who has been working with the Clark County Health District since 1994 when he was asked to test soil in different parts of the valley for their susceptibility to wind erosion.

Using equipment and operators donated by a vendor of dust-control services, James and his team—which included several graduate and undergraduate students—applied nine commercial dust suppressants on plots of land, each approximately 50 feet wide and 150 feet long. As a control measure, a 10" plot was treated with water, currently the most commonly used suppressant.

"Water is fine in situations in which you can keep the soil..."
moist, and some kinds of soils react well to water treatment," James says. "But we wanted to determine whether these commercial suppressants worked better.

Once the plots were treated, the team of researchers tested the effectiveness of the suppressants periodically during the following five months. They used a mobile wind tunnel that they themselves built to produce simulated wind at the sites; the device also collects the fine dust resulting from the wind it generates. They then performed a series of measurements to determine what levels of dust were produced at each location.

The research project was conducted in two phases, although that was not the original plan. A key variable in dust control is weather, and in 1998 when the project began, weather was particularly unpredictable in Southern Nevada. El Niño had produced an unusually wet season including a surprising snowfall—that wiped out the suppressants that had been put in place in the test area. As a result, James decided to repeat the experiment to be sure the initial measurements were valid.

The follow-up study, which was conducted in the first half of 1999, was effectively ended by the 100-year flood in July; however, by that point, the researchers had enough data to draw some conclusions.

In order to understand the nature of the project and its findings, James says it's necessary to explain some of the terms used.

When air quality experts talk about fugitive dust, they do so in terms of the size of particulate matter, or PM. Particles smaller than 10 microns in diameter are called PM10, and those smaller than 2.5 microns, PM2.5. The numbers refer to particular matter that is less than 10 microns in diameter in the case of PM10, or smaller than 2.5 microns, in the case of PM2.5. A micron is a millionth of a meter—finer than a human hair.

Clark County has established a committee known as the PM10/PM2.5 Research Advisory Committee to deal with dust issues, and it was this committee that recommended the $68,000 grant that funded the UNLV project.

The goal of James' research was to determine how effective the various suppressants are in reducing the amount of PM10 that gets into the atmosphere. The tested suppressants fell into seven categories: asphalt/petroleum emulsions, fiber and mulches, lignin sulfates, polymer emulsions, recycled aggregate, salts, and water. The commercial products were applied in amounts recommended by the manufacturers; most of them are in liquid form and are applied either by a water truck with a fine spray, by a hand-held hose, or by a water cannon mounted on the top of a truck.

Although there was not enough funding to measure the impact of different amounts of each suppressant, a couple of accidental variations in application suggested that the amount would make a difference.

"It's just like applying fertilizer to a bed of flowers," James says. "The response depends on how much you put down. When you apply it too dilutio, it doesn't work. When you use too much, you're wasting money."

It was important to test the effectiveness of the suppressant over time, James says. "There is that has been wetted tends to have a crust that, as long as it isn't broken up, is unlikely to cause a significant dust problem."

"However, some soils, as they dry, expand and contract, and eventually crack," he says. "If you’ve ever been in a mudflat, you’ll have seen the dinner-plate-size chunks that are formed by the cracking."

These mud plates tend to curl up around the edges.

"If they curl up enough, the wind comes in and flips them over," James says. "This exposes the untreated soil underneath, and the soil is freed to become dust."

Part of the research project was designed to measure the amount of cracking that takes place in soil treated by each suppressant. "Some worked better than others at holding the soil together," James says.

Then, after the initial measurements were completed, the researchers set out to create what they termed a "mechanical failure": they deliberately broke up the crust by driving a truck over the plot of treated soil, accelerating and decelerating to simulate conditions similar to those at construction sites or at vacant lots used by kids with motorbikes.

After that, the researchers began analyzing their data.

James is quick to point out that the research was a fact-finding mission; he’s not in the business of recommending any particular product. But armed with the data collected in the research, he says, contractors, landowners, and regulators will be better able to decide which of the suppressants will best meet their needs in complying with federal, state, and county air quality requirements.

His report to the health district suggests that while all the products worked fairly well under undisturbed conditions, two stood out as superior when the researchers drove vehicles over the testing plots.

"It turns out that if the suppressants can keep the soil intact, they all perform pretty well over time," James says. "What’s more interesting is how they performed in the ‘mechanical failure’ portion of the testing."

The two suppressant categories that seemed to work best were fiber mulch, which consists of newspaper bits and plaster of Paris, and acrylic emulsions, which consists of polymers suspended in water. The mulch is more expensive but tends to last longer. James says.

The researchers also examined the potential toxicity of the suppressants to the environment and the creatures that live in it through a careful review of the information provided by the manufacturers; a summary of the risk factors was included in the report. Several of the suppressants, including the newspaper mulch and the acrylic polymer emulsions, had very low levels of toxicity, James says.

The cost effectiveness of each suppressant was also investigated. James and his colleagues found a wide range in the product cost, which is measured in applied cost in dollars per acre. That measurement reflects how much it would cost to have one of these products applied to an acre of land. They found the costs ranged from $500 to use water as a suppressant to $6,000 for recycled aggregate; the two most effective suppressants, which cost about $1,000 per acre, represent the average.

James is confident the study provides contractors, landowners, and regulators with additional information, which was the primary goal of the study. But the collaboration between the team of UNLV researchers and others in the community was another success of the project, he says.

He emphasizes that the study couldn’t have been completed without the extensive collaboration of many people and agencies. In addition to receiving the grant from the health district, researchers had the use of a former sludge-drying bed provided by the city of Las Vegas, access to rainfall data from Clark County Regional Flood Control, and site selection assistance from the Southern Nevada Water Authority/Las Vegas Water Valley District and the Clark County Department of Aviation.

Further giving credit where it is due, James says the project could not have been carried out without the energy and skill of graduate student Tina Giegras, who "basically ran the project," as well as graduate students Jon Becker and Sherrie Edwards, and undergraduate students Johan Pulgarin, Gina Venglas, Ana Licon, Christa Swallow, and Lisa Denmark.

James says the students who worked on the project gained a great deal from participating in it.

Participation in a field research project increases their understanding of both engineering design and scientific investigation," he says. "They must understand how the wind tunnel works, keep it running, and be able to understand how to process the data obtained in the field experiments."

An environmental engineer who has previously researched water quality and wastewater treatment, James says working with air quality and soils has led him in new directions. In fact, he has also recently completed another health district-funded study on fugitive dust.

In that study, James and Gambatese, who has since left UNLV, examined ways to prevent dust from coming airborne during the movement of soil, such as from a front loader into a dump truck.

"It was clear that putting a mobile sprayer on the front loader to help reduce the dust that rises up from the truck bed when a loader dumps soil into it," James says. He adds that they used a wooden truck model they built behind UNLV’s Thomas T. Beam Engineering Complex to test various configurations of spray nozzles and water pressures until they determined the optimum combination.

They then made arrangements to test the nozzles and pressures on a UNLV dump truck under real conditions; their report to the health district provided specifications and cost estimates for using truck-mounted water sprays to capture fugitive dust.

James says he enjoys working on local real-world problems, especially ones that can have a positive impact on people’s lives.

"I enjoy helping to find ways to improve the quality of life in the Las Vegas valley. I think it’s one of the best things that UNLV researchers can do."
Comic Tendencies

Mike Upchurch may have started out as a student of comedy, but it didn’t take him long to turn pro. With an Emmy Award for comedy writing and a three-year stint with The Chris Rock Show to his credit, the UNLV alumnus is definitely the one laughing now.

BY SUSAN DIBELLA

It’s still a matter of some embarrassment to Mike Upchurch.

It was 1992, and he was an aspiring young comedy writer who also happened to be a graduate student in communication studies at UNLV. As part of his research for his master’s thesis on the narrative of sketch comedy, he hoped to interview a few famous sketch comedians in order to glean new insights into his area of research and do a little networking.

“Basically, I hatched this plan to go to New York and talk to Al Franken, and I figured I could somehow angle my way on—to what I call ‘not sure,’” says Upchurch, who was surprised and pleased when Franken, who was the head writer on Saturday Night Live at the time, consented to meet him at a New York sushi bar for a little shop talk.

But things didn’t go exactly as planned. Upchurch notes. As he was cleverly weaving into the interview some of the scholarly terms he was applying to sketch comedy in his thesis—ostensibly for the purpose of impressing Mr. Franken—it began to dawn on him that Franken thought he was taking this academic thing way too far.

“I was just a real egotistical sketch comedy,” Upchurch says. “I was writing sketches at the time and doing very well at it. I mean, I knew how to write sketch, but I was trying to be analytical about it for the thesis, and real comedy writers aren’t very analytical about it. Al Franken was just kind of shaking his head and saying, ‘Ah, well, we don’t exactly use terms like that. We pretty much think of something funny, and if it makes us laugh, then we can find some way to bring it to a close, that’s important. But we don’t really use a lot of terms while we’re working on it.’

Then, as if to add an unintentional comic relief coup-de-grace to the whole experience, Upchurch managed to dip his elbow in a dish of soy sauce.

“That was the low point,” he says with the resignation of someone who has had plenty of time to get used to the discomfort of a particularly embarrassing moment. And, he added, no, the interview didn’t get him on—or into—anything in the world of big-time comedy.

But to say things have turned around for Upchurch in the last eight years would be a bit of an understatement. Since the Franken interview, the UNLV alumnus made his way to L.A. and on to the writing staff of Mr. show with Bob and David, a critically acclaimed, Emmy-nominated sketch comedy show. From there, he went on to join the HBO series The Chris Rock Show. Last year, he won an Emmy Award for comedy writing for his work with that team, and has been asked back for a third year. In the meantime, he has been given a contract by industry giants Imagine Entertainment and DreamWorks SKG to write, produce, and direct a sitcom show for their recently-created Internet entertainment company called “POE.com.”

Upchurch is, of course, ecstatic at the success he has achieved so far—so is everyone else on the show. In fact, he’s using the opportunity to a low-key and affable guy like he seems to get. Despite the considerable success he’s achieved at the age of 34, he’s not exactly scowling about it. He is a bit subdued, maybe just a bit shy, when you first meet him. But the initial demeanor wears off after you get to know him, and he lets you in on the fact that he has plans—lots of them. He’s hungry, as they say in the business, but he knows he’s not something good, something that he loves, something that seems to come naturally. And he’s not willing to step too far out of his comfort zone to see how he does there. But when UNLV Magazine asked him to do just that—tell us how a local boy like him made it to the big leagues so early in his career—are those what’s a low-key but affable guy to do answer?

To this day, Upchurch is not sure if it was the wise-cracking of Mad Magazine that got him started or the intensity of Monty Python’s Flying Circus. But somewhere along the line, he got hooked on comedy.

“Mad Magazine was a really big influence in my life,” he says, recalling that while growing up in Boulder City, the owner of the local bookstores would use to call him “the Mad Man” because of his
Attempts at getting his hands on every copy of the publications he could.

"I guess Mad kind of sex in glass my cynicism early on because I became a practicing cynic as a really young kid. Then when I was 5 years old, I saw Monty Python's Flying Circus, and it was great. It was just so insane and so funny—and there was nothing like it on American television. I just thought it was great. I wish it religiously every Sunday night."

Although he was almost compulsive in his consumption of comedy while growing up—and began writing sketch comedy at about age 11—he didn't make a conscious decision to pursue it as a career initially. In fact, when it came to enroll at UNLV, he decided to major in finance.

"I figured that clearly I was going to be wealthy, and so I had to know what to do with the money," he jokes, noting that he took only five finance courses before recognizing how ill-suited he was to that major. "So I ended up taking a lot of classes that looked interesting and eventually began gravitating toward communications courses because I liked working with people. I liked doing the projects and getting my hands on the equipment."

In his senior year, he found a perfect outlet for his knack for comedy writing when he received a grant from CSUN, UNLV's student government, to produce a series of comic parodies. The project fulfilled his interest in the field of entertainment and taught him a great deal about the process of guiding a production. "I learned a lot in my classes, and I especially learned a lot when I got that grant," he says. "Commercial parody is just a microcosm of any other big production. It's just a smaller, but still, all the things you have to do are the same."

Scouting talent and locations—both of which he often found, on campus—ranging from equipment, doing publicity, and handling post-production were valuable learning experiences for him.

After finishing his bachelor's degree in 1989, the thoughts of teaching communication classes appealed to Upchurch, so he enrolled in graduate school and became a teaching assistant. He hoped to find a way to incorporate his fascination with sketch comedy into his graduate work. In his advisers, former communication studies professor Fred Chisholm, he found a scholarly approach to examining sketch comedy, and this thesis topic was born.

Despite his chagrin at perhaps overlooking the subject in the presence of Franklin, Chisholm remains proud of his thesis.

"I'm pretty sure it was the first study on sketch comedy that's been done," he says. "When I first started researching it, I was worried that I would find that I'd been scooped. You just assume that somebody's all over it. But I found very little, and what I did find was pretty shallow. There was a lot of stuff on what is funny, what makes you laugh. But I really didn't care about that. In fact, I think that's almost a sacred thing. You don't want it to break down into elements because that tends to encourage a formulaic approach, and then it really isn't funny anymore. I just wanted to look at narrative structure—beginnings, endings, through-lines, things like that."

He describes his definitions of the three different types of sketch comedy as his "big close." Now that he's a pro, he admits he doesn't exactly bring up his former academic pursuits as the company of his colleagues. "It's not that he's not proud of his background—just, as he points out, there is probably nothing so patently un-funny as studying comedy."

"Looking back, I even thought it might be a pretty amusing thing to do," he says, quickly adding a qualifier. "But I took it pretty seriously. I mean there were a lot of footnotes.

"After the poverty years of graduate school, Upchurch decided to look for a more substantial means of support. After taking a variety of odd jobs, he decided to move to L.A. with a friend who was a stand-up comic."

By day, he worked a series of what he describes as funny temporary jobs. He found it funny commodities the first year in L.A., it's not like I could write a novel about it. "It wasn't that bad. I can't complain about my suffering. I didn't suffer that much. It was just a drag. I had temp jobs. I worked at that place that did hair transplants.

When he wasn't writing during his off hours, he spent time in nightclubs watching stand-up acts with his friends, several of whom were (and are) aspiring comedians; it was at one of those clubs he met Bob Odenkirk (the Bob in Mr. Show with Bob and David), who gave him his big break.

"I was so ready for the job," he says. "I had so much material by then. I was writing like crazy. I mean, I was coming from my temp job and write for another four or five hours. I found out later that there were writers also pitching material to Bob who had credit on incredibly popular shows like The Simpsons. So I think I was just a little more eager than everyone. I definitely wanted more than everyone else. And I pitched so much material to one thing that I think they just decided to give me a shot."

Aired at the time on Comedy Central, Mr. Show, which had received abundant critical praise, was composed entirely of a series of sketches linked together. Upchurch notes. It was right up his alley. He recalls that at the time he was offered the job, he was strapped by the money offered. Although the show hadn't received a great deal of financial backing, the producers were able to offer the Writers' Guild minimum wage.

"Bob and David (Cross) were telling me that they didn't have much money but that it was a very low-budget production and so on. Then they broke the news to me. I was going to make $2,000 a week. I opened my mouth. I said, 'I was going to hold out for about eight bucks an hour.' I like, 'Get outta here - I would've done it for free.'"

"Upchurch served on Mr. Show for one very important season in 1997. Learning what it was like to work on a writing staff in an ultra-creative environment.

When you're writing on a sketch show, your debut game by sitting and reading newspapers, magazines,小说 anything you can get your hands on to get inside the genre of ideas," he says. "It's a sketch show. You can write about anything you want. So I had a little reference library. I had a comic encyclopedia. I had a movie book. I had a bunch of stuff to draw from. I would just thump through it and think of topic.

And then I'd use my wits as bulletin board," he says. "I'd flick of a sketch title and write it down on a little piece of paper with maybe a few notes on it. Then I'd pin it up, so I'd have ideas all over the walls."

When he was doing sketch writing, he'd grab his best material off the wall and pitch the ideas like he'd been doing it all his life.

"At any point, someone might come in and say, 'Meeting—quick.' And we'd have to run in and be funny," he says. Sometimes Bob and David would ask the writers for their ideas for new sketches; at other times they would be working on an idea and turn to the writers for concept development.

"So they'd call the writers in, tell us the premise, and we'd put our and brainstorm and order hatch it," he recalls. "We ate horrible diets of just fast food and junk."

Though the on-the-job nutrition was poor, she estimates at Mr. Show. He had a wonderful effect on creativity. "It was a very generous room. Basically, the word 'no' was not really

Upchurch wrote sketch comedy for Mr. Show with Bob and David for one season. He's seen here in a pitch session with members of the Mr. Show comedy writing team, including the show's slymate, Bob Odenkirk (far right) and David Cross (film extended). He would've done it for free."

"I never drank coffee until I started writing morning TV jokes," he says. "I discovered it makes you feel kind of talkative. I remember one Wednesday, the day before the joke deadline, I was thinking. 'I've got nothing. I'm looking at the subjects, and nothing's coming out.' And somebody said, 'Hey, you want to have some coffee?' I went and had a double espresso, came back, and in about 45 minutes, I'd written about 10 or 12 jokes. I'm like, 'Hey, there's a connection here.' But I still don't consume myself a coffee drinker. Now, I administer it to myself like medicine."

A small price to pay, most would think, for the kind of success he has achieved on the show. Last year, he and his colleagues on The Chris Rock Show continued on page 25 writing deadlines.

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A Scholar in Paradise

Political science professor Steve Parker's travels to some of the world's most idyllic settings have produced some of his field's most revealing insights into the issues surrounding the industry of ecotourism.

"It's tough job, but somebody's got to do it." With a wink and a smile, that's how UNLV political science professor Steve Parker responds to the ribbing he often gets about his work-related travels.

He points out that with tourism having now surpassed petroleum as the world's largest international industry, someone needs to study tourism and its effect on the environment. And if that means some dedicated scholar like himself has to travel to such exotic and alluring locales as Fiji or Papua New Guinea to study the subject, well, that's just a sacrifice that will have to be made in the name of research.

While Parker manages to maintain a sense of humor when faced with good-natured teasing about his travels to some of the world's most idyllic island settings, the fact remains that he is deadly serious about the subject he researches in those locations—government natural resource policy, its effect on tourism, and what it means for the future of the planet.

As a political scientist, Parker, who has taught at UNLV since 1979, is interested in tourism from a public policy standpoint, or, more specifically, how governments can manage the environment by managing what is termed "ecotourism.

The goal of ecotourism, he explains, is to promote ecologically friendly industries that do little damage to the natural surroundings, while at the same time providing people who live in the areas with a way of making a living.

"Ecotourism" combines the words 'ecology' and 'tourism,' but it also combines 'economics' and 'tourism.' 'Ecotourism' really stands for both," Parker says. "The idea is to help the environment generate money for native peoples because, if it can bring them a living, then they are going to have an interest in preserving and conserving it."

Many of the places where ecotourism comes to the forefront are places that only recently have become tourist destinations—places that have not yet been harmed by herds of unruly travelers or by locals who, often unknowingly, destroy unique surroundings in order to support themselves and their families. Someplace like Papua New Guinea.

It was in Papua New Guinea that he spent much of the spring of 1998 on sabbatical from UNLV to further his research into public policy and ecotourism.

He chose Papua New Guinea as a location to study because it has been attracting large numbers of tourists only recently, and its government, therefore, is just beginning to make major decisions that will profoundly influence the future of the island nation.

The indigenous people of Papua New Guinea have the choice of opting for profitable, but highly destructive industries, such as logging or dynamite fishing, or choosing more environmentally friendly options, such as ecotourism.

On an island roughly the size of California where there are only 4 million people and where more than 700 languages are
question is, ‘What other ways are there by which these people can use their environment to earn the money they want?’ Ecotourism policy advises that, instead of destroying a reef by using dynamite for fishing, locals should take scuba divers and snorkelers out there in their boats; they should become the dive masters, and they should be paid for their services.”

This is a prime example, according to Parker, of the maxim of ecotourism: “If nature pays, nature stays.” Papua New Guinea, located on the equator about 150 miles north of Australia, proved an ideal spot for Parker’s studies. It was only in 1935 that outsiders—mostly miners and missionaries from Europe and Australia—began making their way into its interior. With the influence of Western civilization intruding on the native culture only recently, visitors to Papua New Guinea even today are likely to feel as if they’re experiencing some form of time travel that has taken them into the distant past, according to Parker.

With its lush locales, ranging from pristine coastlines with beautiful coral reefs to glacier-capped mountains rising to 15,000 feet, the country has much to offer nature and recreation enthusiasts who are willing and able to pay for the uncommon trip, Parker says. A steadily increasing number of people are visiting the country. Recent figures show a tourism rate of about 20,000 people a year, according to Parker, who has used his ecotourism research in Papua New Guinea, Australia, and other locations as the basis for scholarly articles that have appeared in publications such as The Encyclopedia of Ecotourism, The Journal of Sustainable Tourism, and the Handbook of Global Environmental Policy and Administration.

Many of the travelers to Papua New Guinea are seeking ecologically friendly vacations that provide them access to unspoiled beauty far away from the tourist crowds found elsewhere. For the most part, the people of Papua New Guinea seem to be making good choices about how they will earn money, says Parker, who earlier this year was honored with the UNLVM Distinguished Teaching Award.

Dynamic fishing—a profitable way of obtaining great quantities of fish in a short period of time—only recently has begun making its way to Papua New Guinea. Dynamic fishing is exactly what it sounds like: fishermen row out from shore, throw dynamite in the water, and harvest the fish that float to the surface. The damage to the coral reefs is tremendous.

The destructive results of this practice can be seen in places such as the Philippines and Indonesia where irreversible damage has been done to precious natural resources, Parker says.

Another destructive form of fishing is the practice of stunning fish for capture for the aquaculture industry. All over the South Pacific today, natives go out in their canoes and dive down to find fish hiding in coral reefs. They next squat a sodium-cyanide solution in the direction of the fish, killing most of them. Some are merely stunned but survive. These are netted and sold to aquarium wholesalers. Ultimately, the same sodium cyanide that kills so many fish kills the coral reef as well.

Fortunately, neither practice has yet taken hold in Papua New Guinea where, for the most part, tribal and governmental leaders seem to be taking the more conservation-oriented route, he says.

But for them to continue to make these ecologically friendly decisions, someone needs to provide them options that generate money as well preserve resources, Parker points out.

In Fiji, where Parker traveled in July of this year, one such option has been provided by an entrepreneur who built 16 cabins that now serve as a dive resort. He leases the property from a nearby village and agrees to hire approximately 50 natives to work at the resort. He also buys meat, fish, and vegetables for his resort from the villagers. Thus, the beach and the nearby reef are now generating money for the locals, who have a monetary incentive to preserve the reef, beaches, and rain forest.

A comparable venture is taking place in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. In a particularly picturesque setting just outside the village of Tari, an Australian engineer and his wife have built Ambua Lodge.

“The main thing that brings about 1,200 tourists per year to Ambua Lodge is its exotic bird-watching,” Parker says.

“Worldwide, there are 43 species of the bird of paradise; 39 of these can be found in Papua New Guinea.

“The lodge operator pays a fee of two kina per guest (equal to about one U.S. dollar) to the local Huli tribe. However, his arrangement with them specifies that these payments will continue only as long as there is a consistent level of bird sightings by lodge guests,” Parker says.

“It is right here, of course, that one can see the logic of ecotourism, since the plan gives the Huli a reason for habitat preservation and a powerful incentive to not sell off logging rights to hungry multinational corporations.”

No one has to hire wardens to patrol the area to protect the birds or their habitat, he notes. The villagers, who now have an economic incentive for conservation, see to it that no one bothers them. It would be considered extremely disgraceful for a villager to be caught destroying the habitat or, worse yet, harming a bird of paradise, he says.

Another important facet of ecotourism is cultural preservation, Parker says. Tourists to remote locales are usually eager to experience the native culture, he points out. This translates into commerce when visitors pay the villagers to perform traditional dances and music or offer to buy native crafts.

While the tastes of the outsiders may be somewhat intrusive and may have a negative impact on the traditions—tribe members may make more of a certain kind of mask, for instance, if they realize it’s the one tourists want to buy—in many cases the tourists’ preferences may also be the only thing keeping those ancient traditions from being lost, Parker maintains.

With Papua New Guinea having had no written history before the arrival of the missionaries in 1935, oral tradition—in which elders tell younger tribe members of past events, teach them the traditional dances and music, and show them how to make the traditional crafts—has always been of extreme importance.

However, that oral tradition has been endangered in recent decades. First, the missionaries put a stop to the carvings the tribesmen were doing because, from the missionaries’ viewpoint, these carvings constituted idolatry. Later, as the natives continued to page 21
Confused about all of the herbal remedies, fad diets, and "healthful supplements" out there? You're not alone, says UNLV's nutrition sciences program director Susan Meacham. She's hoping her new program and its graduates might be able to help consumers sort out what good nutrition really means.

By Donna McAleer

Susun Meacham barely has time to answer the questions people are asking before the questions begin. "So what about this high protein diet? Is it good for you?" "Does echinacea really help colds?" "Is green tea the best source of antioxidants?" "Is St. John's Wort harmful in any way?"

As a registered dietitian and a nutrition researcher, Meacham is used to these kinds of queries from people who fear losing weight or burning calories. Many have a professional's understanding of the myriad unresolved issues in the field of nutrition. She doesn't mind answering their questions when the answers are available; in fact she is pleased when people express an interest in her field.

"Food is fuel for the human body," says Meacham, who is the founding director of the new UNLV nutrition sciences program. "It's what we run on, but most people give more thought to the gas they put in their cars - the brand, the grade, the price - than they do to the fuel they put in their bodies."

Currently, Meacham says, most people are confused about the barrage of conflicting claims about vitamins, supplements, and herbal remedies and what each is supposed to do. In some cases, all the claims about which food diet will result in the greatest weight loss, and it's easy to understand why there's so much confusion.

"Eating what's good for you can seem like a complicated business if you believe all the marketing and media hype about the latest food fads," she says, adding that the growing public need to separate nutrition fact from fiction is one of the reasons UNLV started its program in nutrition sciences two years ago.

Part of the problem, Meacham says, is that people lack context for the information they receive about nutrition. For instance, despite some increase in awareness of nutrition matters in recent years - and in part to greater governmental regulation of the food manufacturing industry - many people still do not understand the bewildering array of facts listed on the labels of food containers. People often not only lack an understanding of what the information means, but they also haven't the foggiest idea of how it's generated.

Hence, a little background on how nutrition information is produced is helpful, says Meacham, who holds a doctorate in human nutrition and foods and has researched the subject at several universities, as well as for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

She notes that nutrition facts labels are generated with a computer program that accesses detailed information on each ingredient's calorie, mineral, and vitamin content; the computer then summarizes the overall nutritional breakdown. But how is the basic information gathered in the first place?

The answer is slowly and carefully, Meacham says, adding that the meticulous nature of nutrition research - and the resulting pace at which it is conducted - may also be contributing to the lagging public understanding of some nutrition matters.

"We usually associate only calcium with bone density, but farmers have known for years that if you add boron as well as calcium to the soil, you get stronger, sturdier plants. The trick is to know the proper proportion," Meacham says. She compares the calcium and boron interaction that produces bone growth with the interaction she plans to examine in her new program's research.

An apple a day is still good nutrition advice, according to Susan Meacham, director of UNLV's new nutrition sciences program. "My field is a bit behind the curve. There is so much research yet to be done before we can really determine the effectiveness of various substances," says Meacham. For example, she points out, many of the herbal remedies that are currently on the market have yet to be analyzed properly in objective scientific studies.

When research on those substances is conducted, however, painstaking care will be taken in all aspects, particularly in the testing of human subjects and the effects of each dietary variable; after all, she points out, when you're dealing with people's health, attention to safety and well-being is of the utmost concern.

A look at one of Meacham's most recent studies illustrates how the research process works in her field - and how much attention to detail must be paid.

Many of Meacham's publications have focused on boron, a naturally occurring "ultra-trace" element. While it is not found in large quantities like the more well-known elements of calcium, iron, or potassium, it plays an important role in properly metabolizing other minerals, especially calcium. Meacham is interested in analyzing how the element relates to chronic diseases, including cancer, osteoporosis, and arthritis.

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mechanism was completed in collaboration with U.S. Department of Agriculture research scientists. Researchers must first establish how much of it exists in the typical American diet before they can suggest guidelines.

Meacham’s most recent work, which was completed in collaboration with U.S. Department of Agriculture research biologist Curtis Hunt, establishes benchmarks for 12 different minerals (aluminum, boron, calcium, copper, iron, manganese, magnesium, molybdenum, phosphorus, potassium, sodium, and zinc) found in foods common in the American diet. They have also estimated mineral intake in the United States from foods, including milk, peanut butter, pizza, burgers, cereals, fruits, vegetables, and water. The researchers tested the development of special diets to be used in the future, each sample was blended and put into a solution. Then, they analyzed by a process called inductively coupled argon plasma emission spectroscopy. The process they used for measuring the mineral levels was thorough and rigorous. First, each sample was blended and put into a solution. Then, three identical aliquots (samples) were prepared for each of the 234 foods being analyzed. Since there are traces of boron and other minerals in glass, stainless steel, and other materials, the samples were washed at all times. Water for food preparation was distilled and deionized.

Once the food samples were properly prepared in triplets, acids were added. Those released during digestion were put into the solutions. Then, each sample was analyzed by a process called “inductively coupled argon plasma emission spectroscopy,” which measures the trace minerals’ levels.

“The data from this study establishes how much boron and other minerals the U.S. population ingests,” she says. “It also provides information needed for the development of special diets to be tested in future studies.”

These types of studies must be conducted before research on humans can even begin, she notes, noting that one of the challenges in studying nutrition in people is creating a safe way to research a diet in humans. “It would not be ethical to study a diet missing some essential element people need. Instead of studying what would happen on a deprivation diet, we study a mineral-depleted or mineral-supplemented diet,” says Meacham, whose own work with human subjects has focused on female athletes and low-income women.

In the future, Meacham would like to do more research with minerals used in complementary or alternative medicine. She believes that some minerals hold promise as agents that are toxic to cancer cells; in fact, she thinks scientific scrutiny may in some cases support anecdotal claims. But until research is completed on the substances that have spawned these claims—as well as many others—she is concerned that marketing efforts, not nutritional facts, drive consumer decisions.

“We need to assist people so they can decide what’s credible,” Nutritionists need to help people make informed decisions.”

Now that the program is under way, Meacham says the next step is to help its graduates seek professional credentials to become registered dietitians. "Our students at UNLV will be well prepared to meet professional standards. Credentialing is very important in this field,” Meacham says. “We want our graduates to be sought after and in that sense it’s a public preservation strategy.” The money that comes in from ecotourism often is not enough alone to sustain the villagers, but when it is combined with other non-native industries, such as butterfly farming or timber harvesting with sawmills (small portable devices that allow villagers to cut planks from fallen trees, thus discouraging the threats to the fiber that could also be lost by value-added processes such as making planks from fallen trees), it can help preserve the world’s natural and cultural resources, she says.

Parker provides one telling example of the impact of tourism on the environment in the Springbrook National Park, Queensland, Australia.

"There are no indigenous carvings on the Fly, but there are thousands of pieces being produced every year on the Sepik,” Parker says, displaying a fluke on which a combination bird–crocodile has been carved from a single piece of wood. “The carvers who made this learned the task, the craftsmanship, and the design from his father. The knowledge was transmitted from one generation to the next because there was a market. "If nature pays, nature stays,” he says.

Readers who are interested in finding out more about the type of travel should contact The Ecotourism Society. Known by its initials only as TES, it provides education programs, helps to establish professional guidelines, and offers a wide range of informational services. Information about the society can be found on the web at http://www.ecotourism.org.

Scholar in Paradise
continued from page 17

began spending their time on endeavors such as mining and logging that could generate more money. Little by little, the dances, music, and handicrafts began to lose as the younger people no longer took the time to learn them.

Today, tourists often are invited to "sing-songs" at which villagers, decked out in eye-catching costumes created from a variety of materials, including sea shells and feathers, perform ritual dances and music. "What I witnessed and time and again in regard to cultural activities was young people had stayed behind in the villages wanting to learn the dances from their elders—and the elders were there just to help the choreographers teaching them what to do. The young men are learning it primarily because they’re going to be paid by the tour operator. And if it weren’t for the tourists coming in, these rituals would not be getting transferred to the next generation with the same degree of speed that they are. Fifteen years ago these rituals were dying out, now they’re making a comeback.”

It is no doubt true that the traditions no longer have the same religious significance they once did, but at least they are being preserved, Parker says. "They’re learning the steps. They’re learning how to make the costumes,” he says.

"These things would be lost otherwise and in that sense it’s a public preservation strategy.”

The Fly and the Sepik are the two major rivers in Papua New Guinea. The carving and craftsmanship, such as masks and musical instrumental long had been a valued tradition among the inhabitants of the villages that dot the banks of both rivers. But after the arrival of the missionaries the carving died out. "As a result, for about two generations this art form, which is religious in nature, disappeared on both rivers,” he says.

Then the tourists began arriving in Papua New Guinea. With two boats traveling up and down its waters, the Sepik gets as many as 5,000 visitors a year; the Fly, which has no boats, gets none.

"There are no indigenous carvings occurring on the Fly, but there are thousands of pieces being produced every year on the Sepik,” Parker says, displaying a fluke on which a combination bird–crocodile has been carved from a single piece of wood. “The carvers who made this learned the task, the craftsmanship, and the design from his father. The knowledge was transmitted from one generation to the next because there was a market. "If nature pays, nature stays,” he says.

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September 2000

1-20 Art Exhibits: Todd leverett and Emily Joyce - Recent Work. Call for times. DBFA. 895-3649. (Runs thru Oct. 21)
7 Women's Soccer: UNLV vs. Idaho. 7pm. JF. 895-3207.
8 University Forum Lectures: "Childhood Developmental Disorders in Adults." 7:30pm. MBMA. 895-3401.
10 Men's Soccer: UNLV vs. Grand Canyon. 7pm. JF. 895-3207.
21 Homecoming Game: UNLV vs. UNR. Noon. JF. 895-3207.
25-29 Women's Soccer: UNLV vs. Wyoming. 7pm. SBS. 895-3900.
29 Men's Soccer: UNLV vs. Western Michigan. 7pm. JF. 895-3207.
30 Men's Soccer: UNLV vs. New Mexico. 7pm. JF. 895-3207.

October 2000

3 Concert: UNLV Story Orchestra. 7:30pm. TBT. 895-3949.
5 Concert: UNLV Wind Orchestra I. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-3900.
6-8 Women's Soccer: UNLV vs. Wyoming - Oct. 6, 6pm. Air Force - Oct. 8, 2pm. JF. 895-3207.
6 Men's Soccer: UNLV vs. UC-Santa Barbara - Oct. 6, 8pm. Cal State-Northridge - Oct. 8, noon. JF. 895-3207.
7 Football: UNLV vs. UNR (Hall of Fame Weekend). 4pm. SBS. 895-3900.
10 Volleyball: UNLV vs. San Diego State. 6pm. TMC. 895-3900.
14 Performing Arts Center's Best of the New York Stage: Opening Night with Marvin Hamlisch. 8pm. AHCH. 895-2877.
16-20 Volleyball: UNLV vs. New Mexico - Sept. 28, 7pm. TMC. Air Force Academy - Sept. 29, 7pm. LC. 895-3900.
23 Volleyball: UNLV vs. Air Force. 4pm. SBS. 895-3900.
24 Performing Arts Center's 7th Annual Community Job Fair: 8:00am. MSU. 895-4475.

November 2000

5 Men's Soccer: UNLV vs. New Mexico. Noon. JF. 895-3207.
7 Performing Arts Center's Charles Vanda Master Series: "Nudie-Salerno Sonnette and the Assal/Varinelli. 7:00pm. MBMA. 895-3401.
7-11 Performing Arts Center's Charles Vanda Master Series: "Businesses and Industry." 7:30pm. MBMA. 895-3401.
16 University Forum Lecture: "Transporation and Society: Reflections on the Past and a Peak into the Future." 7:30pm. MBMA. 895-3401.
16-17 International Gaming Institutes: Casino Surveillance Seminar. 7am. BEH 240. 7pm. TMC. 895-3900.
18 Women's Soccer: UNLV vs. New Mexico. 7pm. JF. 895-3207.
21 Performing Arts Center's Charles Vanda Master Series: "Literature the World Stage." 7:30pm. MBMA. 895-3401.
21 Homecoming Football Game: UNLV vs. Wyoming. 4pm. SBS. 895-3900.
23 University Forum Lectures: "German's Place in the European Union." 7:30pm. MBMA. 895-3401.
21 Concert: UNLV Wind Orchestra II. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-3207.
21 Men's Basketball: UNLV vs. Northern Arizona. 7:30pm. TMC. 895-3900.
23 University Forum Lectures: "Lenin Loses His Head in a Strip Casino Centennial Irony and Contemporary Vegas Culture." (slide-illustrated). 7:30pm. MBMA. 895-3401.
Winter Concert: University Choral Ensembles. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-2877.

December 2000

1-10 National Finals Rodeo: Call for times & ticket availability. TMC. 895-3900.
1-10 Performing Arts Center's Charles Vanda Master Series: "Rising Stars of Classical Music," featuring The Erica Trio with Jennie Sisk and John Sisk. 8pm. AHCH. 895-2877.
2-11 Performing Arts Center's Charles Vanda Master Series: "Symphonic Winds." 7:30pm. MBMA. 895-3401.
2-11 Volleyball: UNLV vs. UNR. 7pm. SBS. 895-3900.
5-11 Performing Arts Center's "Islandic Winter." (slide-illustrated). 7:30pm. MBMA. 895-3401.
FAMILY WEEKEND

UNLV students and their families are invited to attend Family Weekend 2000, a fun-filled weekend of academic, athletic, and social activities. Family Weekend 2000 will be held Sept. 15-17 and is an excellent opportunity to learn more about UNLV and its programs and services, meet members of the UNLV administration and faculty, and enjoy a pool-side barbecue, football tailgate, and/or Sunday brunch. For more information on times and locations of Family Weekend 2000 activities, call the event administration and faculty, UNLV, for ticket information.

January 2001

2-8 Theatre Winter Fight Workshop. 8am. BBT.
3 Men's Basketball: UNLV vs. Loyola Marymount. 7:30pm. TMC. 895-3900.*
8 Men's Basketball: UNLV vs. Air Force Academy. 7:30pm. TMC. 895-3900.*
14 Performing Arts Center's World Stage: Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal. 2pm. AHCH. 895-2787.*
17-21 Plan Senior Adult Theatre Production. 8pm. PHT. 895-2787.
21 Performing Arts Center's Best of the New York Stages: Debbie Gravitte and Stephen Schwartz. 2pm. AHCH. 895-2787.*
22 Men's Basketball: UNLV vs. New Mexico. 9pm. TMC. 895-3900.*
27 Men's Basketball: UNLV vs. San Diego State. 7:30pm. TMC. 895-3900.*
28-30 Men's Basketball: UNLV vs. Monmouth - Dec. 28. Mississippi State - Dec. 30. 7:30pm both days. TMC. 895-3900.*

February 2001

2 Performing Arts Center's Charles Vanda Master Series: Russian National Orchestra. 8pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
10-12 Men's Basketball: UNLV vs. BYU - Feb. 10. TBA - Feb. 12. 9pm. TMC. 895-3900.*
18 Performing Arts Center's Best of the New York Stages: Andrea Marcovicci. 2pm. AHCH. 895-2787.*
23 Performing Arts Center's Charles Vanda Master Series: Ni. Paul Chamber Orchestra, featuring Bobby McFerrin. 8pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
23-24 Dance: Dance Spring Concert. Call for times. JBT. 895-2787.
25 Concert: UNLV Jazz Faculty. 7:30pm. JBT. 895-2787.

Women's Basketball

The following is the tentative schedule of the Lady Rebels basketball team. All games are at the Thomas & Mack Center at 7:30pm unless otherwise indicated. Call 895-3900 for ticket information.

Nov. 7 Team Australia, Klloko, 5pm.
11 National Women's Basketball League.
20 University of Texas, San Antonio.
24 Texas Southern
25 UNI-Charle st or Sr. John's.
Dec. 19 Cal State-Northridge, TBA.
23 University of the Pacify
28 UNR, 5pm.
30 Prairie View A&M, 5pm.
Jan. 6 University of California, Irvine, 5pm.
11 Utah.
13 Brigham Young
Feb. 1 Colorado State.
3 Wyoming
11 Air Force
17 New Mexico
24 San Diego State

*Tentatively scheduled at press time.

comic trends

continued from page 12

took home the Happy Award for comedy writing, beating out such big names as David Letterman and Conan O'Brien, as well as his former pal from Mr. Show. "For I'm up for a change, I would imagine, a high point. "It's great to be nominated. It's exciting, and there's nothing up to the point when you announce the winners," he says, recalling his experience at the awards ceremony the year before for his work on Mr. Show. "And then if you don't win, you basically start wondering what they're going to serve at the Governor's Ball.""But if you win, it's tression all the way up to the time, and then it's this incredible, surreal experience. There are all of these flashbacks going off, and people are asking you questions, and you have to get up on stage for the acceptance speech. I was ready to go back to my seat, but no. You go right off the stage and the interviews begin. You go down the red carpet walk into one room full of flower photographers from all over the world. So you stand there with all these flashbulbs going off, and you're trying to keep a good expression on your face the whole time. Then you go into another room where the print journalists are, and then on to another room where the TV journalists are. And they're all shouting questions."

Chris Rock answered most of the questions, he points out, noting that his biggest burden of the evening was carrying around the statue all night to a number of fabulous parties. "I carried that Emmy around for the next 12 hours and the next 12 hours," he says. "From that evening until dawn of the next day, it was just a peak. We were laughing and talking about it the whole time. It was a lot of fun."

Andie MacDowell receiving a huge number of calls—from people he hadn't talked to in years—life returned to normal pretty quickly, he says. "We had to hop on a plane the next day. We had to get going on our first show of the second season I was on, so we had to go back and write jokes. I had been able to have all of the newspapers delivered to the four seasons while we were still in LA, and then I sat by the pool and made notes for the show before we left."

In the long term, he recognizes the Emmy has had its effect, but not on his reputation or on him. "It certainly helps with the career in that it gives people a comfort level with your abilities," he says. "That way if a show tank, they can say, 'Well, we hated Jimmy Award-winning writers. We want to the right people!' They have a level of credibility about anything that goes wrong. So it really helps in that way. But my first response to winning the Emmy was, 'Oh, this is good because it will now be easier to make things happen in my career.' But it went straight to my resume and not to my ego." He now looks forward to returning to The Chris Rock Show, where he enjoys a great rapport with the team of writers and another extremely creative, albeit different, environment. "It's a little less frantic at The Chris Rock Show," he says. "We have scheduled pitch sessions, and it's more laid back than Mr. Show. Chris is great to work with, he's probably different than most people would think. In a pitch session, you pitch five to seven ideas, and he'll just sit and be very analytical. He doesn't really laugh a lot of course, he doesn't want to because he would have to paint a smile on his face for everybody for two hours. So he just listens, and he hears when something is funny. It's a tough room because it's tough to get people laughing. At Mr. Show, people were throwing off the walls."

The environment at The Chris Rock Show is enhanced further by its location, he says. "I can see the Chrysler Building out my office window," he says. "Our offices are on 43rd Street in Manhattan in the same building that used to be occupied by the writers of The New Yorker in the '30s and '40s. It has a historical marker on it. So I look out the window, and think, 'Who knows? Maybe James continued on page 28

In addition to his work on The Chris Rock Show, Top Chef is currently serving as writer, producer, and director of a sitcom show for Pop.com, an Internet entertainment company.
Dameida Lewis, '87 BA Education, is a mentor teacher in Daileda Murphy McCarthy Mountain School. M. Ed., is the director of La Madre recipient of the Nevada Centennial retiring, he moved to Friday city of Las.

Politicall Science, is an attorney in Fremont Street Experience. He elected president of the Las.

Co .... Bruce David Ansteth, '82.

Sal... . Mae Lyn Pointe Sanchez, a provider of hospital billing.

... Mar y International. He

Mark Skidmore, '94 BA Communication Studies, is a fund manager at the University of

Las Vegas, NV

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1990s

Brenda Starcher, '90 Bachelor of Liberal Studies, MBA, is the assistant general manager of the Saks Fifth Avenue store in Palos Verdes, Calif. Previously, she was the human resource manager for the Saks store in Las Vegas...

V.E. Coates Jr., '90 BS Business Administration, was previously an independent

Smartpages.com as national sales

English, graduated from New

was presented with the

of the Equal Rights Center, a civil

Employment, and public

discrimination in housing,

both in

degree and a master of public

administration degree from a
golden gate university, she now lives in Washington, D.C., where she does a free housing program of the Equal Rights Center, a civil rights agency dedicated to enforcing laws that prohibit discrimination in housing.

Brian Boy_defending on his
ground, and his wife, Teri, John c.

Financial Journal of the Las.

FutreU, '87

Brian Boy_defending on his
ground, and his wife, Teri, John c.

Financial Journal of the Las.

FutreU, '87

Brian Boy_defending on his
ground, and his wife, Teri, John c.
comic tendencies
continued from page 25

Thurber could’ve been looking out the same window.”

In stark contrast to the prime real estate at which he resides professionally, the tiny New York apartment in which he actually lives is mostly a testament to the cost of rent in the big city.

“Right now, I am bicoastal in the most pathetic way,” he says. “If you took both of my apartments, the one in L.A. and in New York, you’d have a room roughly the size of a standard faculty office here in the [Flora Dungan] Humanities Building.”

He keeps his apartment in L.A. for his frequent trips to the West Coast to pursue other projects, such as the one he’s doing with POP.com. The project is a live-action sitcom that appears exclusively on the Internet on the site recently created by Imagine Entertainment and DreamWorks SKG. Upchurch is visibly excited about it.

“The Internet is the future, even in comedy,” he says. “And our show is great. It’s about Carl, an office worker who does a secret webcast from his cubicle. He is a master loafer who has avoided doing any actual work for years but has managed to convince his coworkers that he’s the hardest working guy in the company.”

Carl is played by Upchurch’s longtime friend and fellow UNLV alumnus Alfredo Trefers, who is a stand-up comedian and writer. Upchurch himself plays Russel, Carl’s colleague who usually gets stuck doing all of the work.

“I’m not an actor, but I had to do the part for economic reasons,” he says, adding that despite having big-name backers, the project is not very well funded. “After reviewing the tapes, I decided my fake acting doesn’t ruin the show. I think I might actually fool someone. We’ve shot the first six episodes, and it looks to be hilarious.”

Soon the show will be accessible to the general public via the Internet at www.POP.com, Upchurch says. And he has other projects pending, including several screenplays, that he plans to promote as tirelessly as he has promoted himself and his writing up to this point. After all, he notes, work in the entertainment biz can be as fleeting as fame.

But Upchurch’s optimism about his career seems to be more firmly planted these days; shortly before this issue of UNLV Magazine went to press, he received word that he has been nominated for an Emmy Award again this year for his work on The Chris Rock Show. So, it would seem, things are continuing to go his way.

While he doesn’t talk about the narrative structure of sketch comedy much with anybody anymore, he says the concepts are still in there, floating around in his head. He figures they might have helped him in the long run somehow. And who knows, he muses. Maybe Al Franken would be willing to revisit the subject with him someday.
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