Home Sweet Gnome

HOW RMU’S OWN JOE GERUNTINO ‘87 HELPED TO REVOLUTIONIZE THE AIRLINE TRAVEL INDUSTRY
DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

Since I’ve become president, I’ve met dozens of local business leaders, public officials and other members of the Pittsburgh-area community. And time and again, these visitors are pleasantly surprised to discover just how lovely our campus is.

Many of them don’t even know we have a campus in Moon Township. “Don’t you work downtown?” they ask me. Even I was surprised the first time I saw RMU’s campus. But once I stepped foot here, I knew I had found a home.

At its best, that’s exactly what a university is – a home, not only to its students but to its faculty and staff as well. This home has served RMU well over the years, and as the University has grown, the campus has grown right along with it. We’ve built the Nicholson Center, now the focus of student life. We’ve added apartment-style housing for our growing number of residential students. We’ve built a football stadium worthy of an NCAA Division I program.

And we’re just getting warmed up. In this issue of Foundations, you’ll read about RMU’s 20-year master plan, which calls for dramatic improvements to the Moon Township campus, as well as significant renovations to our downtown Pittsburgh facility.

In Moon, we’re going to build a state-of-the-art facility for our School of Business that has already attracted the support of the Pittsburgh business community. We’re adding a new media arts center and a building for the School of Nursing and Health Sciences. We’re going to create a loop road around campus – along with sidewalks, stairs and promenades – to create traditional, pedestrian-friendly quadrangles.

Let’s not forget downtown Pittsburgh. We plan to make $10 million in improvements to our building at 600 Fifth Ave., which is home to several signature RMU programs. Classroom space has been upgraded and expanded, and we’ve added a gallery for the media arts program. The gallery’s exhibitions will be open to the public, making RMU a downtown cultural destination.

The master plan will fuel our strategic growth into the future, but it also reflects just how far we’ve already come. RMU has always been an important part of the region’s educational and professional life. As our presence grows stronger locally, we find ourselves increasingly attractive to students from outside the Pittsburgh region, even from outside the United States.

That’s how it should be. Our students need to know how to succeed in an increasingly global economy. No matter where they live and work, they need to feel at home in the world. And that starts with feeling at home here – at Robert Morris University.

Sincerely,

GREGORY G. DEL’OMO, PH.D.
PRESIDENT
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Growing up in upstate New York, Joe Geruntino ’87 never imagined one day he’d be hanging out with a roaming gnome in Texas. But now he feels right at home as senior software engineer at Sabre Holdings, the parent company of Travelocity.com.

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Read all about it! Just two years old, RMU’s applied journalism program is making headlines with a redesigned curriculum, an informative student newspaper and a culturally diverse speakers symposium.

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Richard Harshman ’78, executive vice president of finance and chief financial officer for Allegheny Technologies Inc., has come a long way from sweeping floors to make ends meet.
> B.S. DEGREE IN NUCLEAR MEDICINE APPROVED
RMU recently received approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Education to offer the region’s first Bachelor of Science program in Nuclear Medicine Technology, a medical imaging technique that utilizes radioactive isotopes to diagnose disease. The program, which emphasizes digital technology and new imaging modalities, is organized in tracks that provide specific instruction in nuclear medicine technology, computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

> CARES RECEIVES NEW INNOVATION WORKS GRANTS
RMU’s Center for Applied Research in Engineering and Science (CARES) recently received two new Innovation Works grants. The first is a $50,000 grant to design and build a robotic cell for Penna Flame Inc., a Zelienople, Pa., company providing flame surface-hardening services. The second is a $25,000 grant to design and build three prototypes of a unique caretaker device called “The Memory Minder,” which provides customized recordings triggered by a sensor in response to the needs of an individual user. CARES partners with industry on contract research projects, training programs and the development of joint grant applications that advance the engineering, scientific and technological capabilities of industry in our region.

> THREE NEW TRUSTEES APPOINTED

> NEW PROVOST CHOSEN
David L. Jamison, J.D., dean of RMU’s School of Communications and Information Systems (SCIS), was named provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, and will oversee all academic affairs and enrollment services for the University and its six schools. Jamison, who has chaired the RMU Campus Diversity Committee and the NCAA Division I Certification Self-Study for the past three years, was chosen following an eight-month
search process by an interdisciplinary university committee. As dean of SCIS, Jamison led RMU to its first-ever professional accreditation (in computer information systems), the addition of RMU’s first-ever fine arts degrees (the B.F.A. and B.A. in media arts), as well as several new degree options in communication, including applied journalism, public relations and theatre. Before RMU, Jamison was senior vice president and provost at the University of Akron. Barbara J. Levine, Ph.D., was named interim dean of SCIS.

> RMU RECEIVES MIDDLE STATES REACCREDITATION
The Middle States Commission on Higher Education recently reaffirmed RMU’s accreditation for the next five years. RMU was commended by the commission for the quality of its Periodic Review Report, which was submitted in May 2007. The purpose of accreditation is to ensure that institutions of higher education provide quality educational programs for their students.

> DON SMITH NAMED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RMU ISLAND SPORTS CENTER
The University recently named Don Smith M’89 executive director of both the RMU Island Sports Center (ISC) and the Conference and Facility Services Department. As executive director, Smith will promote programs that connect RMU to the surrounding communities and work to integrate the ISC with the University’s intercollegiate athletics programs and student activities. Smith, who had been serving as interim executive director of the ISC since July 2007, previously was director of conference and facility services at RMU.

> COMMENCEMENT CHANGES ANNOUNCED
Due to increased attendance at RMU graduation ceremonies, this year’s commencement will feature a dual-ceremony event, with the graduate ceremony beginning at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 10, and the undergraduate ceremony following at 2 p.m. There will be guest speakers at both events. Undergraduate ticket allotments will be increased from four to six tickets, while the graduate ceremony will not require tickets. The master’s hooding ceremony will be integrated into the graduate ceremony, while honors recognition will be integrated into the undergraduate event. A new University awards dinner will take place on Thursday evening to honor the top graduating students from each of RMU’s undergraduate programs.

> SEMS Hosts “EXPANDING YOUR HORIZONS” CONFERENCE
RMU’s School of Engineering, Mathematics and Science (SEMS) held its first Expanding Your Horizons (EYH) conference on Oct. 13, 2007. SEMS, in partnership with Seagate, sponsored the conference to encourage young women in grades 6 through 9 to pursue careers in science, technology, mathematics and engineering. Funded by the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, the conference featured a keynote address by Theresa Rossi, meteorologist in charge for the National Weather Association, and included hands-on learning experiences and career panels. A separate parent/teacher conference offered sessions designed to help these role models support the ambitions of their daughters and students.

> RMU ALERT LAUNCHED
RMU has partnered with Send Word Now, a leading provider of on-demand alerting and response services, to enhance its emergency preparedness and campus security. RMU ALERT, launched in fall 2007, enables the University’s 6,000 students, faculty and staff to receive rapid communications during emergencies and other time-sensitive situations. RMU ALERT uses multiple modes of communications, sending text, voice and e-mail messages to telephones, mobile phones, pagers and PDAs to deliver emergency alerts quickly. Campus administrators can initiate an alert from the Web, phone, e-mail or other internal information system applications.
> RMU HOSTS COLLEAGUES FROM POLAND
Wieslaw Maria Grudzewski, D.Econ., and Irena Hejduk, D.Econ.Sc., research colleagues from Poland, were guests of the School of Business for the fall 2007 semester, marking the first time that the Rooney Visiting Scholars Program sponsored two scholars at once. Grudzewski is a professor of economics at the Institute of Organization and Management in Industry. Hejduk is a professor of economics and head of the Management Systems Department at the Warsaw School of Economics. During their stay at RMU, Grudzewski and Hejduk gave several presentations and taught a course in international business.

> SCHOLARS CO-AUTHOR AWARD-WINNING PAPER
Elizabeth Stork, Ph.D., assistant professor of organizational studies, and Roderick Sims, Ph.D., spring 2007 RMU Rooney Visiting Scholar, co-authored Design for Contextual Learning: Web-Based Environments That Engage Diverse Learners, which won the Paul Thistlewaite Award for Best Paper during the 13th Australasian World Wide Web Conference in July 2007 in New South Wales, Australia.

> PAPER WINS AWARD AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
Daniel Shelley, Ph.D., professor of education, Louis Swartz, J.D., assistant professor of legal studies, and Michele Cole, J.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of nonprofit management, co-authored A Comparative Analysis of Online and Traditional Undergraduate Business Law Classes, which was recently selected as one of the best papers from the proceedings of the 2006 IADIS International Conference WWW/Internet in Murcia, Spain. The paper was also published in the IADIS International Journal of WWW/Internet.

> PROFESSOR PUBLISHES MULTICULTURAL STUDY
Daria Crawley, Ph.D., assistant professor of management, was co-author of Pittsburgh’s Racial Demographics: Differences and Disparities, the most comprehensive study ever conducted on quality-of-life issues for multiple racial and ethnic groups in Pittsburgh. The report, which is the first in a series of chart books published by the Center on Race and Social Problems in the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Social Work, provides a broad picture of the social and economic conditions facing Whites, African-Americans, Asians and Hispanics in the Pittsburgh area.

> PROFESSOR PUBLISHES MANAGEMENT HISTORY ARTICLE
Nell Hartley, Ph.D., professor of management, had her article, Management History: An Umbrella Model, published in the Journal of Management History, and it was cited as the second most important article in the international journal’s history in terms of immediate impact. Developed from material that Hartley has used with her students over the past 20 years, it is now required reading in several graduate-level courses across the country.

> BROADCASTER NAMED ADJUNCT FACULTY MEMBER
Marilyn Brooks, medical and science editor and reporter for WTAE-TV, was named an adjunct faculty member in RMU’s School of Communications and Information Systems, where she taught Information Gathering for Journalism this fall. Brooks, who has been with WTAE-TV since 1984, has worked in broadcasting for more than 35 years. She is the recipient of many awards, including a Woman in Science Award, several American Medical Writers Association honors, the Cecil Writing Award from the National Arthritis Foundation, and a regional Emmy.

> PROFESSOR ATTENDS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
Maria Kalevitch, Ph.D., associate professor of science and associate dean of RMU’s School of Engineering, Mathematics and Science, represented RMU at the joint meeting of the Fifteenth International Conference on Intelligent Systems for Molecular Biology and Sixth European Conference on Computational Biology in July 2007 in Vienna, Austria.

> GOVERNOR NAMES RMU PROFESSOR TO COMMISSION
Valerie J. Powell, Ph.D., R.T.(R), professor of computer and information systems, was recently named to Governor Ed Rendell’s Commission on Chronic Care Management. Powell, who has 25 years’ experience working with health care computing systems, will be working with others on the commission to convert Pennsylvania’s health care records to a digital format. The commission’s goal is to use an electronic health records system (WorldVistA) to facilitate the process of providing quality treatment to patients with chronic diseases.
> BUSINESS STUDENTS AWARDED SCHOLARSHIPS FROM ALUMNUS

Alumnus Rande Somma ’73 recently awarded four School of Business students the inaugural Rande Somma “Integrity First” Scholarships. The four scholarship recipients and five finalists were honored at a luncheon in late October. The recipients, who each received a $2,500 award, were Stephanie Bruner (human resource management), Ashley Harff (accounting), Joshua Hathaway (finance/economics) and Garrett Nogan (marketing). Scholarship applicants were required to write an essay addressing several ethical questions. Somma is president and owner of Rande Somma & Associates LLC, a consulting firm in the Detroit area that focuses on leadership coaching and development.

> FIRST ROTC CADET COMMISSIONED

Gary Paduana became the first cadet in RMU’s Army Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program to be commissioned as an officer in a ceremony held Dec. 14 in the Sewall Center. Paduana, a student in RMU’s five-year integrated program who earned both a bachelor’s degree in engineering and a master’s degree in information security and assurance in December 2007, was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army National Guard. RMU’s Army ROTC program began in the spring of 2006 as a satellite school for the Panther Battalion at the University of Pittsburgh and has since attracted 10 cadets. The program includes an elective curriculum in general military science and offers commissions in all Army branches.

> CONCERT CHOIR PERFORMS HOLIDAY CONCERT

The RMU Concert Choir held its first holiday concert for the campus community on Saturday, Dec. 8, in Massey Theater. The student-run group, directed by Aaron Cook (finance), was formed in 2006 and currently has 16 members, ranging from freshmen to seniors and representing a wide variety of academic majors. In fall 2007, the choir sang the National Anthem at RMU Night at PNC Park, performed at the New Student Convocation and the Alvin Rogal memorial service, and also sang for several community and civic organizations. The choir plans on making the concert an annual event.

> BAND MEMBERS PLAY IN LOCAL HOLIDAY CONCERT

Several members of the RMU Jam Blues Band, including trumpeters Ryan Wolf (social science) and Josh Mathianas (computer information systems) and flutists Danielle Brandau (actuarial science) and Nicole Grace (accounting), played in the West Hills Symphonic Band’s Gala Holiday Concert on Dec. 16 at West Allegheny High School. The symphonic band is under the direction of Clem Rolin, also the director of bands and artist in residence at RMU. Musical selections at the concert included such favorites as Music From the Nutcracker, The Sound of Music, Anderson’s Christmas Festival and Sleighride.

> RMU HOSTS CHILEAN DOCUMENTARY EXCHANGE STUDENTS

RMU’s Center for Documentary Production and Study hosted Barbara Jeraldo Scherping and Gonzalo Manzo, both third-year cinema students at the Universidad de Valparaiso in Chile, for three weeks in September and October as part of its international documentary exchange program. After an orientation by RMU’s Office of International Programs and Services, the exchange students interacted with RMU students and faculty, attended a few classes, traveled throughout the region and recorded material for a series of documentary shorts on Pittsburgh subjects. Scherping and Manzo’s documentaries will be shown at RMU at the center’s annual Docufest in April 2008. Their visit followed a previous exchange of RMU media arts and communications students to Valparaiso in May 2006. Future exchanges are planned.
FOOTBALL
Robert Morris posted an overall record of 4-6 in 2007, including a 3-3 mark in the Northeast Conference (NEC), under the guidance of 14th-year head coach Joe Walton. Senior linebacker Chad Wengert was named the NEC Defensive Player of the Year after leading the Colonials with 112 tackles, good enough to rank third in the league. His average of 11.2 tackles per game established a new RMU single-season record, while he also became the third Colonial in school history to finish a season with at least 100 tackles. On his career, Wengert posted 260 tackles to rank sixth all time at RMU. Joining Wengert on the All-NEC First Team was senior defensive back Mike Niklos. A four-year starter at cornerback, Niklos recorded three interceptions in 2007, pushing his career total to 16. That total ranks second in the RMU career records and ties the NEC record. Named to the All-NEC Second Team were senior center John Steilner, sophomore defensive lineman Mark Szymanski, freshman punter Nick Schirtzinger and senior return specialist Mario Hines. Szymanski recorded 60 tackles in 2007, including a team-high seven sacks, while Schirtzinger paced the NEC by averaging 41.4 yards per punt. Hines averaged 16.3 yards on punt returns and 20.0 yards on kickoff returns.

VOLLEYBALL
RMU advanced to its ninth straight NEC Tournament championship game in 2007 under the guidance of fifth-year head coach Rob Thomas, but succumbed to Long Island for the fourth straight year, 3-0. The Colonials finished with an overall record of 18-11, including a mark of 6-2 in the NEC, to finish third in the league. RMU was led by senior outside hitter Emily Wolthuis, who finished with 357 kills and an attack percentage of .190. For her efforts, Wolthuis was named to the All-NEC Second Team, along with senior setter Tawyna Storino, who finished with 1,190 assists. Storino was also tabbed the NEC Setter of the Year after her average of 12.02 assists per game paced the conference. Storino ranks second all time at RMU with 3,617 career assists.

Freshman middle blocker Amanda Graham was the lone Colonial named to the All-NEC First Team in 2007 after finishing second on the club with 344 kills. Graham led the NEC in attack percentage (.344) and posted a team-high 89 blocks, including 24 solo.

MEN’S SOCCER
Led by 11th-year head coach Bill Denniston, the Colonials posted an overall record of 7-7-4 in 2007, including a 2-4-3 mark in the NEC to finish tied for sixth. Seniors Jacek Przednowek and Ryan Zabinski were named to the All-NEC First Team, marking the third time the pair garnered All-NEC postseason accolades. Przednowek led the NEC in scoring in 2007, finishing with 15 goals and 34 points. Those numbers bumped his three-year career totals to 38 goals and 87 points, both of which rank fourth all time at RMU. Przednowek also tallied the 14th-fastest hat trick in NCAA history, tallying three goals in just 16:20 in a 3-3 deadlock with Mount St. Mary’s. Zabinski finished fourth in the NEC in 2007 with five assists and also added two goals to finish the year with nine points. He is a three-time member of the All-NEC First Team and registered 20 assists in his four-year career, good enough to rank third all time at RMU.

WOMEN’S SOCCER
The Colonials put together one of the best seasons in school history in 2007 under the guidance of 11th-year head coach Bill Denniston, finishing with a 2-4-3 mark in the NEC to finish tied for sixth. Seniors Jacek Przednowek and Ryan Zabinski were named to the All-NEC First Team, marking the third time the pair garnered All-NEC postseason accolades. Przednowek led the NEC in scoring in 2007, finishing with 15 goals and 34 points. Those numbers bumped his three-year career totals to 38 goals and 87 points, both of which rank fourth all time at RMU. Przednowek also tallied the 14th-fastest hat trick in NCAA history, tallying three goals in just 16:20 in a 3-3 deadlock with Mount St. Mary’s. Zabinski finished fourth in the NEC in 2007 with five assists and also added two goals to finish the year with nine points. He is a three-time member of the All-NEC First Team and registered 20 assists in his four-year career, good enough to rank third all time at RMU.
WOMEN’S CROSS COUNTRY

Also led by head coach Michael Smith, Robert Morris finished fifth at the 2007 NEC Cross Country Championships in New Britain, Conn. The squad was led by senior Phillips Thompson, who finished as the top Colonial runner in all of RMU’s meets in 2007. At the NEC championship, Thompson posted a time of 26:55:50, good enough to finish 10th and garner All-NEC accolades. Thompson followed that performance with a time of 32:15:00 at the NCAA Mid-Atlantic Regional in Bethlehem, Pa. That time established a new school record in a 10-kilometer race, eclipsing the previous mark by 40 seconds.

MEN’S CROSS COUNTRY

Under the direction of eighth-year head coach Michael Smith, RMU took home a seventh-place finish at the 2007 NEC Cross Country Championships in New Britain, Conn. The squad was led by senior Phillips Thompson, who finished as the top Colonial runner in all of RMU’s meets in 2007. At the NEC championship, Thompson posted a time of 26:55:50, good enough to finish 10th and garner All-NEC accolades. Thompson followed that performance with a time of 32:15:00 at the NCAA Mid-Atlantic Regional in Bethlehem, Pa. That time established a new school record in a 10-kilometer race, eclipsing the previous mark by 40 seconds.

FIELD HOCKEY

RMU ushered in a new era in 2007 under first-year head coach Olivia Netzler. RMU finished the season with an overall record of 3-15, including an 0-7 mark in the NEC. Seniors Shawna Kushner and Gwen Dalphon each finished with three goals to lead the squad, while Kushner added an assist to post a team-high seven points. Senior goalkeeper Kate Dunlap finished with a goals against average of 2.29, posting 153 saves and a 79.7 save percentage.

THREE NAMED DISTRICT ACADEMIC ALL-AMERICANS

In the fall of 2007, three Colonials were named to ESPN The Magazine District II Academic All-America Teams by the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA). Sophomore MARK SZYMANSKI was tabbed for football, senior TARYN REICHARD for women’s soccer and junior ALAINA GIBSON for volleyball. Szymanski carries a 3.52 cumulative grade point average as a computer information systems major, while Reichard owns a 3.90 GPA as an environmental science major and Gibson has 3.89 GPA as a human resource management major.

KATHLEEN CAGGIANO, seventh-year head coach John Kowalski, just missing out on their first NEC Tournament appearance by finishing seventh in the league with an overall record of 7-10-2 and a 4-4-1 league mark. The resurgence was led in large part to freshman midfielder Kathleen Caggiano, who was named NEC Rookie of the Year. Caggiano led the league in both goals (10) and points (26) while ranking second in assists (6). Her season totals in goals, assists and points rank third in the Colonial single-season record book. Caggiano, who was named the league’s Rookie of the Week four times and Player of the Week twice, was also named to the All-NEC First Team, becoming the first Colonial in the program’s 16-year history to garner that honor. Senior midfielder Kathryn Kirkpatrick and senior defender Taryn Reichard, the 2007 team co-captains, were named to the All-NEC Second Team. Each appeared in 74 career games, the most in school history. Kirkpatrick recorded a goal and three assists in 2007 and finished her career with 21 points. Reichard missed just two games in her RMU career and recorded one goal.

PHILLIPS THOMPSON
Growing up next to Griffiss Air Force Base in upstate New York, Joe Geruntino ’87 got used to the rumble of planes flying overhead daily. It was normal, comforting even. So much so that the absence of aircraft noise was actually more noticeable than its presence.

Little did he know then that one day he would help to revolutionize the airline travel industry. Geruntino was part of a team that developed QikRes, a computer reservation program that forever changed the way we book airline reservations, and one that gave rise to industry giants like Travelocity, where he now works as a senior software engineer.

When Geruntino was 10, his dad, an airplane mechanic with Mohawk Airlines, decided to move the family to Pittsburgh when the company merged with Allegheny Airlines, the forerunner of U.S. Airways. Although their new home in Bethel Park was not within earshot of Pittsburgh International Airport, Geruntino said his dad (now retired) made sure he got plenty of exposure to planes no matter where they were living.

“Even on the weekends,” remembered Geruntino, “my father would take [my mom, my younger sister and me] to airports to watch planes take off and land. He was just infatuated with them. He still is. So growing up, I learned a lot about the airline industry.”
In fact, it was all those experiences at airports and listening to his dad talk so passionately about his job that indirectly led Geruntino, now 43, to where he is today – senior software engineer for Sabre Holdings, the Texas-based parent company of Travelocity.com and several other technology-driven travel companies. (The company began as a division within American Airlines before spinning off on its own in 2000.)

When Geruntino graduated from Robert Morris in 1987 with his B.S.B.A. in business information systems, times were tough in Greater Pittsburgh. Massive layoffs in the steel industry throughout the 1980s sent once high-paid workers scrambling to find any job they could to pay their bills.

“When we graduated,” said Geruntino, “the steel workers were working in movie theaters and fast-food restaurants trying to feed their families. So at the time it looked really bad. We were looking for anything. So I didn’t really have any plan when I got out. To look back on it now, that was naïve, obviously. But all I wanted to do at the time was to be able to support myself so I wouldn’t have to come back with my tail between my legs and live with my parents.”

Since good jobs were few and far between, Geruntino continued to work at the Bethel Park gas station where he had worked as an undergraduate to help make ends meet. But by August, he realized he had to make something happen.
“I came home one day and thought, if I sit around and do this job, I’m not going to get anywhere in my career. So I looked in the want ads and saw that American Airlines was hiring reservation agents. It wasn’t what I went to school for, but I thought, the airline industry always treated my dad pretty well, so I’ll give it a chance.”

Geruntino sent in his résumé, landed an interview in mid-August, and by end of the month he was hired to work in the airline’s Hartford, Conn., office. Having little time to say his goodbyes, he packed up his stuff and hopped on a plane to Connecticut to begin a new chapter in his life.

In those pre-Internet days, travelers booked their flights either through travel agents or by calling the airlines directly and speaking with their reservation agents. So it was Geruntino’s job to talk to customers, gather their information and type it all into American Airlines’ computer system, using codes to find out the availability and costs of seats. It was a tedious process because, just to handle the most common requests, reservation agents had to memorize 1,600 codes that each had a different meaning and purpose in the computer system.

After just nine months on the job, Geruntino was promoted to reservation instructor, training new agents how to use the computer system and how to walk a customer through the sales process. Although he said he “absolutely loved” the position, an unexpected opportunity arose to switch career tracks. It was one he couldn’t pass up.

In 1989, American Airlines decided to develop a prototype of a new computer reservation program and beta-test it in its Hartford office. Geruntino and a couple of other reservation agents were chosen to work with the programmers since they dealt with customers each day and knew what they needed in a reservation system. Although their part in the project only lasted about three weeks, it was evidently long enough for Geruntino to impress the programmers with his knowledge of computers. When they returned to their office in Texas, one of the programmers suggested to his boss that they invite Geruntino down to continue to work on the project – which they did.

Geruntino spent six weeks in Texas working with programmers to identify and fix the bugs in the new reservation system. What emerged was QikRes, a revolutionary computer system so sound that American Airlines would use it for the next 10 to 15 years – a rare accomplishment for any new technology.

The program was simpler to use and much more efficient. It cut agents’ phone time in half and enabled them to talk to more customers each day than ever before, which meant more potential sales. It also drastically reduced the training time needed to explain the system, so instructors could devote more time to sales-closing techniques. And since just about anyone could pick it up quickly, it increased the pool of potential employees.

“It was the beginning of user-friendly interactions with computers,” said Geruntino. “It took these complicated back-end systems and made them so that anyone could deal with them.”

At the end of the project, in March of 1990, Geruntino was offered a permanent position in the department. Once again, he packed his bags and headed off to Texas to begin the next chapter in his life.

In his current position as senior software engineer, Geruntino develops and fine-tunes programming that powers Travelocity.com and GetThere, a travel reservation system designed for large corporations. For example, in the case of Travelocity.com, you type in your trip information, hit “enter,” and all of your flight, hotel and rental car options pop up. But what you don’t see is the layer of programming that Geruntino and his colleagues work on – programming that rapidly gathers the information you input, translates it so that it can “speak” with the data center where all the information is stored (named, not coincidentally, SABRE) and find what it needs, and then sends it back to your computer screen so that it’s easy to understand and clearly presented.

“In simplest terms, we are like a translator working between two sides that speak different languages,” explained Geruntino. “We help them communicate with each other so customers – whether it’s a person planning a vacation from home or a corporation booking its travel plans for a trade show – get all the information they need quickly and easily.”
While he didn’t take the traditional path to a career in computer programming, Geruntino did make the most of the opportunity when it presented itself, which is exactly what he did as an undergraduate at RMU.

“When I was in high school, I didn’t do anything,” said Geruntino. “I wasn’t involved, and I was kind of shy. I didn’t go to the dances or the extracurricular activities. So when I got to Robert Morris, I made a conscious effort to enjoy everything about it. I knew I was there to get an education, but I also wanted to get involved with the social aspects. So I tried to do as many things as I could while I was there. I thought, I’m only going to do this once so I might as well get the most out of it.”

He wasted little time getting started. When Geruntino was a freshman, an adviser who learned he had taken some photography courses in high school recruited him to take photos for the yearbook, which he did for two years. “The ironic thing was every time they took the staff picture, I was at work,” he said with a laugh. He joined Delta Gamma Phi fraternity (serving as president his senior year) and the Ski Club, and he also served as a freshman orientation adviser for three years.

“Robert Morris was exactly what I needed at the time,” said Geruntino. “It was structured, but not too structured, so I wanted to work hard. And it seemed very relaxed. The teachers would talk to you as adults. That was much different from high school.”

Although he first enrolled as an accounting major, it only took Geruntino two classes to realize it was not for him. He just couldn’t picture himself crunching numbers for the next 50 years. Besides learning what he didn’t want to do with his life and leading him to a career in computers, he also learned something far greater about himself. Thanks to Victoria Fratto, assistant professor of accounting at RMU, Geruntino learned that he could achieve whatever he wanted if he was willing to work hard to get it.

“I don’t know what she did, but she really got to me,” he said. “She really cared about what was going on, and you could see that she sincerely wanted you to do well; she wanted you to excel. She talked about how you should want it for yourself and always do your best. She had a big impact on me.”

So much so that, several years after he graduated, Geruntino wrote Fratto a letter to let her know how much she helped him to grow and how appreciative he was. He thought she would want to know that she made a difference in one of her student’s lives, because he often wondered the same thing when he was training new reservation agents.

“It was always nice when I heard comments from people I taught, so I just felt I needed to tell her,” he said. “It’s very rewarding to teach, but I think it’s an unsung profession. I don’t think most people understand how important teachers really are.”

What Geruntino appreciated most of all about the professors at Robert Morris was that many had proven themselves in the workplace. Instead of merely preaching theory from ivory towers, they were actually applying theory and techniques in the business world.

“They had the practical experience from being out of the classroom,” he said. “I think that carried a lot of weight with me, because here were people who were not just telling me how to do things out of a book, they had real-life experience – something I didn’t have. So I could really respect the fact that they had done the job and knew what it took.”

Having graduating from Robert Morris 21 years ago, Geruntino now has quite a bit of real experience under his belt, too – experience he tries to share with his 14-year-old son, Joseph Anthony. And although he’s been away from Pittsburgh for more than two decades, he believes some of the best lessons he learned – and some of the hardest – took place in the Steel City, from seeing the devastating effects of the collapse of once mighty industry on families.

“It really shows you the other end of the spectrum,” he added. “It teaches you to be appreciative of what you have and to work hard to keep it. You see how at any minute it could all be taken out from under you, forcing you to start over. Being in that area at that period of time definitely made a big impact on the way I’ve gone about not only my professional career but living in general. I imagine that’s why I’ve been where I’ve been for so long now. This is really the first company I started with right out of college and I’m still here.”

WRITTEN BY MIKE RANSDELL  | PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETE LACKER
“It happened to me the first time I visited campus,” said Robert Morris University President Gregory G. Dell’Omo, Ph.D. “I got to the crest of the hill, and the campus unfolded before me. I just knew there was so much going on here. The personality of a university begins with its campus. In 10, 20, or 30 years from now, I want our graduates to have fond memories of the RMU campus and what it means to be from here. That can only come from having a strong sense of place.”

It’s that sense of place that the Robert Morris University Master Plan, a plan for campus development over the next 20 years, will provide.

Having a master plan for the University is not a new idea. RMU has been operating under the guidance of a similar strategy for many years now. What’s unique about this new plan, however, is the scope of its vision and its emphasis on creating – as Dell’Omo said – “a strong sense of place” within the minds of RMU students and graduates.

“A ‘sense of place’ provides a powerful emotional connection to the University that lasts a lifetime,” added Dell’Omo. “It’s similar to how we feel when we
remember a major event in our lives. We can instantly recall where we were when the event happened and how the surroundings impacted our feelings. A campus environment provides that same type of impact on our graduates’ feelings about the formative years they spend at RMU.”

David L. Jamison, J.D., provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, sees the plan as an instrumental part of RMU’s continued growth. “As we reach maturity as a University, we have sharpened the focus of our academic programs,” said Jamison. The Master Plan allows us to develop an appropriate and consistent living-learning environment for our students as they pursue the engaged learning that is our hallmark.”

Dan Kiener, senior vice president for business affairs, sees RMU’s current master plan as a refinement and enhancement of the prior plan. “The last master plan saw the migration to apartment-style residential living with the completion of Lexington and Concord Halls,” said Kiener. “The signature piece of that plan was Nicholson Center, which has now become the hub of student life.”

RMU’s new master plan embodies Dell’Omo’s vision for a university that fosters engaged learning and a strong focus on the quality of student life. New facilities will house new programs and consolidate current ones for a more effective use of resources. Other changes and additions will enhance the overall living+learning experience. Finally, a transformation of the campus layout will enhance its beauty and create a safer, more pedestrian-friendly environment. In short, the new master plan will improve the overall quality of life at RMU and help to attract more students both nationally and internationally.
Current projections show the total cost for the renovation projects approaching $75 to $90 million over the next 10 years.

Before coming up with a new master plan, RMU turned to architects RossBianco of Pittsburgh’s South Side to conduct a study of the University’s current building situation. Three “big picture” issues were identified: the creation of a loop road, the addition of an academic quad, and the addition of a residential quad. Each of these will be addressed during different phases of the plan.

In the first phase of the plan, envisioned over the next five to 10 years, the emphasis will be on student housing, academic classroom facilities, parking and what Roofner calls “site amenities.” The first housing project will be a “mixed-use” building (fig. 2) with retail shops on the first floor and housing on the top floors. A promenade will connect this new space to the football stadium.

Additionally, the old admissions building has been renovated to house nuclear medicine, with the first classes held in spring 2008. A future, 22,000-square-foot addition to the building will house the entire School of Nursing and Health Sciences.

One of the signature projects of the plan is a new media arts building, which will bring together all of the media arts majors into one facility. Currently, the graphic design and web design concentrations of the media
I’m thrilled with the support that the PNC Foundation and the United States Steel Foundation are providing for RMU’s business school,” said Joseph Nocito ’70, president of Nocito Enterprises Inc. and chairman of the RMU Board of Trustees. “It’s a terrific endorsement and a powerful statement that recognizes the vital role that the University and our business school play in the region.”

“The nature of Robert Morris University has changed,” said Dell’Omo. “We used to be a predominantly local school. Now we’re regional and, in some cases, national and international. Today, 75 percent of our freshmen live on campus – it’s their home 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Now that we’ve grown, it’s time for the infrastructure to catch up, and the master plan is our chance to do that.”

The personality of the RMU campus is changing. What was once seen as a commuter business college is now recognized a vibrant, progressive center of learning that offers students diverse academic opportunities with all the features of traditional university life. The graduates of tomorrow will certainly look back on the time they spent at RMU – the experiences they had and the friendships they forged – and remember it fondly. And now, thanks to the vision expressed in the RMU Master Plan, the campus itself will be a vivid, cherished part of those memories.

WRITTEN BY KIMBERLY MAUERSBERG
ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. F. PETERSON
newspaper, these students are gaining the skills they will need to inform the masses – and the wisdom to do so responsibly.

understand the tremendous responsibility the media has in shaping our perception of the world around us. Thanks to a newly redesigned curriculum and forums such as The Sentry student newspaper, these students are gaining the skills they will need to inform the masses – and the wisdom to do so responsibly.

Name the three most important events or issues in the world today. Now, consider how much you know about them. Regardless of what’s on your list, it’s pretty safe to say that you learned everything you know about these events from the mass media.

Students in the new applied journalism program at RMU
Applied journalism is one of six concentrations available to students majoring in communication. With 35 students currently enrolled, it’s one of the fastest-growing areas of study at RMU. Originally rolled out in the fall of 2006, the journalism curriculum was revised in the summer of 2007 to provide students with the best combination of courses possible in a 21-credit-hour sequence.

The applied journalism sequence begins with Information Gathering for Journalists – a class designed to teach beginning journalists how to get the raw materials for news stories. In this course, students come to appreciate the detective-work side of journalism, whether it be something as simple as attending a council meeting to document the vote on a controversial ordinance, or something as complicated as overcoming obstacles such as the ones Woodward and Bernstein faced when breaking the Watergate story. Copy Editing, the second class in the sequence and the last of two prerequisites for all other journalism coursework, provides students with a solid foundation in spelling, punctuation, grammar and Associated Press (AP) Style.

In their sophomore year, students take Newswriting I, which challenges them to write several different kinds of news articles including coverage of government, the courts, education and general assignment news. Most students follow Newswriting I with the Journalism Production/Practicum course, in which every student writes one article for each edition of the The Sentry. Journalism students can retake this course multiple times for open elective credit if they wish. Newswriting II is offered in two separate classes – one for print and one for broadcast. Students take the version of their choosing and select a beat that will be the focus of all their stories for the semester.

After completion of the skills-based classes that comprise the bulk of the journalism curriculum, students finish their senior year with two courses based more in theory than applied skills. Journalism Law & Ethics gives students a primer in First Amendment law and a taste of logic-based ethical deliberation akin to philosophy. Finally, as a capstone course, students take Mass Media Seminar, which challenges them to ponder the rich relationship between the media and society. In doing so, they cannot help but find their own place as journalism practitioners in that relationship.
In keeping with its name, the applied journalism program features an effective outlet through which students can gain practical newspaper experience and ply their trade while still in school. The Sentry newspaper is the voice of the RMU student body and the one place where journalism students can call on all of the skills learned across the entire journalism curriculum.

The Sentry, like the entire journalism program at RMU, is relatively new. It was brought about by President Gregory Dell’Omo, Ph.D., who upon arriving at RMU made the formation of a student newspaper one of his first priorities. “A student newspaper is critically important to a university’s intellectual and community life,” said Dell’Omo. “In addition to giving our students direct, hands-on experience to all phases of the newspaper business, The Sentry allows for the free exchange of news, ideas and opinions. I know I look forward to each issue.”

After a few experimental editions, The Sentry began publishing regularly in the fall of 2006. Since then, student involvement has increased by more than 400 percent and the paper has grown from four to 24 pages. Now that the newspaper newsroom is located on campus in the Patrick Henry Center, the staff hopes that students will take advantage by either stopping by to offer feedback or to submit their own stories.

Seamon, faculty adviser to The Sentry, and Dana Hackley, staff adviser, oversee all aspects of the newspaper. Seamon began as adviser of The Sentry in 2006. He is also an assistant professor in the School of Communications and Information Systems, where he teaches most of the journalism courses. “Serving both as academic adviser and adviser to The Sentry enables me to help the students make the connection between their coursework and the newspaper,” said Seamon. “And now that we’ve moved the newsroom onto campus, we feel we’ll be able to build a real sense of journalistic community here at RMU.”

Hackley joined The Sentry team in the summer of 2007 to assist with production and the newspaper,” said Hackley. “Students at RMU need to feel empowered and as if their voice matters,” said Hackley. “A student newspaper is the best vehicle for that.” Hackley also remains an integral part of the Academic Media Center, where she works with RMU-TV.

There are currently nine positions associated with The Sentry that students fill for pay or course credit. On the editorial staff, Executive Editor Caitlin Krampe oversees a staff of five mid-level editors, including News Editor Renee Hannah, Features Editor Brooke Beatty, Opinions Editor Corina Campbell, Sports Editor Bruce Bales and Copy Editor Kaleigh Rectenwald. These coveted editorial positions will serve as invaluable learning experiences for countless other RMU journalism students in the future.

By the time The Sentry celebrates its 10-, 20- and 25-year anniversaries and beyond, the roll of past editors will undoubtedly include the names of talented alums who achieved great success in the field of journalism.
The Communication Department’s annual Journalism Symposium is yet another example of how RMU provides real-word learning experiences for its students. Each fall, accomplished professionals from the field of journalism take a day out of their busy lives to engage in a dialogue with RMU’s journalism students. The symposium’s perennial theme is Journalism Today – An Examination of Contemporary Issues in the Media. By keeping the symposium’s theme current, organizers can be sure that it will always be a perfect complement to the Applied Journalism program, which is grounded in a real-world curriculum with high practical value for students who want a degree that can get them a job.

The 2006 symposium featured longstanding Pittsburgh journalist Eleanor Schano, Marilyn Brooks of WTAE-TV and Mike Myer, executive editor of the Wheeling (W. Va.) News-Register and the Wheeling Intelligencer. The 2007 event included U.S. Congressman Tim Murphy; Robert DeFrancis, dean of community relations and institutional advancement at West Virginia Northern Community College; and Rod Doss, chief editor and publisher of the New Pittsburgh Courier. In the evening, students were treated to a lecture by CNN Chief International Correspondent Christiane Amanpour, who spoke at Heinz Hall as part of the Pittsburgh Speakers Series.

During the symposium, the industry leaders speak in morning lecture sessions and remain for a series of roundtable discussions in which they enter into a conversation with students about some of the most profound points raised during the earlier sessions. These sessions invariably leave participants, both students and speakers, feeling stimulated and with the belief that some very real truths were revealed about the subtleties and nuances of the journalistic process that pervades all levels of society on a daily basis.

With fewer than two years under its belt, Applied Journalism has brought a rich new dimension to education at Robert Morris University. In its short existence, the program has been the platform for a fully revised curriculum, the impetus behind one of the most successful yearly events on campus, and the driving force behind a student newspaper that may, if it follows the path of other university papers, soon eclipse the department from which it came. Academic history is being written as applied journalism flourishes at RMU. One thing’s for sure, the students, staff and faculty involved in its beginnings – the charter members, so to speak – can take great pride in their roles as pioneers in this valuable new program.

WRITTEN BY MARC C. SEAMON
WITH REPORTING BY VAL BRKICH
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEVIN COOKE
None of us ever think it’s going to happen to us. But when it does, we deny, we ask why, we curse, we scream, we beg, we bargain, we cry, we withdraw and, ultimately, we accept. It’s all part of the grieving process – when our computers die.

If those emotional reactions sound oddly similar to how we grieve the loss of a loved one, that’s because they are, according to Connie Ruzich, Ph.D., University professor of English studies at RMU. Ruzich, whose research focuses on how language use shapes and reflects identities and behaviors, recently completed a paper on the subject called Our Deepest Sympathy: An Essay on Computer Crashes, Grief, and Loss, which will be published in the journal Interaction Studies.

Ruzich first noticed the similarities about three and a half years ago when she overhead a conversation a student was having with some friends before class. The young woman demonstratively explained how her computer had crashed the night before while working on a paper due that day for Ruzich’s class. As Ruzich watched the student entertain her friends with her roller-coaster story, she had an epiphany. “It
just hit me,” said Ruzich, “that it was Kübler-Ross’ stages of grief that she was enacting right in front of us in a compressed way.”

In her popular 1969 book, On Death and Dying, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross identified five distinct stages that people experience when confronted with a tragedy such as terminal illness: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Although there are other models that explain the grieving process, Kübler-Ross’ is probably the most well-known and well-tested, which is why Ruzich decided to use it as her guide.

In order to analyze how people think and feel about their computers, Ruzich researched newspapers, websites, blogs and computer magazines for computer crash stories. “I discovered how very human we make computers and how irrational our interactions with them are,” said Ruzich, “just as our interactions with other humans are kind of irrational. It was very surprising to see how prevalent it was [in the language] and how much it was the norm.”

She found stories of people shooting their laptops in fits of rage, praying for their computer’s “health,” bargaining with their computers not to crash and even mourning their loss. She also found a data recovery company that has a “data crisis counselor” who provides quasi-emotional support to customers who call in asking for help.

Ruzich, however, is not equating the death of a computer to the death of a person. “Drawing comparisons between computer crashes and human deaths is not meant to trivialize the grief and suffering caused at the loss of a loved one,” Ruzich wrote in her paper. “But this research suggests that in addition to viewing computers as social actors, humans who experience computer failure may also experience accompanying bereavement as described by Kübler-Ross at the loss of an inanimate object.”

Why do so many people feel such a strong connection to this particular inanimate object? Perhaps because we rely on computers more than ever in our daily lives. We use them to work, to shop, to bank, to research, to stay connected with friends, to learn what’s going on in the world, to play games and music, to store photos and to keep our schedules organized.

“I fear [computers] much more,” Ruzich said, laughing. “You can’t read all these accounts of peoples’ horrible traumas without realizing that every time you use your computer, in some sense, you’re increasing your dependency on it.”

Coincidentally, as she was putting the finishing touches on her research paper, Ruzich’s own family experienced two fatal computer crashes. Her daughter, Emily, a student at the University of Richmond, lost a 38-page paper during finals week (which she had to rewrite) when her new computer bit the dust. And Ruzich and her husband lost important financial records when their home computer died.

“It’s been really funny to be sort of living this as it’s been going on,” said Ruzich. “And I have to say, what I’ve noticed is that, much like death, you never think it will happen to your computer.”

WRITTEN BY MIKE RANSDELL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEVIN COOKE
To pay for his education at RMU, Richard Harshman ’78, recipient of the 2007 Alumni Heritage Award, spent his summers at Pittsburgh Activated Carbon, sweeping floors, driving forklifts, operating heavy machinery and doing whatever else he was asked to do. The company (now called Calgon Carbon) made granules of carbon used for water filtration out of coconut shells or coal. It would pulverize the raw materials into a black liquid, process it with chemicals, then send it through a blast furnace, where it was hardened into pellets.

Harshman got the job through a special program that invited a select group of college students to fill in for vacation laborers during the summer. The rules were simple: work hard and you will get asked back the following year. So he did, and he was.

Now executive vice president of finance and chief financial officer for Allegheny Technologies Inc. (ATI), a Pittsburgh-based Fortune 500 company that produces specialty metals for markets around the world, Harshman values those experiences for the lessons they taught him.

“I learned that I didn’t want to do that all my life,” he said with a laugh. “And to have a great respect for the guys who did, because it was very dirty and tough work. This stuff was so fine it would actually get in the pores of your skin. I can remember every summer it literally took a couple of weeks of showers to get it out. It really showed me the value of an education, quite frankly, in terms of furthering yourself and putting yourself in a position of using your mind, as opposed to your body for your career choice.”

After graduating from RMU in 1978 with a bachelor’s degree in accounting, Harshman went to work as an internal auditor for Teledyne, a huge corporation at the time with more than 100 businesses in industries as varied as aerospace, insurance and dental appliances. He steadily moved up the corporate ladder with Teledyne and then ATI (created by the merger of Teledyne with Allegheny Ludlum in 1996). This meant moving back and forth across the country over the next 17 years: Pittsburgh to Los Angeles to Toledo, back to Los Angeles, to Charlotte, and finally, back to Pittsburgh again.

Each decision he made was based on a goal he set for himself in his early 20s – to land a CFO position with a Fortune 500 company by the age of 45. In 2001, he achieved that goal just under the wire at the age of 44.

“None of what I’ve been able to accomplish would have been possible without the support of my wife and my kids [Jeffrey, 20, and Jamie, 19]. If you look at what I put Scheryl and the kids through in terms of moving, that’s hard,” he said. “That can create a lot of stress and strife, and she was there with me every step of the way. It’s because of her and our children’s support and understanding that I’ve been able to have some success in my career.”

Returning to Pittsburgh after 17 years has allowed Harshman to reconnect with his alma mater. Since 2000, he’s served on RMU’s Board of Trustees on a number of committees. In 2006, he created the William P. & Marjorie Harshman Endowed Scholarship, named in honor of his parents, who taught him to “do your best and always work hard” – a simple rule he’s always tried to live by.

For his achievements, Harshman was presented with the 2007 Alumni Heritage Award, the University’s highest alumni honor, at the annual President’s Council Dinner on Dec. 11.

WRITTEN BY MIKE RANSDELL | PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRY CLARK
CLASS NOTES

Your signature is worth $4,000 to me!

Alumni – Do you know a prospective college student who would thrive at RMU? Encourage them to apply and sign their application. If they’re admitted, your signature will earn them a $1,000 annual grant! For more information, call the Admissions Office at 800-762-0097.

60s

CLEVELAND EDWARDS, a former Colonial basketball player who attended Robert Morris Junior College from 1967–69, was inducted into the Robert Morris Athletic Hall of Fame on Sept. 29, 2007.

70s

RANDE SOMMA ’73 recently awarded the inaugural Rande Somma “Integrity First” Scholarships to four students in RMU’s School of Business. Each student received a $2,500 award. Somma is president and owner of Rande Somma & Associates LLC, a consulting firm in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., focusing on leadership coaching and development.

CAROLYN (YAMBROVICH) NOCE ’77 is a customer account executive with Comcast. She and her husband, Gerard, who have been married 26 years, reside in Bethel Park, Pa., and are the parents of Jeannine and Nicklaus. Carolyn is a major sweepstakes winner and has won more than $45,000 in prizes since 1977, both locally and nationally.

RICHARD HARSHMAN ’78 was the 2007 recipient of RMU’s Alumni Heritage Award. Harshman is the executive vice president, finance, and chief financial officer of Allegheny Technologies Inc. in Pittsburgh. Richard and his wife, Scheryl, reside in Upper St. Clair, Pa., with their two children, Jeffrey, 20, and Jamie, 19. (See story p. 22)

80s

SUSAN DOYLE ’82 is employed by Continental Airlines Inc. in marketing programs. Susan resides in Houston, Texas.

JEFF BELSKY ’83 is vice president of strategy at Pittsburgh Technical Institute. Jeff and his wife, Johnene, reside in Moon Township, Pa., with their children, Jordan, Michaela and Aaron.

SCOTT FREE ’85, senior vice president and corporate treasurer of F.N.B. Corp., has been named chief financial officer of First National Bank, F.N.B.’s largest subsidiary. Scott and his wife, LISA (DETTERBECK) ’88, live in Hermitage, Pa., with their children, Shelby, Jennifer and Cali.

DIANE PEARSON ’85 was named Woman Business Professional Associate of the Year for 2007 by the Pittsburgh chapter of the National Association of Woman Business Owners. Diane is a financial adviser and shareholder at Legend Financial (continued)

Delta Zeta Chi sorority sisters TERESA (CARRIGAN) STUMPF ’79, BETTY ROSTCHECK ’79, GAIL (BITTNER) LUDWIG ’79, LORI (WYNN) NEIMAN ’77, DONNA (D’ERAMO) WIKERT ’79, GLORIA (SINCLAIR) FULTZ ’79 and BARBARA (PUGLIANO) LEAX ’77 recently reunited for a weekend reunion at Seven Springs Mountain Resort. Some of the sisters had not seen each other for 28 years. The catalyst for this reunion was the loss of one of their sisters, SANDY (DUNKIN) BANNON ’78, in 2006. While at the reunion, there was also phone contact with MAUREEN (VERNAL) O’BRIEN ’79, KAREN (JOHNSTON) MARINKOVICH ’78 and LYNN (TOWNSEND) BALDWIN ’79 M’84. The DZX sisters are already planning a 2008 reunion and would love to hear from their sisters.
CLIFF HARTLE '88 has been named manager of information services for the Pittsburgh Transportation Group (PTG). Cliff resides in Avalon, Pa., with his wife, Kathy, and two sons, Nicholas and Joseph.

VINCENT WOLF '89, executive vice president of Cowden Associates, was honored along with the rest of the Cowden firm as one of the Top 15 Small Workplaces in North America by The Wall Street Journal and Winning Workplaces. Vince and his wife, DENISE (BUNCE) '90, reside in Moon Township, Pa., with their children, Zachery and Alecia.

DAVID PERRICONE '90 and his wife, Michele, became the parents of a son, Anthony Robert, on June 20, 2007. The Perricones reside in Hackensack, N.J.

LINDA TROCANO '91 M'98 and her husband, Steve, became the parents of a daughter, Annalise Kathryn, on Aug. 10, 2007. Linda is vice president, account services, with Next Marketing in Atlanta. The family resides in Smyrna, Ga.

On Saturday, Sept. 8, 2007, more than 400 RMU alumni, students, faculty and staff members made it down to the North Shore for RMU Night at PNC Park to watch the Pittsburgh Pirates battle the Chicago Cubs. After a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem, sung by the RMU Concert Choir, President GREGORY DELL’OMO tossed the ceremonial first pitch to Alumni Association President JIM VITALE ’81. JOHN KRNYEVICH ’03 presented the Pirates’ line-up card, and alumni couple PAVEL M’05 and LAURA ’01 MARES were the 3rd- and 6th-inning base changers.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW FOR THIS YEAR’S RMU NIGHT AT PNC PARK ON FRIDAY, SEPT. 19, 2008, when the Pirates battle the Houston Astros (first pitch is at 7:05 p.m.). After the game, stick around for a spectacular Zambelli fireworks show sponsored by Robert Morris University. Don’t miss this chance for a fun, relaxing evening at the ballpark with other members of the RMU family!
TONY D’AMICO ’92 recently relocated back to the Pittsburgh area after spending the last 10 years in Washington, D.C. He is currently employed with MarketSphere. Tony and his wife, Lisa, reside in Wexford, Pa., with their children, Reid, Joseph and Sophia.

WADE TIMMERSON ’92, a former Colonial basketball player, was inducted into the Robert Morris Athletic Hall of Fame on Sept. 29, 2007.

TIM BIRCKBICHLER M’94 is the director of sales and marketing for Springs Window Fashions in Mission Viejo, Calif.


SUSAN ROTA ’95 married DENNIS BARRICELLA ’98 on May 12, 2006 in Las Vegas. Susan is an employee benefits specialist for RAND Corp. and is pursuing an M.S. in organizational studies at RMU. Dennis is a manager for RGIS Inventory. The couple resides in Reserve Township, Pa.

HEIDI MERTZ ’97 is a commercial credit analyst with Brentwood Bank. She and her son, Ethan J. Opiela, reside in Bethel Park, Pa.

JENNIFER STANKEWICZ ’97, a former Colonial tennis player, was inducted into the Robert Morris Athletic Hall of Fame on Oct. 6, 2007.

DOUGLAS YAKICH ’98 recently left ING Direct after four years, taking the position of event planner for California and Hawaii with Ameriprise Financial. Douglas and his wife, Jacqueline Jordan, reside in Glendale, Calif., with their daughter, Isabella.

00s


MARIO WOLDT ’00 is employed with ThyssenKrupp Steel AG. Mario resides in Cologne, Germany.

LAURA GUTHRIE ’01 is employed by Fidelity Mortgage in sales. Laura resides in Pittsburgh.

DOUGLAS ’01 and STACY (SUSTAR) ’03 RITCHART became the parents of a daughter, Ella Agnessa, on Aug. 24, 2007. The family resides in Aliquippa, Pa.

MATT FURJANIC AND KEVIN COLBERT

JASON EVANS ’02 was recently named operations manager of Equity Real Estate Solutions. Jason resides in Pittsburgh.

SHARON WALENZIEWICZ ’02 is a systems analyst/developer with the Medical and Health Science Foundation. She and her husband, Tim, reside in Whitaker, Pa.

LAUREN DICKINSON ’03, a former Colonial softball player, was inducted into the Robert Morris Athletic Hall of Fame on Sept. 29, 2007.

MEN’S BASKETBALL TEAM
25-YEAR REUNION

On Nov. 10, 2007, several players, coaches and administrative staff members from RMU’s 1982 and 1983 men’s basketball NCAA Tournament teams gathered on campus for a 25-year reunion celebration. PAUL HENSLER ’83, a member of both teams, was the organizing chairperson for the event.

To begin the day, the group and their guests were treated to a Colonial football win over Sacred Heart from the comfort of the Joe Walton Stadium University Box, followed by dinner and a reception at the Sewall Center. At the dinner, MATT FURJANIC, head coach of both teams, was inducted into the RMU Athletic Hall of Fame by his former assistant coach, KEVIN COLBERT ’79, now the Pittsburgh Steelers’ director of football operations.

Later that evening, the group watched the RMU men’s basketball team down Iona in a 72-66 thriller in head coach MIKE RICE’S first game. At halftime, the ’82 and ’83 teams were recognized at center court, and each player, coach and administrator was presented with a gold watch by President GREGORY DELL’OMO and Director of Athletics CRAIG COLEMAN.

The ’82 squad was the first team in RMU history to qualify for the NCAA Tournament, while the ’83 team is the only RMU squad in any sport to win an NCAA Tournament game, doing so over Georgia Southern.
KEVIN ORLOSKY ’03 and MELISSA RENNIE ’05 were married on Sept. 8, 2007. The couple resides in Pittsburgh.

ANDRE REID ’03 has been named an associate with Clifton Gunderson in Baltimore. The firm is the 13th largest CPA and consulting firm in the nation. Andre resides in Reisterstown, Md.

PAUL SPRADLEY ’03 M’06 was recently appointed assistant director of student life for multicultural affairs at Robert Morris University. Previously, Paul was an area coordinator with RMU’s Residence Life Office. He resides in Pittsburgh.

LAURA WALL M’03 is employed with Heritage Valley Health System as supervisor, nuclear medicine. Laura and her husband, Robert Kim, reside in Moon Township, Pa., with their children, Vanessa and Olivia.

SHAWN COLADONATO ’04 and Cara Baycura were married on July 7, 2007. Shawn is a computer analyst for Everdream in Charlotte, N.C., and Cara is a pharmacy manager at Walgreens in Salisbury, N.C. The couple resides in Mooresville, N.C.

APRIL HARMS ’04 and Pete Pascarella were married on June 23, 2007. The couple resides in the South Hills area of Pittsburgh.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR! On Saturday, Oct. 11, 2008, Robert Morris University will celebrate both Homecoming 2008 and Parents & Families Day. A full day of festivities kicks off in the morning with hospitality tents and some good old-fashioned tailgating. Alumni and friends will enjoy various pre-game activities including a temporary tattoo booth, balloon and caricature artists and entertainment from the RMU pep band. Don’t miss out on all of the fun this year! WE’D LOVE TO SEE YOU THERE!
CLASS NOTES

PATRICK PIERSON ’04 was recently promoted to sports information director at St. Bonaventure University, where he’s worked for the past three years. Patrick resides in Olean, N.Y.

PATRICE SMITH M’04 has been appointed director of government and foundation relations with the National Constitution Center. Previously, Patrice was the assistant director of corporate and foundation giving at Robert Morris University. Patrice resides in Voorhees, N.J.

JENNIFER STOESSEL ’04 is employed as catering sales manager with Hilton Short Hills in Short Hills, N.J. After graduating from RMU, she received her Master of Arts in corporate and public communications from Seton Hall University. Jennifer resides in Morristown, N.J.

MELISSA RENNIE ’05 and KEVIN ORLOSKY ’03 were married on Sept. 8, 2007. Melissa is an accountant with Alcoa. The couple resides in Pittsburgh.

AMANDA CHARALAMBOUS ’06 is a financial adviser with Waddell & Reed. She resides in Pittsburgh.

LAUREN DELAHANTY ’06 is engaged to ROBERT ZEMCIK ’05. A fall 2008 wedding is planned.

The inaugural Colonial Golf Classic was held on Oct. 8, 2007, at the Allegheny Country Club in Sewickley, Pa. Eighty-eight golfers, including 10 alumni, participated in the outing. In all, more than $21,000 was raised in support of RMU student athletes.

THIS YEAR’S COLONIAL GOLF CLASSIC WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, SEPT. 29, 2008, at the Allegheny Country Club. Participants will be treated to a luncheon and cocktails, and will be eligible to win various skill and team prizes. In addition, each participant will receive a commemorative gift just for taking part in this important event.

The cost to register is $400 per person or $1,600 per foursome ($100 of each golfer registration is tax-deductible). There are also various sponsorship opportunities available. The registration deadline for this year’s Colonial Classic is Monday, Sept. 15, 2008.

For more information, please contact the RMU Alumni Relations Office at 412-262-8481 or rmualum@rmu.edu.

If you cannot attend the golf outing but would like to donate giveaway items (i.e., shirts, golf balls, hats, etc.), please contact the RMU Alumni Relations Office.
On Nov. 6, 2007, Robert Morris University lost a longtime friend, trustee and benefactor with the passing of Alvin Rogal. He was 84.

Rogal joined the RMU Board of Trustees in 1974. He and his wife, Ann, gave generously to the University over the years, helping to fund the nondenominational chapel named in the family’s honor and establishing the Ann and Alvin Rogal Endowed Scholarship. He received the University’s highest honor, the American Patriot Award, in 1998.

Rogal entered into the insurance brokerage business in 1947 and spent 60 years with Hilb Rogal and Hobbs, recently retiring as chairman of the board. He was also an active and distinguished leader in the Pittsburgh community.

The RMU Board of Trustees held a memorial service honoring Rogal on Dec. 6, 2007, at the Ann and Alvin Rogal Family Chapel on campus. Those attending the service included current and former trustees, University deans and administrators, the Rogal family and members of the RMU Campus Ministry Association.

On Jan. 22, 2008, Robert Morris University lost two members of its family when sophomores Jonathan Gilbert and Michael Tatalovich were killed in an off-campus shooting. A third student, junior Michelle Machusko, was injured and listed in serious condition at press time.

Tatalovich, 20, of Aliquippa, Pa., and Gilbert, 22, of Monaca, Pa., were classmates at Center Area High School and roommates on the RMU campus. Tatalovich was an economics major and a member of the RMU College Bowl team. Gilbert was a recent transfer from the Community College of Beaver County who was studying elementary education.

On Jan. 30, 2008, nearly 300 students, faculty, friends and family members gathered in Sewall Center for a memorial service to pay tribute to and share stories about the two friends.

“Our prayers and sympathies go out to the families and friends of these three young people,” said President Gregory G. Dell’Omo, Ph.D. “We are shocked and saddened by this tragic loss to the Robert Morris family.”
Upcoming Events

> MARCH 08
26 Pittsburgh Speakers Series: Frank McCourt, 8 p.m., Heinz Hall, Pittsburgh

> APRIL 08
2 Women of RMU Luncheon & Program, Omni William Penn Hotel, Pittsburgh
9–12 Colonial Theatre: 1776, 8 p.m., Massey Theater
13 Colonial Theatre: 1776, 2 p.m., Massey Theater

> MAY 08
10 RMU Commencement: Graduate Ceremony 9:30 a.m., Undergraduate Ceremony 2 p.m., Sewall Center Arena
14 Erie Area Alumni Event, Lake Shore Country Club

FOR MORE INFORMATION on these and other upcoming events, contact the Office of Alumni Relations at 412-262-8481 or rmualum@rmu.edu.

NAME __________________________________________________________________ YEAR OF GRADUATION ________________
PREVIOUS/ MAIDEN NAME ______________________________________________________________________________________
ADDRESS __________________________________________________________________________________________________
CITY/STATE/ZIP ________________________________________________________________________________________________
HOME PHONE ___________________________ WORK PHONE ___________________________
E-MAIL ADDRESS ________________________________________________________________
PROFESSION/POSITION __________________________________________________________
EMPLOYER NAME ______________________________________________________________________________________________
ADDRESS __________________________________________________________________________________________________
CITY/STATE/ZIP ________________________________________________________________________________________________
SPOUSE’S NAME ______________________________________________________________________________________________
CHILDREN’S NAMES AND AGES ________________________________________________________________
NEWS ITEM __________________________________________________________________________________________________

MAIL THIS COMPLETED FORM TO: Office of Alumni Relations, Robert Morris University, 6001 University Boulevard, Moon Township, PA 15108-1189. Or, send your news via e-mail rmualum@rmu.edu or fax 412-262-8642.
OVER THE HOLIDAY BREAK, THE RMU WOMEN’S LACROSSE TEAM TRAVELED TO AUSTRALIA FOR 12 DAYS OF COMPETITION AND SIGHTSEEING. THE COLONIALS VISITED MELBOURNE, APOLLO BAY AND SYDNEY (PICTURED), AND PLAYED FOUR GAMES VERSUS THE VICTORIA STATE TEAM, WHICH INCLUDED EIGHT AUSTRALIAN WORLD CUP TEAM MEMBERS.