



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN: SOME TCU "WHAT IF'S"

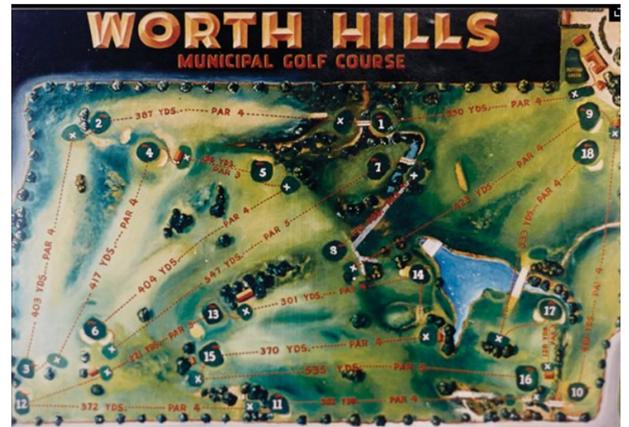


It can be an interesting intellectual challenge to speculate about historical "what ifs." Would reconstruction have turned out differently had Lincoln not been assassinated? What if Kamala Harris had been elected president? Or Al Gore for that matter? Here are five TCU-related "what ifs" that have some historical basis, which I offer as food for thought:

- What if the March 22, 1910 conflagration that swept through the Main building didn't happen? Could Waco, then TCU's home, have supported two institutions of TCU's and Baylor's current magnitude? Similarly, what if Waco or some other city had matched or exceeded Fort Worth's relocation offer of \$200,000 plus fifty acres of land several miles from town?
- Would TCU have survived the depression without Mary Couts Burnett's \$3 million gift (worth over \$60 million today)? Even with it, payment of salaries was delayed several times and faculty took a series of across-the-board pay cuts totaling 43% between 1930 and 1934.
- What if TCU had not arranged with the city of Fort Worth in 1961 to acquire the parcel of land, then a golf course, that now accommodates many of the athletic faculties as well as the growing number of residence halls? Would this have significantly constrained the University's growth and consequently reputational ascension?
- What if the 1910 Flexner report not been published? It resulted in significant reforms to U.S. medical education as well as the closure of many medical schools deemed substandard, including TCU's in 1917. What if it had persisted? And if so, how might that have affected the rest of TCU and the medical community of Fort Worth?
- And finally, in the late 1980's, I wrote a letter to the editor to the Skiff suggesting that TCU give up football and instead concentrate its athletic resources on men's basketball...building a fancy arena and hiring a "name" coach. I cited the national recognition of Georgetown and Duke as examples of significant return on investment as well as the fact that basketball is far less expensive than football. What if that happened? No Rose Bowl, Peach Bowl, Alamo Bowls, Gary Patterson, Max Duggan, and the list goes on. And, like football or not, much less national recognition for TCU. I was most assuredly wrong on that one, although the portal and NIL has significantly attenuated my interest in college football.



The March 22, 1910 Fire that destroyed the Main and changed TCU's destiny.



Do you have some "what ifs," TCU or otherwise?

Paul



FROM OUR JANUARY MEETING:

Dr. Bingyang Wei, Associate Professor and Department Chair (Computer Science), gave a fascinating and relevant discussion about artificial intelligence, which included examples of how AI (pronounced “A” “I”) can both be used and misused. He described how machine learning works to create AI and encouraged us to avail ourselves of AI while also recognizing its limitations and how it can be used to prey in powerful ways on those unsuspecting. Bing also gave examples of how AI can be productively employed by TCU faculty, staff and students, dispelling the notion that the only role AI plays in higher education is helping students to cheat. It was a “souper” presentation, complemented by a lunch of soup, salad and desserts.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR (upcoming luncheons):

Tuesday, February 17-Our speaker will be Dr. Harry Parker, Professor and former Chair, Department of Theatre. Harry (and possibly a student) will talk about TCU’s acclaimed Theatre program and describe how the faculty and staff are preparing students for the profession.

TIME/LOCATION: The meeting will begin at 11:30am in the Kelly Alumni Center.

REGISTER TO ATTEND: please register at least a week in advance on the TCURA website (<https://tcura.tcu.edu/>) or by contacting Cheryl Cobb at c.cobb@tcu.edu.

Tuesday, March 17- David, Kent and Trish: Performing acoustic folk and Americana music from the 50’s and 60’s, led by our very own TCU retiree David Grant. Location: Kelly Alumni Center.

Tuesday, April 21-Jason Soileau, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Planning, Design and Construction: Learn about the latest developments in the campus master plan and Berry Street improvements. Location: Smith Entrepreneurs Hall (Room 1520A&B) in the Hays Business Commons (Neeley School of Business).

Tuesday May 19-TBA

DEAN CHRIS WATTS PASSES AWAY

Chris Watts, the Marilyn Davies Dean of TCU’s Harris College of Nursing & Human Sciences passed away on January 14th after a valiant fight against cancer. He was 53 years old. Chris joined TCU in 2008 as the director and chair of the Davies School of Communication Sciences & Disorders, growing the School by over 60 percent in both undergraduate and graduate enrollment. He was named Dean of Harris College in 2019. Chris was an internationally recognized scholar whose research addressed Parkinson’s disease. A true loss to the TCU community.





HUMAN RESOURCE CONTACTS:

If you are enrolled in TCU Benefits and have questions, please call (817) 257-7790 or email hrbenefits@tcu.edu.

For Via Benefits, call 1 (888) 429-8490 or register through the Via Benefits portal at <https://my.viabenefits.com/>.

FEATURED RETIREE:

We'd like to feature a retiree or two each month who has done something interesting (travel, a class taken or taught, or any other retirement activity of interest). Please email Phil Hartman (p.hartman@tcu.edu) or any other Board member with information about you or another retiree.

This month we feature Babette (Babs) Bohn, emerita Professor of Art History. Babs joined the faculty in 1988 and was the recipient of the 2020 Chancellor's Award for Distinguished Achievement. In 2022 she was named as the Art History & Criticism winner in the 46th annual Association of American Publisher PROSE Award for her book entitled "*Women Artists, Their Patrons, and Their Publics in Early Modern Bologna.*"

Four years after retiring, Babs remains active with scholarship, family, travel, gardening, and her dog Winston. She and husband Dan DeWilde moved to the Washington D.C. area three years ago, where Babs relishes the great museums, libraries, and scholarly community, despite missing her friends in Texas. During the past four years, she's written and published more than a dozen essays and continues to give lectures, conference papers, and one exciting, endowed lectureship at the National Gallery London, tracing the collection history of Italian women's artworks by American and British museums. That history was full of surprises, such as the fact that almost all paintings by Italian women were gifted by donors to American museums, rather than purchased, up until the last quarter of the 20th century, when that pattern changed dramatically. But this early history suggests that the presence of women's works in American museums was more accidental than deliberate for a long time. Her research continues to focus on the women artists of Bologna, with occasional forays into other areas of art.



Meanwhile, Babs and Dan have enjoyed some wonderful trips, to Morocco, Costa Rica, Spain, the UK, and of course Italy. They also regularly visit San Francisco to see their daughter Katie, who just completed her residency in emergency medicine and is now engaged to another ER doctor. Despite a serious case of Trum Derangement Syndrome, Babs and Dan love the D.C. area, where Babs has started a Book Club, joined a Women's Club, volunteers for Meals on Wheels, and remains an enthusiastic gardener. She says that although D.C. has a shorter growing season than Fort Worth, she is finally able to grow peonies, her favorite flowers, in the colder climate, and she adores cherry blossom season, in late March.



CAMPUS STRUCTURE OF THE MONTH:

Our memories of TCU are centered around events that involve colleagues and students but of course they occurred in buildings and other campus structures. Consequently, the University's campus plays an important role in our recollections of TCU. Please let me know if you have a fav, and I'll try to include it in an upcoming issue.

This month's feature is a building that in 2003 gained its somewhat verbose name, the "University Recreation Center/Rickel Academic Wing," although a few still refer to the building as "The Rickel." Did you know that TCU retirees have free access to the building and its various facilities? If interested, go to the office closest to the northeast door and they can get you set up. It's free and you can even rent a locker.

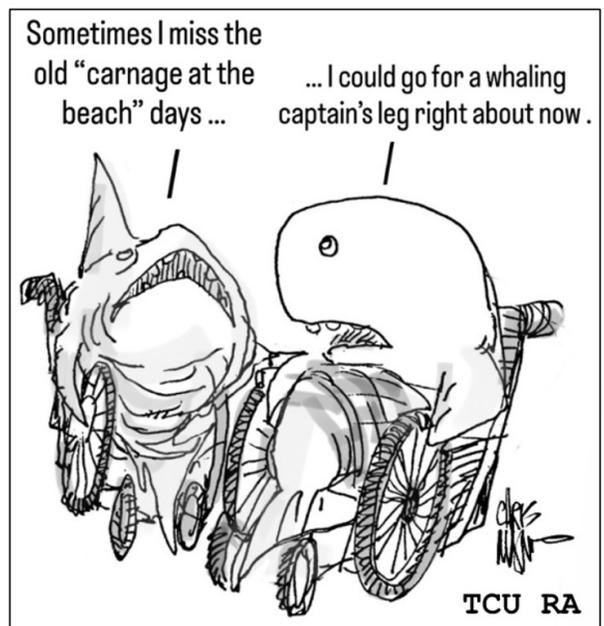
Prior to the completion of the Rickel Center, all physical education classes and recreational sports used facilities of the "little gym," the original gymnasium built in 1921 and later renovated (and subsequently renamed Erma Lowe Hall) to accommodate the School of Fine Arts' ballet and modern dance programs. In the 1960s, enrollment increases and a national emphasis on physical fitness and sports participation raised awareness that TCU's physical education facilities were seriously lacking. That changed in 1972 thanks to the generosity of the Cyrus K. and Ann C. Rickel Foundation. A 2001-2003 expansion added 202,000 square



feet, simultaneously tripling the building's size and rendering TCU's recreational sports facilities second-to-none, particularly when considering the size of the institution's student body relative to most Big 12 Conference rivals. With a dozen classrooms, the Stadium Drive-facing Rickel Academic Wing is home to the Department of Kinesiology, the TRIO Programs, and Army & Air Force ROTC. Workout facilities include a natatorium with a six-lane, twenty-five-yard lap pool and a twenty-two-foot deep diving well, a nine-thousand-square-foot weight room, a three-thousand-square-foot cardio area, a thirty-foot climbing wall, racquetball courts (one of which converts to a squash court), a hardwood gym with three basketball courts, and a one-eighth mile elevated track for walking or jogging.

The grounds immediately to the north and east of the Rickel have undergone changes as well. For many years, nine tennis courts stood behind the original Rickel Building. And in the early nineties, two outdoor beach volleyball courts were added to the building's north side. In 2016 the latter underwent a substantial upgrade, rendering them suitable for TCU's nationally ranked NCAA-level women's beach volleyball team, which remarkably won the NCAA national championship this past year!

Thanks again to Chris Manno for
a TCURA-specific cartoon!





WE REMEMBER OUR COLLEAGUES

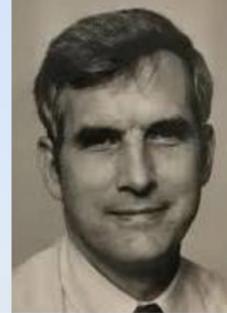
Nancy Joy Gorsch- Brite faculty (1992-2012)

November 3, 2025



Bill Vanderhoof-Education faculty (1969-2004)

October 15, 2025



Dave Addis-Mathematics faculty (1970-2008)

December 15, 2025



Joan Hewatt Swaim- reference librarian (1978-1996)

January 18, 2026



Leo Newland-Environmental Sciences/Biology faculty (1970-2015)

January 22, 2026



Dave Finn-Marketing faculty (1980-2009)

January 24, 2026



HOW ABOUT SOME HUMOR?

Recycled from a 1998 TCU Retirees' Newsletter: (some headlines from various newspapers)

- Include your children when baking cookies
- Enraged cow injures farmer with axe
- Man struck by lightning faces battery charge
- Local high school dropouts cut in half
- Stolen painting found by tree
- Kids make nutritious meals

**AND SOME FAMOUS MISQUOTES:**

“Mirror, mirror on the wall...”	Actual line: “Magic mirror on the wall”	- <i>Snow White</i>
“Elementary, my dear Watson”	Holmes never said that in the books; only in later movies.	
“Play it again, Sam”	Actual line: “Play it, Sam”	- <i>Casablanca</i>
“Beam me up, Scotty”	Closest line: “Scotty, beam me up.”	- <i>Star Trek</i>
“If you build it, they will come.”	Actual line: “If you build it, he will come”	- <i>Field of Dreams</i>
“Do you feel lucky, punk?”	Actual line: “You’ve got to ask yourself one question: do I feel <u>lucky</u> ”	- <i>Dirty Harry</i>
“Houston, we have a problem.”	Actual line: “Houston, we’ve had a problem.”	- <i>Apollo 13</i>
“We’re not in Kansas anymore.”	Ha, Dorothy actually said this one!!	- <i>Wizard of Oz</i>

HEALTH HELP NOW. *“What did you say?” Hearing Aids and Protection as We Age*

Carolyn Spence Cagle PhD, RNC-E

A recent talk at the library where my husband and I volunteer offered the chance to hear a colleague, a retired hearing specialist, speak about hearing loss and aids available for people with that loss. My husband, with loss in his right ear due to childhood cap guns, eagerly attended and learned some things I wanted to share with you. Attention to this issue seems relevant as we aim to be safe, enjoy our lives, and experience healthy aging.

For background, 30% of people aged 65-74 years have some degree of hearing loss. Nearly half of all people aged 75 have problems with sufficient hearing to ask others to repeat their conversations or use TVs and other devices turned up very loud. Those with hearing loss may cope by selecting their best TV sound settings, using a soundbar, TV closed captioning, or sound streaming. Overall hearing challenges frustrates everyone to hinder social interactions, leading to social isolation and possible depression of affected people. Hearing loss has been linked to loss of balance, loss of independence, learning, and even cognitive decline or dementia since the affected person’s brain fails to get sufficient auditory stimulation important for brain function. Hearing loss may also affect one’s safety due to an inability to hear sirens or alarms, use a phone, or place people in dangerous situations that they normally would avoid.

There are various hearing devices now on the market. Over the counter (OTC) aids became available in 2022 to best help people with minimal to moderate hearing loss. Those aids (varying in price, some using a smartphone app) generally amplify sounds, including background noise, which may complicate hearing conversations. Significant loss may require a pricier prescription device that uses technology to screen out background noise and tailor the device to your needs. Some Bluetooth devices will allow you to connect your aid to your e-devices. *Consumer Reports* rates both OTC and prescription devices to help you choose. Traditional Medicare does not cover aids, although some managed care plans will cover a portion of the cost. The VA also covers aids if one is a veteran. *What important decisions can you make to improve your hearing or protect it as you age?*

- Get an annual hearing check; Medicare pays for a yearly wellness visit to include a basic hearing assessment by your PCP (primary care provider).
- Invest in noise-cancelling earbuds or headphones to listen to podcasts and music in a noisy environment (available from Bose, Apple, and Samsung).



- Watch for medications that cause hearing loss (some high blood pressure, nonsteroidal, and antibiotic meds; work with your doctor to avoid those)
- Test your hearing with an online tool to perhaps gain information for a medical visit.
- Act early to see an audiologist (hearing doctor covered by Medicare insurance) specially trained to assess your depth/range of hearing loss if you have concerns or others have expressed concerns about your hearing.
- As needed, partner with an audiologist or state licensed non-doctor hearing specialist to fit you with an affordable and appropriate hearing device; plan follow-up to test various devices before you settle on the best device customized to your needs.
- Be patient, knowing that it may take time for your brain to adapt to an aid; routine wearing of the aid will improve your hearing, but it will not return to usual hearing.

Hearing loss is cumulative: what you lose early in life cannot be replaced due to hearing cell damage. Thus, it is essential to protect your current hearing by using quality ear plugs/covers when interacting with loud noises (lawn mowing, use of loud electrical appliances [e.g., blenders, [Nutribullet](#)], and loud music, etc.) or avoiding those experiences. If you have loss, you also have multiple current options to improve your hearing. These may include reading widely about aids, seeking health provider guidance and talking to others with aids to more fully engage in the world around you with better hearing!

References:

Assess hearing loss and possible cause. Hearing Handicap Inventory Questionnaire/Consumer Ear Disease Risk Assessment (CEDRA). Available at: sites.northwestern.edu/cedra.

A wise way to protect your mind (2025, June). *UCLA Health: Healthy Years*, 22(6), p. 3.

Evaluate prescription and OTC aids: Hearing Tracker.com/heardvisor.com.

How to hear everything (2025, July-August). *Consumer Reports*, 90(5), 44-51.

Pajer, N. (2025, May-June). See me, hear me, feel me. *AARP The Magazine*, 68(3C), pp. 54-55.

Sound advice (2024, September). *UCLA Health: Healthy Years*, 21(9), p. 3.

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TCURA MISSION STATEMENT

The TCU Retirees Association exists to provide opportunities for fellowship, to promote lifelong learning, to advocate for fair benefits, to recognize the accomplishments of its members, and to strengthen the relationship between the retirees and the University.