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Shower Curtains Host Microbial Mayhem

Taking a shower hasn’t been this scary since Norman Bates.

A study out of the San Diego State University Center for Microbial Sciences reveals that hundreds of millions of colorful bacteria thrive on shower curtains, waiting to attack those who think they are getting clean.

The bacteria hide in the scummy buildup at the bottom of shower curtains, according to the study by SDSU professor Scott Kelley and colleagues at two other universities.

“People with weak immune systems are especially susceptible to these opportunistic pathogens,” Kelley said, adding that healthy adults are unlikely to face a serious threat from microorganisms found on shower curtains.

But for children, or patients with AIDS, or those undergoing chemotherapy or people with open wounds, some of the germs can be extremely dangerous.

“If these pathogens get into the body of someone who doesn’t have a strong enough immune system, the symptoms can be serious,” Kelley said. The bacteria can cause urinary tract infections, pneumonia, abscesses in the gut and more.

Kelly recommended that shower curtains be cleaned or replaced regularly. “Or better yet, install glass shower doors, as these opportunistic pathogens don’t seem to thrive on glass like they do on vinyl,” he said.

SDSU to Develop A Greener SUV

Students and faculty from SDSU’s Department of Mechanical Engineering have been chosen to participate in a high-profile competition to develop a more environmentally friendly sport utility vehicle.

The competition, called Challenge X: Crossover to Sustainable Mobility, is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and General Motors. The 17 selected universities, announced at a press conference last week in Washington, D.C., will re-engineer a 2005 Chevrolet Equinox, a new compact SUV. The competitors have three basic goals: reduce energy consumption; decrease emissions; and maintain the performance and utility features of the stock model.

Jim Burns, associate professor of mechanical engineering, who will direct the SDSU team. “We intend to build the best new hybrid-electric SUV powertrain – period,” he said.

Burns expects several dozen students per year will have the opportunity to work on the Challenge X project. “Work has already begun on the conceptual design,” he said.

More information is available at www.challengex.org.

Aztec Baseball Team Wins Title

Congratulations to the Aztecs baseball team for winning the 2004 Mountain West Conference regular season title! Under the direction of second-year coach Tony Gwynn, the Aztecs finished with a 19-9 record and the No. 1 seed for the MWC postseason tournament. The winner will advance to the NCAA Regional Tournament.

C L A S S A C T S
Transform 500 acres of surplus federal property into an outdoor classroom. That was the idea in 1966 behind San Diego State’s Fortuna Mountain Field Station, one of four “living laboratories” dedicated to environmental research and education.

But, over time, Fortuna Mountain didn’t really work as a field station. Although conveniently close to campus, its location within popular Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) left sensitive experiments vulnerable to public access. And building restrictions prevented construction of lab, classroom or overnight facilities.

So when Sedra Shapiro, executive director of SDSU’s Field Station Programs, learned that the San Diego Zoological Society needed to acquire a parcel of natural habitat to offset expansion of the Wild Animal Park, she saw an opportunity and seized it, initiating negotiations with the Zoo and the City of San Diego. In March 2003, the City Council approved the resulting win-win-win transaction.

The zoo purchased 266 acres of Fortuna Mountain and deeded it to the city as an expansion of Mission Trails. SDSU realized $2 million from the sale, enough to set up a healthy endowment benefiting the Field Station Programs.

“This transaction was a great benefit for everyone,” Shapiro said. “It more appropriately aligns our respective missions and expertise. It strengthens the partnership between the city and the university, and it enables the zoo to comply with mitigation requirements.”

Community leaders were equally pleased. “Creating a mitigation area in Mission Trails Regional Park was a wonderful way to secure land in perpetuity and to generate income for the SDSU Field Station Programs,” said Dorothy Leonard, chair of the MTRP Citizens Advisory Committee.

“It was a wonderful opportunity partnering with San Diego State University to provide additional land for Mission Trails,” City Council Member Jim Madaffer agreed.

And for once the environment came out ahead, too. “It is a nice consortium,” Shapiro said, “because we all have an interest in the natural world, land stewardship and making decisions based in science.”

– SMY
Acts of Terrorism May Be Expressions of ‘Collective Madness’

A 360 Magazine article by Liese Klein explores the concept of collective madness and its role in acts of terrorism. The article delves into how collective thinking, which can manifest in various forms such as groupthink and tribalism, can lead to extreme violence.

The article highlights the work of Dipak Gupta, a political science professor at San Diego State University, who has studied the phenomenon of collective madness. Gupta defines collective madness as a killing frenzy that can turn an entire population into a killing machine. He suggests that this state of collective madness can be triggered by a variety of factors, including a sense of threat, economic deprivation, and a feeling of entrapment.

Gupta’s expertise has been in high demand since the attacks of September 11, 2001, and he has been interviewed by the media and participated in panel discussions on the topic of collective madness.

The article also discusses how collective madness can be diffused and how it can be contained. It suggests that understanding the roots of collective madness can help in preventing future acts of terrorism.

The article concludes with a call for caution and a reminder of the importance of understanding the complexities of human behavior and the factors that can lead to collective madness.
Once upon a time, the realm of wizards, ogres and enchanted sprites rarely extended beyond the boundaries of childhood, but today children’s literature enjoys unprecedented popularity on adults’ best-seller lists and in the display windows of leading booksellers. Scholars at San Diego State, where the study of books written for youthful audiences has long been a credentialed field of academic endeavor, see the shift in public opinion as welcome—and overdue.

“We won the battle [for legitimacy] long ago,” said Alida Allison, whose course, “Adolescence in Literature,” tackles the work of James Joyce, Sophocles, J.D. Salinger, Russell Hoban, Pam Munoz Ryan and Zhai Zenghua. “At San Diego State, children’s literature is prized for its intrinsic value as literature, not primarily as a stepping stone to literacy.”

That distinction undergirds the College of Arts and Letters’ long-standing and broadening support for the children’s literature program. This fall, the Department of English and Comparative Literature will offer a new specialization in the field for master’s students. And plans have been approved to establish a National Center for the Study of Children’s Literature on campus.

A $2.7 million campaign to fund the project is now under way.

“What it amounts to is recognition that we’re a powerhouse in this area,” asserted Jerry Griswold, one of the first English professors hired to teach children’s literature at SDSU nearly 20 years ago.

Faculty envision the center as a beehive of international scholarship and activity, sponsoring study-abroad exchanges and attracting leading specialists such as Maria Nicolajeva, a former Fulbright recipient and past president of the International Research Society for Children’s Literature. Nicolajeva taught at SDSU from 1999 to 2001.

The center would also develop curricula to train thousands of California teachers to expand their use of children’s literature in the classroom. This effort would build on the work of the SDSU Children’s Literature Circle, a group of teachers, librarians, writers, booksellers and alumni that meets occasionally to discuss books or hear leading children’s authors, such as Russell Hoban, Lawrence Yep and Gary Soto.

Today, about 200 liberal studies students enroll in these courses each semester. Liberal studies program coordinator Phoebe Boelster estimates that up to 70 percent of students in the program go on to earn teaching credentials and eventually find positions in San Diego area schools, a factor that children’s literature faculty consider an added responsibility.

“We are very aware that many of our students are teachers and future teachers, that we’re talking to people who are going to be using these books in their own classrooms,” Allison said. “We recognize how formative that is.”

June Cummins, the newest of SDSU’s children’s literature specialists, hopes the center will also engage a broader audience in...
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Jerry Griswold, who often reads “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” with his classes, enjoys these kinds of subversive elements in children’s literature. He reminds students that Tom plays hooky and disrupts church services. Popular heroine Jo March from “Little Women” refuses to grow up and become a woman in the conventional sense.

“They classic books, if they’re read thoughtfully, as we do in class, question the essential values of this culture and raise thoughtful citizens,” Griswold noted.

Fleischman’s characters are vividly drawn; even their names evoke strong images. General Dirty-Face Scufflehorn from “Jingo Django,” for instance, and Hold-Your-Nose Billy from “The Whipping Boy,” some critics contend that creating such lively characters is Fleischman’s most distinctive contribution to children’s literature.

Some of the best historical fiction is certainly in the children’s book field. I was a history minor at Stanford and I love poking around in the dark corners of history. I can cut loose when I’m writing in a historical period; my imagination seems to be richer. I can exaggerate the characters and have a lot more fun with them.

When I was writing only for adults, I never got letters, was never asked to speak. Now that I’m writing for children, I get letters all the time and two or three invitations a week. There’s a whole new field that’s blossomed up in the 40 years that I’ve been writing children’s books. Programs like the one at San Diego State are multiplying throughout the country.
By Sandra Millers Younger

By his own admission, James R. Allen III was “going down a bad road.” Ditching school. Running with gangs. Dodging the law. Then he met Sandra McBrayer. She was a different kind of teacher, and she ran a different kind of school.

“She stayed on you,” Allen remembered. “Most teachers would’ve gave up on me, but Sandy didn’t.” Like many of McBrayer’s students at “The Place,” the unique San Diego school she established in 1987 for homeless and unattended youth, Allen responded to a teacher’s unwavering faith in his ability to succeed. In 1994, against formidable odds, he graduated from high school.

Today he is a civilian supervisor for the Navy, proud to be supporting his young family and grateful for the enormous difference one teacher made in his life. “I love her,” Allen said every few sentences. “If it wasn’t for Sandy, I’d be somewhere else, doing something different. She was a big help to me.”

Sandra McBrayer, ‘86, ‘90, moves mountains every day to help kids like James Allen. Honored in 1994 as National Teacher of the Year for her trail-blazing work at The Place (now known as The Monarch School), she has used that pulpit to galvanize support for children’s issues. In her current position as executive director of the Children’s Initiative, she leads the charge to effect family-friendly public policies and integrate child-oriented community services. And as an alumna and instructor in SDSU’s College of Education, she is convincing a new generation of teachers it is okay to care.

Sandra McBrayer cannot tell you exactly why she decided to enter the teaching profession. She can, however, tell you why she stayed and why, ultimately, she decided to leave. “I did not mean to be a teacher,” she said. “It just happened. And when I began teaching it was so easy to love and believe and give; it was second nature.

And it worked. McBrayer’s success in reaching a population of students other educators had considered unreachable brought her national acclaim as Teacher of the Year. But winning the highest award in her profession at age 33 left her conflicted. “Who are you after that?” she wondered. “What are you supposed to be next? It was almost as if my profession was taken away.”

The dilemma was not that McBrayer had achieved the ultimate, but that she had suddenly been catapulted into a new realm of responsibility. “I was given this platform and the knowledge,” she said. “I just happened. And when I began teaching it was so easy to love and believe and give, it was second nature.

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Sandra McBrayer meets with Mother Teresa.

“Is your responsibility just to your kids or is it to all kids?”

Sandra McBrayer brings enough passion and charisma to her work to moderate a Middle East Peace summit. But the secret to her success, she says, lies in a simple philosophy: “It’s all about kids.” She keeps telling that to people: “It’s all about all kids.” In practice, her kids-first philosophy usually comes down to a single searing question: “Is your responsibility just to your kids or is it to all kids?”

Part of the Initiative’s mandate depends on recruiting San Diego businesses to help fulfill that universal responsibility. “We’re a small-business town,” McBrayer said, “and many of those businesses don’t know they’re supposed to be responsible for children, or they don’t know how.”

So McBrayer’s team makes suggestions. “Can you open your shop to job shadowing? Can you mentor a kid? Can you buy a little league uniform?”

Some, of course, can do more. And some do. McBrayer points to Mission Federal Credit Union’s unsolicited contribution: converting a storage area above its Pacific Beach branch into 6,000 square feet of rent-free, furnished office space for the Initiative.

Under her leadership, the Children’s Initiative has raised $23 million in state funding to establish 50 free afterschool programs throughout San Diego County. Seed money for the project came from a surprising source: the county credit union’s unsolicited contribution: converting a storage area above its Pacific Beach branch into 6,000 square feet of rent-free, furnished office space for the Initiative.

McBrayer, who earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in public health at SDSU and was honored in 1992 as Alumna of the Year, also returns to the College of Education each semester as an adjunct instructor. Dean Lionel (Skip) Meno especially values her dual perspective as both educator and youth-services expert. “It’s a follow-your-heart thing. If you care about the kids and they know it, it makes a huge difference in them.”

McBrayer’s team asked, backing up the request with statistics showing that most teen violence, including suicides, occurs during unsupervised afternoon hours.

“Ian mind that no one had ever crossed those ledgers lines before. When it comes to helping kids, Sandy McBrayer loves to challenge the system. “Sometimes I hear from agencies or organizations, well, we’re not allowed to do that, well, that isn’t done that way,” she said. “And I say, well show me why not. Our job is to eliminate the perceived barriers.”

She can also bridge the disparate worlds of ideological new teachers and stress-scarred students. “I don’t sugarcoat here. McBrayer poses real-life classroom scenarios — disrespect, profanity, even violence — to help her students develop advance strategies. “As a college education professor, those are tough things to breach, and yet I believe it’s our responsibility to do it,” she said. “If it don’t prepare you, when you’re standing there and it happens, I’ve failed you.”

To practicing teachers, McBrayer offers two suggestions. First, don’t try to solve your students’ personal and family problems on your own. Develop a network of service groups and community agencies you can call on to provide medical or social services. And second, don’t be afraid to get involved.

“Caring is not wrong,” McBrayer said. “Kids will perform far better if you do for them the only and strictly because you care.”

Mcdonald, the Parker Foundation; and Robert Horsman, San Diego National Bank.

Sandy McBrayer

Skil and do for you, when you’re standing there and it happens, I’ve failed you.”

McBrayer joined U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, then chair of America’s Promise, to encourage businesses to support youth. “I believe it’s our responsibility to do it,” she said. “If it don’t prepare you, when you’re standing there and it happens, I’ve failed you.”

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Mcdonald, the Parker Foundation; and Robert Horsman, San Diego National Bank.
Dubbing a new San Diego State football era “Air Craft” is more than coining a clever phrase. For longtime Aztec fans, it harkens back to the heyday of the legendary Don Coryell. Head football coach at SDSU from 1961 through 1972, Coryell won fame for his unbeatable passing offense and his winning seasons. Memories of the “Air Coryell” era at San Diego State still delight fans and former colleagues from Montezuma Mesa and throughout today’s National Football League. Several of Coryell’s former assistants have gone on to shine as NFL coaches, some even taking their teams all the way to the Super Bowl. Joe Gibbs won three Super Bowl championships as head coach of the Washington Redskins. John Madden took one with the Oakland Raiders. And NFL assistant coaches Jim Hanifan, Rod Dowhower and Ernie Zampese all own Super Bowl rings. Also apprenticing under Coryell at SDSU were longtime NFL assistant coaches Tom Bass and Sid Hall.

Breaking the mold
Former Coryell colleagues believe his mentor’s intensity, devotion to the game and willingness to take risks set an invaluable example for other coaches.

“Don was a master at what he did,” said Gibbs, who now owns the Joe Gibbs Racing NASCAR team. “I don’t know if I was ever around anyone who was more dedicated, focused and intense.”

John Madden, a television sports analyst who will soon join ABC’s “Monday Night Football” crew, agrees. “Don Coryell was the originator of focus and a one-track mind,” Madden said. “Football was his life. He gave great pre-game talks. He’d turn out the lights, and when you’d listen as a coach, you were ready to go out there and play.”

Innovations in offense
Coryell drew particular notice for his offensive strategy, which literally introduced the modern passing game to college football. Not surprisingly, SDSU quarterbacks Don Horn (1965-66), Dennis Shaw (1968-69) and Brian Sipe (1969-71) all went on to make their marks in pro football. Receivers Gary Garrison (1964-65), Haven Moses (1966-67) and Isaac Curtis (1972) did likewise.

Sipe, who played for the Cleveland Browns from 1974 through 1983 and ranked the NFL’s most valuable player award, believes his SDSU career had “everything to do” with his coaching. "When I went to the New York Giants in 1969, I was dismayed at how unsound they were,” Dryer said. “I learned more about defense at San Diego State than I did in my first three years of pro football.”

By Steve Dolan

“Air Craft” Rekindles Memories of an Aztec Coaching Legend

Coryell leads an Aztec strategy session during the late ’60s with assistant coaches (left to right) Al Baldock, Ernie Zampese and Claude Gilbert.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SDSU ARCHIVES

PHOTO: JIM DREISBACH, COURTESY OF SDSU ATHLETICS DEPT.
success as a pro. A very low draft pick in the 1st round, Sipe says his SDSU experience in the Coryell offense put him miles ahead of the competition. “I ran a more sophisticated offense at San Diego State than what the Cleveland Browns had,” said Sipe. “I was a high school football coach who took Santa Fe Christian to a San Diego County title last fall. ‘Other quarterbacks were stronger than me. [But] they were not as comfortable as I was in a passing offense.”

What we did at San Diego State is common now,” Sipe went on. “Back then, it was revolutionary. The fans really appreciated it. We even outdrew the Chargers [in attendance] some years.”

Before Coryell came to SDSU, he had concentrated more on running the ball, and even introduced the popular I-formation running attack as an assistant coach at the University of Southern California. In time, a majority of college teams used the same offense, but Coryell was in the vanguard.

“Every place he went, he was a pioneer,” Maddox said. “He was an innovator long before he was known as an innovator. He’s a brilliant mind, coach, teacher and motivator.”

A players’ coach

Players and coaches alike describe Coryell as an extraordinary man. They say he was honest, straightforward, dedicated, intense and fun to play for. Tom Nettles, a wide receiver for Coryell at SDSU from 1966 through 1968, remembers him as the ultimate players’ coach.

“I talked to [former Chargers quarterback] Dan Fouts about that, and he said Don was the same way with the Chargers,” said Nettles, now an on-air talent with The Golf Channel. “Don only said good things about his players. He took the blame for a loss and gave credit to the players for a win.”

Today Coryell adds that the overall atmosphere on Mountiman Mesa contributed to his success with the Aztecs. “The faculty at San Diego State was just tremendous when I was there,” he said. “They were interested in the team because we had a bunch of guys who ... were there to get an education and didn’t cause problems. The faculty, administration and everybody else were so helpful. I think our players responded to that because some of them had been to other schools that were not as good to them.”

Coryell won the respect of his assistant coaches not only because of his reputation on the field or game day, but also for his dedication and focus away from practice and games. Joe Gibbs remembers seeing Coryell studying plays in a dark room, not even noticing the lack of light because he was so focused. “He was so intense,” Gibbs said. “That kind of set him apart from most people.”

Madden remembers a time he was talking to Coryell when the coach pulled an apple out of his desk and started eating it. Madden had to ask why he was munching on an old, half-eaten apple. Coryell noticed as much and threw the fruit away.

Making it fun

Coryell was also a skilled delegator who transferred responsibility to his assistants and let them make decisions without ever second-guessing him. “Don had a lot of camaraderie with his players and coaches,” said Ernie Zampese, who coached under Don Coryell at SDSU from 1966 through 1972 before later rejoining him in the NFL. “It was fun to be around him. I don’t know what I would have done if not for Don Coryell. I had a wonderful career, and it’s because of him.” Zampese is now a special consultant to the St. Louis Rams.

Jim Haslam, current offensive line coach for the Rams, worked under Coryell at SDSU in 1972 and also followed him to the pros. “The most enjoyable years of my career were with him,” Haslam said. “He made it fun. So much of what we do today emulates Don Coryell. He had a tremendous legacy not only at San Diego State, but also in the game of football. I know he’s in the College Football Hall of Fame. He should be in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.”

Red Dowhower, who retired earlier this year as offensive coordinator of the Philadelphia Eagles, seconded that opinion. Dowhower played for Coryell at SDSU in 1963 and 1964, and later coached under him both at SDSU (1966-1972) and with the St. Louis Cardinals.

“He should be in the NFL Hall of Fame,” Dowhower said. “He was a great innovator. A lot of what we do now needs to be credited to Coryell. If you pull the films of our 1966 championship team at San Diego State and what we’re doing today, there’s probably not a lot of difference. A lot of things Don did in San Diego State were probably before their time.”

With characteristic modesty, Coryell passes the praise for his great success at SDSU to dedicated and skilled players and assistant coaches. “It was just a wonderful bunch of guys there,” Coryell cooed. “Every year was a great year.”

PHOTO: ERNIE ANDERSON. COURTESY OF SDSU ARCHIVES.
Arthur Gordon Linkletter was just a kid at San Diego’s Woodrow Wilson Junior High when he discovered his future. It unfolded before him in the grandiose words and gestures of a traveling speaker.

“He was a typical, old-fashioned orator — stentorian,” Linkletter remembers more than 75 years later. “Everything was very broad and very loud and very exaggerated. I thought that was just wonderful. I went backstage and talked to him. He told me what a wonderful life it was to speak and read. And so now, I am that.”

At 89, Art Linkletter in fact commands an international podium as a wise and beloved senior commentator. His credibility springs from a life well lived and worth emulating, a history distinguished by personal and professional success, remarkable resilience in the face of tragedy and a passion to share all he’s learned.

From future teacher to television pioneer to business tycoon to inspirational speaker, Art Linkletter’s remarkable life has come full circle.

By Sandra Millers Younger
Most people who know Art Linkletter remember him as a friendly face from a black-and-white television screen, the winsome host of long-running daytime hits “House Party” and “People Are Funny.” Before Oprah or Regis, it was Art Linkletter who ruled the ratings and won the public’s affection, along with two Emmys and a Grammy award.

But those who know him only from his television success know relatively little about Linkletter. He is a man equally accomplished in business, an astute investor and entrepreneur who still actively oversees a conglomerate of family-run ventures as chairman of Linkletter Enterprises. He is a man devoted also to education and good works. Art Linkletter softens his memory of those long-ago hardships, along with two Emmys and a Grammy award.

With Lois, leading the 1950 San Diego State Homecoming Parade.

With energy to spare, Linkletter also writes. He is a member of the men's student body and of his fraternity, the progenitor of Alpha Tau Omega. He was a fixture at pep rallies and school dances, where he met Lois, then a San Diego High School senior.

An inauspicious beginning

Logically, no one could have expected Art Linkletter to succeed in show business. “I thought I had no talent to ever be a star,” he says, “so I decided I had no talent to ever be a star,” he says, “so I decided I had no talent to ever be a star,” he says, “so I decided I had no talent to ever be a star,” he says, “so I decided I had no talent to ever be a star.” But Linkletter found himself better suited to the business world than the ivory tower. It was a realization Smith could never accept. “They all said, you know, you have to go to college,” Linkletter remembers. “I decided I had no talent to ever be a star,” he says, “so I decided I had no talent to ever be a star,” he says, “so I decided I had no talent to ever be a star.”

But for all his success, Art Linkletter was still desperately poor and by now his parents had moved again, leaving him homeless as well. So he “lived around town,” staying with friends, window shopping and spending the night in a beach cottage during the day. “It was an exciting place,” he says of the fledgling metropolis.

He took every job that came along, sometimes as many as five at a time. He graded papers, made salads in the cafeteria, posed nearly nude for life drawing classes, even spied on dishonest dealers at a big casino south of Tijuana.

Linkletter credits his English professor, Florence Smith, for focusing him beyond those eclectic times. “She aimed me as high as she knew,” he remembers with obvious gratitude. “She wanted me to be a Rhodes Scholar, and she wanted me to turn out to be a writer.”

Linkletter must have contributed to the excitement. A natural athlete who still swims, skis and surfs, he set a record in the 100-yard dash at 19.5 seconds.

At 1929, Art Linkletter set off to see the world. “I put this thing down on her pageant he’d written as radio director for the Texas Centennial, a series of world’s fairs to showcase American achievements,” he remembers. “I thought, that’s what I thought, that’s what I thought, that’s what I thought, that’s what I thought, that’s what I thought. I will never be that kind of a writer, because that is not where the market is.” Art Linkletter went on to write more than 20 books, including the hugely popular, Kids Say the Darndest Things, hilarious excerpts from his 27,000 classic television interviews with children. Kids topped the best-seller list for two years “They’re not great literature,” he says about his published volumes, “but they’re entertaining, and they’re educational, and they’re successful.”

Broadcasting icon

Psychology professor Harry Steinmetz proved a better analyst than Smith of Linkletter’s true talents. When the manager of local radio station WNOX began looking for a student employee, Steinmetz suggested Linkletter, who, as always, jumped at the opportunity to make a few extra bucks. The future broadcasting icon couldn’t see his own potential in the new field.

“I decided I had no talent to ever be a star,” he says, “so I decided to take a job with Woodrow Wilson Junior High School as an English teacher,” the first step toward his ultimate goal of becoming a college professor.

It never happened. Linkletter was learning when two radio gurus in Dallas opened a long microphone cord outside the studio window and started chatting with passers-by before the first “man-on-the-street” interviews. In that moment, he realized his potential and gave up his college dream.

Linkletter went on to write more than 20 books, including the hugely popular, Kids Say the Darndest Things, hilarious excerpts from his 27,000 classic television interviews with children. Kids topped the best-seller list for two years “They’re not great literature,” he says about his published volumes, “but they’re entertaining, and they’re educational, and they’re successful.”

Linkletter felt only slightly singled. “I just said, ‘No, Miss Smith, I will never be that kind of a writer, because that is not where the market is.’ ” Art Linkletter went on to write more than 20 books, including the hugely popular, Kids Say the Darndest Things, hilarious excerpts from his 27,000 classic television interviews with children. Kids topped the best-seller list for two years “They’re not great literature,” he says about his published volumes, “but they’re entertaining, and they’re educational, and they’re successful.”

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enhanced or minimized,” he says. “And I think that any setback is maybe nature’s way of saying: ‘You’re pushing your luck.’” Then there is television. “I think that tragedy and unexpected defeats leave you either heartbroken or heartened,” he says. “I’m heartened. I’m always looking forward.”

Linkletter became a tenacious crusader against drug abuse, a cause that he had championed in his earlier years. “I think that people are influenced by what I say or do. What means something to me is that people are influenced by what I say or do. What I am involved in is going to change lives for the better.”

A new direction

Looking back, Art Linkletter sees his show-business success as more than just a career. “I want people to remember me for the time when tragedy drove him to the lectern and, ironically, the speaking career he’d envisioned for so long.”

In 1969, the same year “House Party” ended, the Linkletters lost their youngest daughter, 20-year-old Diane, in a drug-related suicide. “I think the tragedy of losing a child is the most difficult thing that anybody could ever endure,” he says. “You can lose your fortune, you can lose your health, you can lose your family, but you don’t lose your child.”

Unbelievably, in 1980, the Linkletters lost a second child, a 10-year-old son, to a fatal heart attack. “I think that tragedy and unexpected defeats leave you either heartbroken or heartened,” he says. “I’m heartened. I’m always looking forward.”

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Approaching his 90th birthday, Art Linkletter still travels 200,000 miles each year to share the lessons of his years in as many as 70 lectures on health, business, education and positive aging. “It’s a potentially grueling schedule at any age, but Art Linkletter thrives on the opportunity,” he says. “Each thing in my life, failures and successes, opened doors for me and rearranged my values and judgments so that I am, at this age, feel I am filled with the wisdom of life,” he says. “You only get it through defeats, getting up, persisting, learning from your failures, making judgments on ethics, values, morality, friendships and all the good things in life.”

When he’s not on the road, Linkletter typically puts in four or five hours a day at his Beverly Hills office, keeping track of his business interests. “At one time, the money thrilled him. But his heart is elsewhere now. He’s a happy man, pleased with his accomplishments, how far he’s traveled from Moose Jaw. And how much opportunity still lies ahead.”

“I’m proud to be an SDSU alumnus, because of the university’s rich past, tremendous academic achievements and outstanding legacy of community service,” Dressel said. “The SDSU Alumni Center will help us showcase our university while providing a venue for alumni to meet. And when SDSU alumni get together, great things happen.”

Because alumni are vital to San Diego State’s long-term success, SDSU President Stephen L. Weber has made the Alumni Center his highest fund-raising priority. The majority of the $10 million needed to build the facility must come from private donations. To date, more than 35 percent of this amount has been committed, thanks to the leadership of campaign tri-chairs Nikki Clay, L. Robert Payne and Tom Carter.

“An SDSU alumnus,” Dressel said, “is an SDSU alumnus for life. The SDSU Alumni Center will become a cornerstone of the university’s efforts to serve its alumni and the Greater San Diego community. In addition to providing much-needed on-campus banquet and meeting space, the new facility will house all of University Advancement, including the Alumni Association, in one convenient location. The Alumni Center will also offer a ballroom for large functions and a library/lounge featuring a rotating exhibit of Aztec and university memorabilia, curated by the staff of Love Library.”

Philanthropy

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SDSU recognizes those lead contributors to the SDSU Alumni Center Campaign for their support and vision (partial list): Love and Barbara Parne, Dr. Dwight E. Stanford, The Lockney Family Foundation, Arthur R. Barron and Robert E. Barron, Art L. and Gwen Fleming Family Foundation, Jerry and Martha Dressel, Jeffrey W. Glazer and Lisa S. Brain-Glazer, Benjamin G. and Nicole A. Clay, Bill and Nola Trumpsoller, Erich R. Schafer, Richard R. Davis and Brint Colburn Davis, Randy Gordon and Maria Moul-Gordon, Douglas X. Pattillo, Ph.D., and Walter A. Turner.

A Place to Call Our Own: The SDSU Alumni Center

Friendships formed during our years at San Diego State University often remain among the most lasting memories of our life experience. Then, despite good intentions, we graduate, go our separate ways and lose contact with the individuals – and the university – that made such an important difference in our lives.

“The thousands of SDSU alumni living in the San Diego region, less than 5 percent remain involved with their alma mater,” said Jerry C. Dressel, ’76, president of the SDSU Alumni Association. “We need to do a better job of reconnecting with and engaging our alumni in meaningful ways. Key to this outreach is bringing them back on campus to see familiar places, tour new facilities and learn about all that is taking place here.”

The SDSU Alumni Center will become a cornerstone of the university’s efforts to serve its alumni and the Greater San Diego community. In addition to providing much-needed on-campus banquet and meeting space, the new facility will house all of University Advancement, including the Alumni Association, in one convenient location with ample adjacent parking. Located on 55th Street, between Parking Structure V and the SDSU Athletic Center, the building will also offer a ballroom for large functions and a library/lounge featuring a rotating exhibit of Aztec and university memorabilia, curated by the staff of Love Library.

“I’m proud to be an SDSU alumnus, because of the university’s rich past, tremendous academic achievements and outstanding legacy of community service.”

“I would be very happy to start all over again at 20,” he says. “The next 50 years are going to be great; they’re going to make the last 100 look like kindergarten.”

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A Place to Call Our Own: The SDSU Alumni Center
A Gift of Land, a Legacy of Hope

Thanks to a generous gift of land, San Diego State University is moving ahead with plans to build a new campus near the Imperial County community of Brawley.

SDSU’s existing Imperial Valley campus, located on the Mexican border in Calexico, is too far away for many residents in the north end of the county to commute to classes, explained Khosrow Fatemi, Imperial Valley Campus dean. The Brawley site 22 miles to the north will serve those areas, as well as the city of El Centro, offering many county residents their first chance to obtain a college education.

SDSU’s plans for a second Imperial Valley campus became a possibility when the Bixby Land Co., longtime owners of the Lucky Ranch near Brawley, agreed to donate 200 acres for the project. “They offered us the best part of their 2,000-acre parcel,” Fatemi said, “right on Highway 78.” The donated land is appraised at approximately $4 million.

Jean Bixby Smith, president of the Alamitos Land Co. in Long Beach, said the decision to donate acreage for the new campus fulfilled both business and philanthropic purposes. “We’ve been a member of the Brawley community for a long time, and we’re interested in seeing them realize their dreams to grow,” she explained. “We’ve worked closely with the city to make changes we thought would enhance their growth opportunities as well as ours. Since higher education is the key to economic development, one idea that came up was trying to attract the university.”

For Smith personally, there was yet another reason. “Education is a part of my life,” she said. “I was a teacher for a while, and I served on the board of trustees of my alma mater, Scripps College in Claremont.” Smith also maintains a special interest in California State University, Long Beach. Her father was one of the institution’s original trustees.

The Bixby gift could help bring welcome, long-term changes to the Imperial Valley, a primarily rural desert region whose young, growing population is limited by the scarcity of educational and employment options. Only about 10 percent of residents 25 and older hold a college degree; nearly half have not even finished high school. The county’s unemployment rate is just over 21 percent; by contrast, the state-wide rate is only about 5 percent. And more than 22 percent of residents live in poverty, with per capita income averaging only $18,469.

Fatemi hopes to see those numbers improve as educational opportunities expand. By 2008, with 1,400 students projected to enroll at Brawley, and 400 more at Calexico, SDSU’s Imperial Valley enrollment could nearly triple – from 1,000 to 2,800. The Brawley campus will significantly increase our ability to serve the community,” he predicted.

That’s just what Jean Bixby Smith intends. “Education is important, and it’s important to expand its presence in the [Imperial] Valley and be able to offer it to the residents there,” she said. “We were in the fortunate position of being able to help them achieve that goal.”

—Sandra Millers Younger
Emmy Winner Jack Ofield Fills a Tall Order for Short Films

To hear SDSU film professor Jack Ofield tell it, a recent business trip to India was more like a swashbuckling adventure. “There were cows in the street. It was so wonderful and so exotic,” he remembers. “There were soldiers guarding the gate. It was a beautiful gothic colonial-type building, heavy tropical jungle growth.”

Ofield’s adventure took him by train from Bombay to the Film and Television Institute of India in Pune where he hoped to discuss new talent. Calls and letters had gone unanswered, so he’d decided to pay a personal visit.

After talking his way past the guards and into the school’s office, Ofield found his letters tidiest in a pile, unopened because he’d addressed them to a prior director. Such surprises are nothing new to Jack Ofield. He travels the world in search of short films for “The Short List,” a four-time Emmy-winning series that airs internationally on public and cable television. A project of SDSU’s Production Center for Documentary and Drama, “The Short List” is marking its eighth season with broadcasts in Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. In the U.S., the program is usually carried by local PBS affiliates. In San Diego, look for it on Cox Channel 4.

A recent “Short List” broadcast, for instance, opened with “By Default,” a parable on the persistence of student loan officers, then segued into the “The Photograph,” a moving meditation on aging and memory from Russia. The show finished with “Lifting,” a short, wordless short from France about an embryo that literally swallows passengers. Despite PBS’ high art reputation, Ofield says he structures the program to aggressively compete for viewers. “We need to follow normal television practices, which is to hook you early and make you miss the beginnings of all the other shows,” he said. “Then you’ll stay till the end. We’re competing with everyone out there; and everyone’s got these remotes.”

Ofield’s own reputation as a connoisseur of short films is admired throughout the industry. “He’s polished the art form,” says Craig Prater, director of the Festival of Festivals film showcase in Palm Springs, Calif. “Jack’s someone who’s very well known and terribly well respected. Because of his knowledge of that particular genre of film, he’s considered one of the experts in the field.”

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Prater believes the success of “The Short List” has given the short film genre greater prominence and improved the overall quality of work being produced. Perhaps not coincidentally, the short-film genre has received more attention and improved the overall quality of work being produced. Perhaps not coincidentally, the short-film genre has received more attention and better production values, everything,” Prater says. “It allows more filmmakers to show their work to more people, to show their creativity.”

Ofield says. “We’re probably better known in Europe and the Far East, Ofield is sustained by his passion for the craft of filmmaking. He can frequently be found late at night and on weekends in the SDSU editing studio, polishing a 30-second promo to perfection.

“Welcome to the 21st century,” Ofield says. “I bring in a thermos of great coffee. I turn off the lights so it’s kind of moody and dark. It’s like driving some magical machine.” And another adventure begins.

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By Liese Klein

“Short List” selections because 99 percent of what he sees at festivals and screenings doesn’t make the cut.

“It’s like fishing,” he says. “You’re looking for something you like.” What Ofield likes is a combination of outrageous, whimsical short films. “If I saw a terrible film and it made me laugh, I’d know that was something I’d want to include,” he says.

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But the increasing popularity of short films has a down side, Ofield says. “Because the quality of work being produced. Perhaps not coincidentally, the short-film genre has received more attention and better production values, everything,” Prater says. “It allows more filmmakers to show their work to more people, to show their creativity.”


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