

*We love every Cougar...
 but for one night,
 these few happen to be
 our favorites.*

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 6pm Reception, 7:30pm Dinner & Program
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AWARDS-DINNER

UH Alumni

THE MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY

One Ring to Rule Them All

Celebrating 10 Years of the Official UH Class Ring

Loss of a Legal Legend

REMEMBERING UH ALUM AND BENEFACTOR JOHN O'QUINN

I Am Woman!

EXPLORING THE WOMEN'S ARCHIVE AND RESEARCH CENTER

Winter 2009

XX-amining Gender

by Kim Reister Stinebaker ('91)



Among the treasures housed and cared for in the University of Houston MD Anderson Library's Special Collections is a unique assembly of historical papers that tell the tale of women's history in Houston and in Texas.

The Women's Archive, begun in 1996, documents how local women over the years have come together to achieve their goals, address their concerns, and impact society. The collection, together with the Women's Studies Program and the Friends of Women's Studies, serves as part of the triad that is the Women's Archive and Research Center (WARC) at the University of Houston.

The idea for the archive came when Carey Shuart, the 2009 UH Alumni Association Chair's Award recipient, was reflecting on materials that her grandmother, Blanche Chenoweth, had left her. Chenoweth was a professor, radio host, and suffrage worker in 1920s and 1930s Chicago.

"My grandmother left me this amazing, truly historic collection of papers and belongings that I promised to save," Shuart recalled, "but I didn't know what to do with them. There must be other papers from interesting individuals out there without a home too, I reasoned, so I approached Cynthia Freeland, then director of the Women's Studies Program, about establish-

ing an archive for papers important to women."

At the time, the Women's Studies Program was not a line item on any university budget and could have disappeared with the wave of a hand. All involved agreed that an archive would help solidify the program's presence and serve the community. The library graciously made space in their Special Collections, and the rest is history—literally.

WARC's initiative is broad and achieved through, of course, the archive, but also scholarships, fellowships, and grants for UH students and faculty, as well as its Living Archives Interview Series and an oral history program that augments the written archive with video interviews. Long range plans include a conference on Houston women's history and endowment of a faculty chair.

"Documenting what women have been doing and making those documents available to scholars affects our understanding of what has shaped our past," said Dr. Elizabeth Gregory, English professor and director of the Women's

Studies Program. "The archive puts the focus on what women do and have done to make clear that women have been active contributors to the life and culture of Houston all along."

And telling these stories is aided by the archive's 53 individual collections, featuring a range of organizations that include social action groups, political offices, philanthropic associations, and sport and garden clubs. The records date back to 1878. Examples include papers from the Houston Area Women's Center, the archive's first acquisition; the National Women's Conference of 1977; the Top Ladies of Distinction, an African-American philanthropic group; the River Oaks Blossom Club; Houston NOW chapters; the Association of Women in Science; and most recently, the Komen Foundation Houston's papers.

Gregory explains that working through groups and organizations was often the only way women could make an impact in early society, and those groups have now proven to be a reliable historical resource. Many of Houston's

VOTES FOR WOMEN

A pre-19th Amendment sash worn by suffrage workers, part of the collection housed at the UH Women's Archive and Research Center.

more prominent community and fine art organizations sprang from small women's groups—for example, the Houston Public Library, the Museum of Fine Arts - Houston, and the Houston Ballet.

"The papers give us an idea of how these organizations operate," said Dick Dickerson, university archivist. "We sought active members' papers and now have quite a collection."

A person's papers typically include correspondence—which Dickerson said is most revealing—scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, or photos. An organization's collection normally includes rosters, founding papers, by-laws, minutes, yearbooks, agendas, publications, programs, newsletters, and photos with identification.

"However it comes to us, we can take it," said Dickerson. And that means videos, disks, email—anything electronic.

Care is required in housing and organizing such historical artifacts, and a state-of-the-art storage area has been created for the collection using a compact shelving system acquired with the opening of new Special Collections in 2004. Complete with light, temperature and humidity control, the environment is stabilized to add longevity to the sensitive materials. Dickerson said the area stays dark as much as possible with acid-free storage containers and files. Every element of the space has been selected to be as fire-safe as possible.

While all of the papers reveal unique aspects of women's roles in society, a few tell a deeper story than others. Here's a sample of what the WARC offers.

The Ewing Family Papers

This collection documents the social life and feminist activities of mother and daughter Mary Ellen and Gladys Ewing. Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the Ewing Family Papers is the material pertaining to Mary Ellen Ewing's involvement in the suffrage movement. Through their scrapbooks, photos, albums and newspaper clippings, researchers and interested guests of the Special Collections can get a first-hand account of the movement and the times between 1878 and 1917.

Mary Ellen Ewing's life was characterized by public and philanthropic service, which deservedly placed her in "The Texas Women's Hall of Fame." She was the Chairman of the Legislative Committee of the Harris County Suffrage Association and Honorary President of the Child Welfare League.

She also was known for her activism in fighting for public school reform and her feminist advocacy regarding the need for women on the school board. She succeeded in other roles as well, being granted three patents for developments in street sanitation.

Nikki Van Hightower

The collection of Nikki Van Hightower documents her extraordinary career from the time of her appointment as the Houston mayor's first "Women's Advocate" through her work as Harris County Treasurer.

Van Hightower became involved in the women's movement while in college in the early 1970s and continued that involvement after moving to Houston in 1975. In 1976, Houston Mayor Fred Hofheinz appointed her to the position of Women's Advocate, making her responsible for "coordinating efforts to secure equal rights for women" in Houston.

She continued to be an outspoken activist in the women's movement and a leading proponent of equality for women in Houston while becoming instrumental in establishing the Houston Area Women's Center in 1977. She became the Center's Executive Director in 1979 and held that position until 1986.

She currently holds the positions of Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, and Senior Lecturer with the Health Science Center at Texas A&M University.

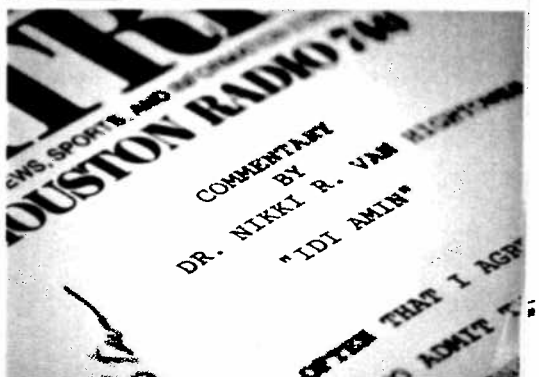
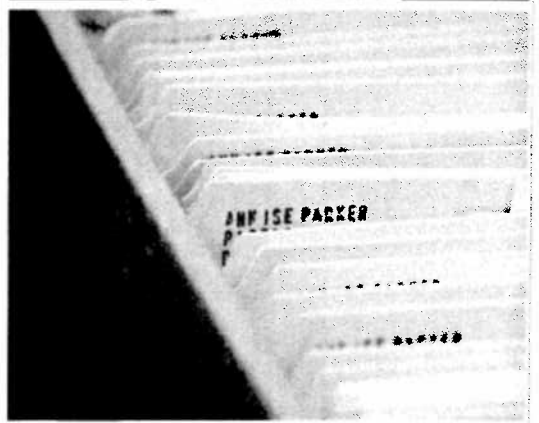
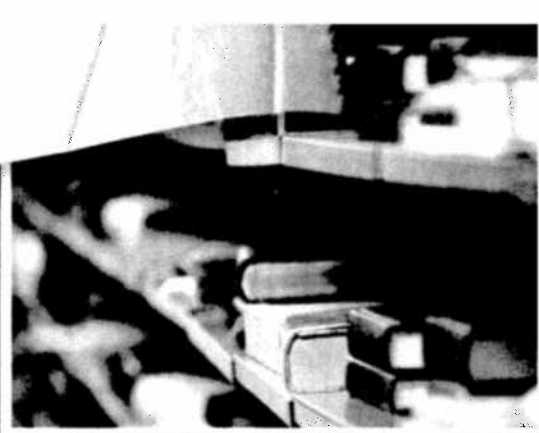
Carolyn Farb

Carolyn Farb is an internationally known fundraiser, author, businesswoman, and philanthropist. During the past 30 years, she has raised more than \$25 million for a number of charities and worthy causes, the majority of which are based in Houston and benefit local organizations, including the University of Houston and the University of Houston Alumni Association. Her hard work and devotion to others have earned her the nickname "the first lady of philanthropy."

"This collection of papers, photos, video, speeches, and newspaper clippings provide a step-by-step documentation of social history and significant fundraising," said Dickerson.

Mayor-Elect Annise Parker

Annise Parker was recently voted in as Houston's second female mayor, and her papers document several of her campaigns for elected office in Houston—from her unsuccessful bids for City



Friends of Women's Studies

Council in 1991 and 1995 to her winning races for City Council in 1997 and 2001 and for City Controller in 2003 and 2005.

After 20 years in the oil and gas industry, Parker moved into public service, becoming Houston's first openly gay City Council member.

In addition to her work in city politics, Parker has been the subject and author of numerous newspaper and magazine articles across the country. Parker is active in the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered (GLBT) community and the Houston community as a whole. She serves on various governing boards, such as the boards of directors of Holocaust Museum Houston and Girls Inc. and the advisory boards of the Houston Zoo, the Montrose Counseling Center, Bering Omega Community Services, and Trees for Houston.

Perhaps interesting to some, representatives from a mayoral race rival thumbed through her papers in the archive, one can only assume to dig up dirt. Thankfully for Parker, they left discouraged and empty-handed.

As the Women's Studies Program was developed in the early 1990s, the community arm of the program was also formed. Originally called the Women's Studies Community Outreach Board, the group is now known as the Friends of Women's Studies, and grew with the academic program as a natural support group for raising funds and awareness of the importance of scholarship about and by women.

Group members also recognized the importance of establishing an archive. The Friends support the Women's Archive and the Women's Studies Program under the rubric of the WARC (Women's Archive and Research Center), funding both the archiving of documents and the work of scholarly research itself through scholarships and fellowships.

The group raises funds through membership dues, an annual Table Talk luncheon, and through individual gifts to specific projects. Among the projects it funds are archival assistantships for graduate students who process the collections; graduate assistantships in the Women's Studies Program; undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral fellowships and scholarships in Women's Studies; fellowships for faculty research, travel grants for graduate

students and faculty presenting conference papers and the Living Archives interview series.

While it is a fundraiser, the Table Talk luncheon also serves as a community focal point for honoring the accomplishments of Houston women in all fields. This year's luncheon is set for Feb. 25, 2010, at the Hilton Americas, chaired by Andrea Georgsson and Sarah Cooper.

"The Friends are excited about the opportunity to showcase the archive, both so that they can be alert to identify materials that should become part of the archive and so that they can become supporters," said Gregory.

For more information about the Friends and the Program, please visit www.friendsofwomen.org. To find out how to donate your papers to the Women's Archive, contact Dick Dickerson at dickd@uh.edu.

Alumni may access the archives either by visiting the library on campus or electronically at <http://info.lib.uh.edu/research/index.html>.



Blanche Chenoweth, a professor, radio host, and suffrage worker in 1920's and 1930's Chicago, is one of many remarkable women featured in the UH Women's Archive.

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