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Embassy Row

These troops are actually actors posed in front of Founders Hall, transformed temporarily into an embassy for scenes in a new television series. "Penscola" stars James Brolin as a Marine pilot and will air on CBS, 7 p.m., Saturdays. The film crew was on campus Aug. 8, shooting scenes in the front and east courtyard of Founders, as well as inside. Room 151 was converted into the office of an embassy dignitary.

The Way Life Works

By Jill Wagner

Juan Aguilar works in UC operations, but once a week last semester he was a fixture in Copley Library. For the hour he spent on the other side of campus, Aguilar wasn't setting up conference rooms or cleaning up after visitors. He was studying.

Each week, Aguilar met Doug Gilbert, a student volunteer with the Workplace Literacy Program, to review math and English. They worked on vocabulary, algebra and geometry. Near the end of the semester Gilbert gave pointers on speechwriting and helped Aguilar practice public speaking.

Aguilar attended El Cajon Adult Center for a year, working to earn his high school diploma. When graduation neared, his instructor asked Aguilar to address his fellow graduates. The quiet, modest man was honored by the request, but hesitated with his answer.

"I had made speeches in Mexico, but in a different language it is harder," Aguilar says. "I decided to do it for the people around me, for the people who helped me."

In the heartfelt speech, Aguilar talked about the challenge of addressing a big audience. "That is the way life works," he said. "Life is a system of challenges and rewards; for every obstacle you overcome, there is a reward if you persist and carry that task to the end."

Aguilar began pursuing fluency in English when he first arrived in the United States 10 years ago. At USD, he joined the literacy program jointly run by human resources and the Office of Community Service-Learning. His reward thus far is a high school diploma, eventually he will have a college degree, Aguilar says with a confident smile.

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ViP Cookies

Back to school time means filling lunchboxes or stocking up on afterschool snacks. Kids of all ages will love these award-winning chocolate chip peanut butter cookies. The recipe was submitted by Vice President and Provost Frank Lazarus at the employee picnic bake-off.

Ingredients:
1/2 cup margarine, softened
1/2 cup shortening
1 cup peanut butter
1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup light brown sugar, packed
2 eggs
2-1/2 cups flour
1-1/2 tsp baking soda
1 tsp baking powder
2 tsp salt
12 oz. chocolate chips

Directions:
1. Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees
2. Beat margarine, shortening, peanut butter, sugar, brown sugar and eggs on medium speed until well blended.
3. Stir together flour, baking soda, baking powder and salt. Add to peanut butter mixture and beat until well blended.
4. Stir in chips and drop by rounded spoonfuls on an ungreased cookie sheet.
5. Bake 8 to 10 minutes. Makes 5 dozen.
Benefits Brief

Newly hired faculty, staff and administrative employees should contact Esther Nissenson immediately at ext. 8762 to schedule a benefits orientation. Eligible employees must enroll in their insurance coverage within 30 days from their date of eligibility. If not enrolled within this period, coverage may not be available until Jan. 1, 1998.

A reminder to returning part-time faculty. If you have a benefits-based job this fall, and you had benefits last spring, please contact Esther. You also have a 30-day window in which to reinstate your insurance coverage, and if appropriate, retirement contributions.

Human resources must receive a tuition remission application for part-time students no later than 10 days before the first day of class. Late fees may be incurred if the application is received after the deadline. Tuition remission forms are available in human resources.

The provision which allowed an employee to exclude $5,250 in tuition remission benefits for graduate level classes expired June 30, 1996. Congress considered extending this provision. Unfortunately, the final version of the 1997 Taxpayer Relief Act did not include an extension. Therefore, tuition remission benefits for graduate courses will be considered taxable income beginning July 1, 1996. You may expect an estimated 30 percent tax withholding.

Health insurance companies require student status verifications on dependents covered by the university's health plans and who are full-time students between the ages of 18 and 25. If the verification form is not returned to the insurance company in a timely manner, medical and dental coverage could be canceled.

— Vicki Coscia

Moving and Shaking in Financial Aid

By Jill Wagner

She's worked in the Office of Financial Aid Services for 10 years, but her co-workers had never seen CC Costanzo quite like she was the day the department moved from Serra Hall to Hughes Center.

Decked out in an apron, the pockets filled with a tape measure, markers and box cutters, Costanzo directed the entire move from a perch in the third-floor hallway. The clipboard constantly in her hand held a map of where each box, desk, chair and filing cabinet was to be placed. The new office numbers were also on the map, though Costanzo rarely needed to refer to them. Whether the box was marked HC319, 313 or 304, she quickly steered the movers in the right direction.

The job may have been one of a general directing the troops, but Costanzo's enthusiasm for life and contagious laugh can put anyone at ease. Judith Lewis Logue, director of financial aid services, notes with appreciation that the movers "bent over backward to accommodate (Costanzo's) requests."

Usually it's Costanzo, in her role as financial aid adviser, who will do anything to help a student, parent or colleague. Her extraordinary ability to organize large projects — including logging all documents submitted by financial aid recipients — and the wealth of knowledge stored in her head has earned Costanzo the admiration of co-workers across campus. This year Costanzo learned just how much she is appreciated when she was named a finalist for the 1997 Manuel Hernandez Employee of the Year Award.

"What distinguishes CC is not only her longevity in a stressful position, but her sincerity and concern in fulfilling her role at USD," says Lewis Logue. "She is very committed to doing the right thing, and taking that extra step to follow through."

A vast amount of work goes on in Costanzo's cozy cubicle, which is filled with trays, notebooks and baskets full of documents to be logged, mail to be opened and distributed, or forms to be updated and photocopied. Often a student worker shares the space with Costanzo; always other advisers or financial counselors file in to ask questions.

CC Costanzo and her clipboard — which held a map of where each piece of furniture would go — were inseparable when the Office of Financial Aid Services moved to the Hughes Administration Center.

Costanzo grew up in a suburb of Cleveland, one of six kids. Dealing with constant interruptions and people always in her space probably feels normal. Being a leader and office manager are skills she perfected at USD, working in an office that has grown from seven to 17 employees in her decade here.

Costanzo handles everything from ordering supplies to figuring out why a financial aid application is hung up. The latter is a skill especially dear to students and parents, who often call or visit the office in a panic.

Because of her understanding of how the big picture works, Costanzo moved into her position of monitoring incoming documents and helping students after about four months on the job. "I can look and know instantly what's the matter with a file," she says.

But when recalling moving day, Costanzo laughs and wonders out loud where the drive to take over the whole project came from.

"It's kind of funny. Something in here just takes over," she says, pointing to her head.
Commuter's Corner

When you think about it, we're all commuters. We drive, ride bikes, walk, take the bus and ride the train to work. But really, most of us drive almost every day.

There are alternatives to locking ourselves in an auto and motoring to work, and that's what this new section is about — commuting options and the people who choose them. Look here each month to gather tips, learn bus and train schedules, and read what inspires our colleagues to regularly use alternative transportation.

The Three “E”s of Cycling

Thirteen miles from La Mesa to Alcalá Park on the fat, knobby (and by nature, slower) tires of a mountain bike is a long haul for someone accustomed to leaving for work and arriving by car 20 minutes later. Barbara Peterson, assistant director of community service-learning, made the trek for the first time on Bike to Work Day in May 1996. She's been cycling twice a week ever since.

Bike to Work Day is an annual event held statewide during California Clean Air Week, and Peterson is what some bike advocates might call a convert. Inspired to ride on a day when thousands of others were doing the same, Peterson needed only to see it was possible to continue the effort week after week.

She keeps things simple and inexpensive by wearing shorts and T-shirts already in her closet, and bringing her work outfits to the office the day before she rides. A used road bike carefully selected from the classified ads is Peterson's replacement for borrowing her son's mountain bike.

When the mornings come quicker than expected, Peterson reminds herself of the three reasons she likes to ride: for exercise, for the environment and to examine the day for what inspires our colleagues to regularly use alternative transportation.

Survey Says ...

Thoughts on Ethics Across the Campus Sought

Does USD live up to the ideals set forth in its mission statement? Do the employees and students here respect each other and all their differences?

These are questions staff, faculty, administrators and students will be asked in October when the Ethics Across the Campus survey is distributed. Monsignor I. B. Eagen recently attended the Staff Employees Association meeting to encourage participation in the initiative he is spearheading.

The survey will take 30 to 45 minutes to complete. The committee collecting the data hopes to provide employees with a quiet place to fill out the form, Eagen says. Results will be shared publicly in a campus wide town hall meeting scheduled for January.

Meanwhile, the four-paragraph mission statement is being translated into Spanish, Portuguese and Vietnamese. "It is something that should be readily available to everyone in their daily work lives," Eagen says.

Future Speakers

The SEA board began this year to invite guest speakers to attend the monthly meetings in an effort to familiarize the guests with the association and educate SEA representatives about important programs on campus.

Donna Barnes, assistant professor of teacher and special education, who was recently appointed director of the Manchester Family Child Development Center, will speak at the Sept. 10 meeting about her background and goals for the center.

The board also discussed inviting Thom Barnett, assistant director of human resources, to answer questions about the new performance evaluation system. Since all staff have attended workshops designed to familiarize them with the new system, employees are bombarding SEA representatives with questions. Barnett would be invited to the October or November meeting.

Giving to Employee/Students

Staff employees attending school at USD will be eligible for one of six $50 gift certificates to the bookstore being donated this fall by the SEA. The funds were raised through raffles and special events held in the past year.

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Young operatic hopefuls will compete for advancement in the national selection of outstanding male and female voices, 1 p.m., Sept. 27, in Shiley Theatre. The auditions are open to the public with a $5 suggested donation at the door. The program runs until 4:30 p.m.

Psst...

Bits and Pieces from the Readers

Yes, James Brolin is here. In a trailer parked in the Camino lot.

Nope. He’s not coming today. None of his scenes are being filmed.

Those were the rumors that were flying Friday, Aug. 8, when a slew of actors and crew members invaded the campus to film scenes in the television series “Pensacola.” James Brolin is the hero of the hour-long drama set in Florida, featuring a Marine pilot.

Truthfully, most of the people wondering about the whereabouts of Brolin quickly followed with, “What about Babs?” The star watchers in our midst were more interested in seeing Barbra Streisand, who’s engaged to Brolin, than the heartthrob actor.

Commuter

(Continued from page three)

ahead. It’s a time to clear her mind, Peterson says. Everyone should have several reasons for choosing alternative transportation, she adds. If, for example, she doesn’t feel like exercising, the other two reasons will motivate her to ride anyway.

Other little rituals Peterson finds helpful include:

- Bringing lunch the day before. On the mornings she rides Peterson carries only a fanny pack to hold purse items.
- Building in a 20-minute grace period between when she wants to leave the house and absolutely has to leave in order to get showered and in the office by 8:30 a.m. Easy access to showers makes bike commuting possible, Peterson says.
- Praying on long uphill climbs. The hardest part about hills, she notes, is when you focus on how much your legs or lungs hurt. Praying for friends, family and the day ahead keeps her mind occupied. Singing works too.
- In the hour it takes Peterson to pedal between La Mesa and Linda Vista, she continues to be amazed by the heightened awareness of her surroundings.

“...smell honeysuckle and jasmine blooming,” she says. “That is just so neat. I feel the weather. It’s something I don’t get being enclosed in my office with no windows.”

New Hires and Promotions

Welcome to the following employees who recently joined the USD community:

Moises Baron, counseling center;

Guadalupe Corona, student affairs; Matt Enyedi, university center; David Gomula, bookstore; Brandy Kolmer, development; William Tillson, athletics; Jennifer Torns, athletics; Stuart Benjamin, law school; Isabel Eustaquio, law school; Julie Ferguson, law school; Arti Rai, law school; Roberta Robinson, law school; Carmela Bubel, financial aid; Olivia Gil-Guevara, development; Liza Gough, special events; Ernie Salazar, grounds maintenance; and Michael Thiem, public safety.

Congratulations to the following employees who recently received promotions:

Kathy Bruzzese, assistant director of international resources; Rosa Jewel, executive assistant in graduate admissions; and Nicole Matthews, assistant director of alumni relations.

Aguilar

(Continued from page one)

His work toward the next degree began in August at a community college, where Aguilar is taking a computer class. No time like the present to take on new challenges, he says.

Aguilar was one of 15 employees who worked last spring with student tutors. The Workplace Literacy Program began as an English as a Second Language class, but it has evolved to one-on-one tutoring to better meet the needs of employees.

A room in the human resources suite houses a computer and lesson materials for use by program participants, and often the tutoring sessions are held there as well. The program is learner-driven, with the employees asking the tutors for help in areas of their choice. Depending on what system is worked out with their supervisors, some employees are tutored during work hours, others do it on their own time.