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St. Petersburg EXPLODES

Downtown growth and USF expansion leave mark on Tampa Bay
Zappa comes alive

It sounds like a sure-fire recipe for culture clash: The Florida Symphony Orchestra on-stage with the Frank Zappa tribute band Bogus Pomp on Jan. 22 at 8 p.m. at the Mahaffey Theater. However, when it comes to Zappa there's always more than meets the eye.

During a career that stretched from the 60s to the 80s, Zappa blazed a trail as a brilliant satirist who poked fun at everything from the Peace Corps (Who Needs the Peace Corps) to disco (Sheik Yer Bop). He also gained a reputation as a superb guitarist and a demanding bandleader with an eye for talent. That's not even mentioning his work as a producer.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of Zappa's career was his talent for orchestral composition. His classical pieces were played by some of the top orchestras in the nation and he gained considerable respect as a serious composer. His work drew comparison to some groundbreaking artists as Edgar Varese.

Unfortunately, since his untimely death, his orchestral works have gone mostly unplayed because Zappa's estate has guarded them so closely.

Last year's joint effort between Bogus Pump and the Florida Symphony Orchestra was the result of several factors: Bogus Pump is recognized as a crack outfit that has the talent to do justice to Zappa's material. Also, the number two man at the Orchestra, resident conductor Thomas Wilkins, is a Zappa aficionado.

As might be expected when exploring uncharted territory, last year's effort produced some uneven moments. Reviewers noted that the acoustics were a bit of a challenge. Putting a rock and band orchestra together on stage could seem problematic.

Maestro Wilkins also expressed concern that his group might not have enough rehearsal time, given that Zappa's compositions are extremely complex.

However, it seems the first time around went well enough to convince everyone involved that it was worth another try.

A couple of points are worth noting: Tickets aren't cheap. The prices range from $25 to $48. Also, don't come expecting to hear "Valley Girl" or "Yellow Snow." Bogus Pump will no doubt find some interesting parts of Zappa's rock opus to explore, but the orchestral pieces will be, to put it mildly, challenging.

Those who come with open ears and an open mind may come away with newfound respect for one of America's most misunderstood musical talents.

-Mike Hennessy

Currents

'round town

Through May 29

John F. Kennedy: The Exhibition — Florida International Museum presents a story of heroism, romance, tragedy and legacy. The exhibit is stocked with old family photos, mementos, passports and personal possessions of the famous first family. Tickets are $7.95 for college students, $13.95 for adults, $5.95 for children 6-18 and children under 6 are free. The Florida International Museum is located at 100 Second St. N., St. Petersburg. For information call (877)-JFK-SHOW.

Weekends

Uptown Friday Nights — Participate in a Dome District Block Party located on Central Avenue between 11th St. and 12th St. Enjoy monthly free concerts from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. For information call (727) 822-4562.

on campus

January 24

Make your own Sunday: 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 7 to 8 p.m. Harborside. For more information call 553-1596.

January 24

USF Ethics Lecture Series begins. Free lecture begins 7 p.m. in the CAC. Lectures scheduled on alternate Mon. nights through April 17. For information, call 553-3458.

February 4

Comedy Night. Come out to see funnyman Hood, a nationally recognized comedian. Free with valid USF ID. $2 for non-students.
***USF marks Y2K with nary a glitch***

By Chris Curry

Like much of the computerized world USF minimized the hyped up threat of Y2K through preparation and prevention. A Y2K status report posted on the university web site Jan. 1 showed that computer systems on all campuses were checked and operational. The only glitch the report showed was a dating problem at the payroll office in Tampa.

Greg Fussell, assistant director of information technologies at Tampa, said a database showed certain hourly employees, mostly students, were to be paid for work done in the year 2099. Fussell said the problem was discovered Jan. 3 and corrected that day. He credited the smooth transition to two years of work by university employees implementing new software and solving any problems that arose.

"When you look at the scope of the work that was done," Fussell said, "the problems encountered were minute."

Dennis D'Ettore, a supervisor at the computer lab on the St. Petersburg campus, said that while the potential for chaos created by worldwide computer crashes might have made for compelling news, there was little chance of it occurring.

"Preparations were in place," D'Ettore said. "We saw Y2K coming for years. The probability of anything happening was remote."

According to D'Ettore, the time and money invested in preventive measures kept glitches to a minimum. Over the semester break, lab personnel, who maintain computers throughout the campus, installed a Y2K patch provided by Microsoft in all machines using Windows 95.

"Our computers are not giving us any problems," D'Ettore said. "Without a doubt every dime spent on Y2K was well spent money."

Edward Sanchez, the electronic information librarian at the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, said that the work of updating the library's software began in June and continued through December. With 1,500 databases and thousands of electronic journals to maintain, Sanchez

Y2K continued on Page 7

Nonetheless, Weber has seen students pull all kinds of tricks to escape ticketing. During finals week he said he came across a truck parked in Lot 2 (in front of the Davis building) where the driver had designed a "look-alike" hang tag out of a Kleenex package, perhaps hoping that officers patrolling the lot wouldn't take the time to get a closer look. Of course, a citation was issued. What students have to remember is without decals and parking service enforcement, no money would be generated, so there would be no parking. "You'd be looking at a lot of sand lots," Weber said.

Siwik said for those without parking permits, there's plenty of free parking.

"Even if you park off campus, say, for instance up on Fifth Street, you are still pretty close to the campus," he said. "And we survey the parking situation every semester. Even at peak operation times, there are still at least 100 spots open."

Aside from writing tickets and patrolling campus lots, parking service officers and campus police officer motorist emergency services such as jump starting a dead battery, air for flat tires and escorts to cars, both on and off campus, at all hours. "If you are affiliated with the university, we are going to do everything we can to keep you safe," Siwik said.

Even with such benefits, if a student, faculty or staff member is ticketed and feels the citation was unjustly issued, there is an appeal process available for seeking redress.

"First of all, continue the direction of the previous president Betty Castor had set on growing the regional campuses, especially this one. Second is securing the resources it will take to have that happen. Those are the main issues USF-St. Petersburg Dean Bill Heller is concerned with as he searches for a new USF president moves into high gear. Heller also wants the next president to give regional campuses more autonomy, "so that decisions will be made closer to where the action is in this growth period."

The list of candidates to succeed Betty Castor as President of USF is down to seven. The two full-time candidates on the list for most USF students and faculty is Thomas Tighe, who currently serves as Provost/Executive Vice-President of USF. The other six candidates are either presidents or provosts at their current institutions.

The seven finalists, who represent a diverse pool of candidates, were culled from more than a thousand applicants over a five month period. There are three women and one black man.

Each candidate will have formal interviews at the Tampa campus, the day before their St. Petersburg appearance. If you'd like to see the Tampa campus open forums, but can't make the drive, they can be seen on closed circuit TV at Bayboro Hall room 204 from 8:30 a.m. to noon.

The candidates, their current positions and their dates to visit the St. Petersburg Campus: Antonne Garishul, Provost, Howard University, Jan. 13, DAY 120 Stéphene Rogers, Provost, Clemson University, Jan. 19, DAY 130 Sharon Brehm, Provost, Ohio University, Jan. 20, DAY 130 Carol Harter, President, University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Jan. 21, DAY 130 Judy Genahaft, Provost, State University of New York-Albany, Jan. 25, DAY 138 Thomas Tighe, Provost, University of South Florida, Jan. 26, DAY 130 Thomas George, Chancellor, Wisconsin Stevens-Point, Jan. 27, DAY 130 The open forums run from 4:45 to 6:45 p.m.

---Compiled by Mike Hennessy and Chris Curry
de/0w/Ne 3
Bayboro putting on new face

**Signs of change in every direction**

By Krista Reiner

As USF settles into its Research 1 status and searches for a new president, USF-St. Petersburg heads into the 21st century preparing for an influx of new students and facilities. Look around. There’s evidence of change in all corners of the campus.

At the intersection of Fourth Street and Fifth Avenue, the partnership between USF and All Children’s Hospital moves forward, as the building is scheduled for Feb. 9. Just down the street at the Seventh Avenue and Third Street S., is the Pediatric Research Center.

The Florida Center for Teachers, a facility designed in partnership with the Florida Humanities Council to provide continuing education for the state’s teachers, is 50 percent complete. The center, at the corner of Seventh Avenue and Third Street S., is scheduled to be finished in June, leaving ample time to prepare for the fall 2000 semester.

Next door to the teaching center on Third Street South is the vacant Williams House. Grant said that budget shortages caused delays in renovation, but USF-St. Petersburg is now soliciting contractor’s quotes to complete the historical building, once the home of St. Petersburg’s first mayor.

Using a “different methodology” to reassess the renovation plan, Grant said, his office was able to keep the budget under the limit requiring a public, open bidding for area contractors.

Under the old process, the university and other state institutions were required to hold open bidding for construction projects with $500,000 budgets or higher. The figure has been increased to $1 million, allowing USF to work on the Williams House with a “single contractor already working within the university,” Grant said.

On the other end of campus, the first floor of the Marine Science Laboratories building is preparing for the remodeling of 4000 square feet of lab space. To keep up with the latest technology and safely accommodate the science requirements a first-time crop of freshman and sophomores, Grant said the lab renovation include new fume hoods which need to be outfitted and modernized every few years for the protection of students, staff and facility doing research with potentially hazardous materials.

Perhaps the most ambitious construction yet to break ground is the Central Core project. While still in the master planning and design phase, the project will create a pedestrian-only, landscaped quad by eliminating sections of Sixth and Seventh Avenues South and the adjoining Second Street South. The space will be similar to Martin Luther King Plaza on the Tampa campus.

While $410,000 has been appropriated for the project by the Capital Improvement Trust Fund (CITF), much of this initial money will go toward design fees required in the first phases of design. The plan will proceed as future funding sources open up, Grant said, noting that while his office is moving “as fast as we can move forward, there is no deadline we need to meet.”

Grant went on to say, however, that “the process is taking place” and the construction of the core could come as early as the fall semester.

Grant said the facilities planning office is concerned not only with the outward, aesthetic value of new buildings but the purposes they serve. “We’re building an environment, and that includes interior space, as well as exterior.”

The Florida Center for teachers, one of many new projects, is slated to open in June.

Steve Ritch, USF-St. Petersburg’s director of student affairs, said the construction and improvement of an urban campus can be challenged because the existing environment has to be accommodated. “The idea is to create an environment where you very clearly know you are on your campus,” said Ritch. He said new additions to campus like the central core create a pleasing physical environment that encourages interaction and communication within the campus. “A campus is about a sense of place,” said Ritch. “We’re carving out a new identity to create a real sense of community.

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Pascal said there is a God-shaped vacuum in everyone. Maybe that’s why life sucks without Him.

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Downtown boom sparks concern

By Lorri Helfand

You can see signs of downtown St. Petersburg's boom from campus. Just peer to the north, where three luxury condos now bolster the city's skyline.

The Cloisters, the Florencia and Vinoy Place are expected to add 200 new residents and $100 million in real estate value to the downtown neighborhood.

Walk from campus along First Street toward Central Avenue and construction cranes that loom over the BayWalk complex come into view. The $30-million project will include a 20-screen movie theater, retail stores and several restaurants.

It's evident that downtown is on a roll — new buildings, new business, new attractions. It's never been livelier, nor, apparently, as well off.

But Tim Clemmons, a local architect and president of the North Downtown Neighborhood Association, urges caution, concerned that St. Petersburg might lose sight of its traditional appeal as a nice place to live, work and visit.

"The downtown area has the potential to be the best true urban neighborhood," he said. But to reach that potential, he added, requires a balance of residential, business and cultural components.

Clemmons said a single project won't tip the balances. As a downtown native, he said, it will become less desirable to residents. He also fears that if neighborhoods become too specialized they'll lose their vitality and deteriorate.

"We've abandoned our towns one by one," he said, adding that we need to learn from tragic examples elsewhere.

He hopes the city nurtures its downtown residents, and, if it does, the area will be better for businesses as well.

Housing must be affordable and mixed, not just luxury high-rises, he said, and streets must be pedestrian friendly. Clemmons said one-way thoroughfares like M.L. King (Ninth) Street are difficult for pedestrians to cross because they go through a maze of turns.

Clemmons supports the BayWalk project, but he fears it might lure business away from smaller merchants and establishments just beginning to make headway.

Beyond the issue of residential-business-cultural balance, Clemmons, president of St. Petersburg Preservation, Inc., wants to maintain the downtown character.

The area designated as the North Downtown Neighborhood stretches east to west from the waterfront to M.L. King Street and north to south from Fifth Avenue North to Central Avenue. It includes such historic treasures as the Carnegie Library, Tilton Mansion, Vinoy Park, the open-air post office and Mirror Lake Park.

Marie Bebo came here 25 years ago on a two-week vacation and never left. She recalls the historic green benches and the activity downtown. She is discouraged by some development downtown, and said emphatically, "They can't change my Mirror Lake."

Although some distance from the bustle of bulldozers and cement trucks, Mirror Lake is under going its own renewal. The city recently awarded a $389,000 contract to clean the 11-acre lake.

An underground tank will treat the water with alum, which will bind pollutants, causing them to sink to the bottom. The project is scheduled for completion in March.

Clemmons thinks sound planning will ensure that the downtown neighborhood flourishes as an urban village, achieving progress and growth while protecting its history and character.

"The trick is, how do we carefully mix these things together to be most compatible?"

King honored as contemporaries reflect

By Chris Curry

A picture of Dr. Martin Luther King hangs on the wall of history professor Raymond Arsenault's office in the Snell House.

"He left a legacy that a peace without justice was a false peace and that true liberation is self-liberation," Arsenault said.

On Jan. 17 the nation paused to honor Dr. King on the anniversary of his birth. But people who were his contemporaries vividly remember his death.

This semester Arsenault is teaching a seminar on the Riders of 1961, who fought segregation on interstate buses. He devotes a week of the course to 1968, the year when King had been shot and killed.

Since 1968, Arsenault has spent much of his career focusing on the civil rights movement and race relations in the classroom and on campus prior to King's assassination, University of Nebraska students organized an anti-war and anti-racism protest.

"When he died he left a void that still needs to be filled," Carr recalled the anger that followed King's death, calling it tumultuous time both "68 and '69," said David Carr, coordinator of arts and sciences at USF St. Petersburg. In 1968, Carr was a graduate student at the University of Nebraska.

"Every campus was alive with protest," Carr said. "Just prior to King's assassination, University of Nebraska students organized an anti-war and anti-racism march through downtown Lincoln. The march went by a construction site and all the hard hats were yelling at the protesters. This was at a time when all the students had long hair and all the construction workers had short hair."

This situation has since reversed."

Carr recalled the anger that followed King's death, including riots in Omaha and Counsel Bluffs, Neb. But he said the sense of shock was not the same as when John F. Kennedy was shot in 1963.

"When you're exposed to repeated violence," Carr said, "it almost begins to seem normal."

In April 1968 young Lillian Lewis was working her way through the third grade at Gorrie Elementary in Tampa. She was at school when she heard the news that King had been shot and killed.

"I remember coming home and everything in the house was shut down and my mother was crying," said Lewis, an interdisciplinary social sciences major. "I remember my mother saying never would be another man like King, never be anyone to lead me like he did, and she was right."

Although some distance from the bustle of bulldozers and cement trucks, Mirror Lake is under going its own renewal. The city recently awarded a $389,000 contract to clean the 11-acre lake.

"There was a sense of despair and resignation after King's assassination," said Pearl Williamson, the administrative assistant to the campus' dean. Williamson lived in St. Petersburg in 1968, working as a legal secretary for the law firm of Minnis and Williams.

"The consensus in the community was that King stood for equality through non-violence," Williamson said.

"When he was shot the reaction was that the assassination was a statement against equality." Along with the need for equality, Williamson says that King left a legacy of the value of education. "It takes education to allow one to get to know cultures, habits and people in general. Education opens the doors to understanding."

Arsenault added that sometimes in life you get the right person in the right place at the right time.

"King was that person," he said. "There is no guarantee you will ever get another one."
A job description fit for a university

USF seeks president for mutually destructive long-term relationship

By Doug White

If there was such a thing as truth in advertising, here's what you might see in the "help wanted" section of the Chronicle of Higher Education regarding USF's presidential vacancy.

COLLEGE PRESIDENT SOUGHT — Progressive Tampa Bay university seeks slinky politician-like higher education administrator with excellent fund-raising ability and lake-warm people skills to head burgeoning institution.

Responsibilities:

President will include establishing and maintaining backward bureaucratic policies and procedures, while developing and reviewing administrative information and boosted budgets. In-between frequent rounds of golf, ideal candidate must provide equitable, effective and courteous services to students and underpaid faculty and staff by responding to all concerns and inquiries with rehearsed answers brimming with inappropriately (Ability to feign interest and nod frequently while wearing a pooping grin a plus). President will transcend traditional boundaries among administrative units, academic disciplines and various constituencies by providing false promises and evasive answers to all concerned parties. Ability to work well in stuffy pedagogical atmosphere and relate effectively to eccentric, long-winded academics and self-righteous students is imperative. President will ensure adherence to multiple sets of state and federal regulations and requirements, while simultaneously being able to funnel money from exorbitant textbook prices and parking tickets into his or her own mutual fund. President will also adopt at creating plans for building new facilities that will further limit the dwindling number of available parking spaces on all university campuses. Student press organizations will be disbanded and/or blown up when they become overly critical.

Qualifications:

The individual must have earned a B.S. in B.S. Perfect candidate will be former idealistic ultra-liberal activist turned bureaucracy-worshipping, big-government-loving, fence-riding, paper-pushing figurehead. Master's and doctoral degree required, in addition to seven to ten years experience in high-profile administrative position. Chosen candidate must have survived at least two documented inquiries into ethical misconduct. Strong writing skills and public speaking ability is looked upon favorably, although proficiency in double-talk and academic mumbo-jumbo is absolutely required. President must also sort of attempt to realize that "satellite" campuses like that of St. Petersburg, have little to do with telecommunications. (The importance of this understanding – as well as the entire lot of satellite institutions – can be forgotten and/or dismissed after one month of being in power.) President must pifer money from smaller branches to appease Tampa campus.

Salary/Benefits:

Excessive salary will be competitive and commensurate with selected candidate's education, experience, and ability to completely fool search committee and interviewers. Excellent benefits package includes full medical and dental plan, 401K retirement plan, paid vacation and holidays – including Guavaween and Gasparilla. President will go to be the wrath of the Student Parking Services employees. President will not have to pay parking tickets or outstanding library fees, which will equal several thousand dollars per academic year.

Application:

To be considered for the University of South Florida presidency, please submit a formal application to Doug White at the Crow's Nest office. Please include application, pedantic cover letter, grossly exaggerated resume and fake photocopy of official transcripts. Interview will be conducted at the Tavern at Bayboro next to the St. Petersburg campus over chicken salad sandwiches and beer. Bribes will be accepted in the form of Bud Light pitchers.

The University of South Florida is an equal opportunity employer focused on excellence in teaching, research and public service. USF exposes the free exchange of ideas in the spirit of academic freedom and professional responsibility. USF upholds the highest of standards on all levels.

And if you believe that, you should probably stay where you are.

Dear Krista, note from a fake friend

By Krista Reiner

As a graduate student on the slippery slope of the top comer of the page was a message

"Help wanted.

"Trusting daughter of an enlightened, letter.

"Accept a personal, and therefore inherently uplifting, letter. It arrived in a plain, white, legal-size envelope. My name and address were on the front, typed, and there was no return address. Thats right, an honest-to-goodness typewriter – a device that produces letters and words without the help of a hard drive. But there was no return address, and the postmark hailed from Santa Ana, Calif. I dont know anyone in Santa Ana, and given a blank map of the state, I doubt I could point a finger to the city's general area. The only people I know from California reside in San Francisco. They are not the types to say they live in San Fran and risk the disclosure that they actually live in Santa Ana. Suffice to say, Santa Ana rang no bells with me, so my guard went up.

I opened the letter. Inside was a fold of newspaper, with torn, ragged edges. In the top corner of the page was a message handwritten with blue ball point pen: "Krista, try this it works." No signature. The article so thoughtfully sent to me turned out to be an advertisement for a diet plan. "Teacher Loses 70 lbs. in Only 8 Weeks Easily ... Without Being Hungry ... After Everything Else Fails Her!"

I flipped it over. Was the article I expected on the other side? No dice. The flip side revealed one-half of a seemingly two-page ad for a discount sports apparel store sale "Friday, Saturday and Sunday only." I flipped back to the diet ad. "Thats in me scanned for the name of the newspaper in which this stunning, must-see ad was published. How interesting that the right edge of the newsletter was torn in such a way that only the word "news" appeared. Was it the Santa Ana News? Dieting News? Personal Issues Exposed News? I scanned further. After a full page of color photos and testimonials from happy, thinner men and women all around the nation, I found the ordering information – a Web site address, a payment address in Katonah, N.Y. and a toll-free number.

Could it be that during the holidays in Connecticut the ex-boyfriend I ran into thought I needed to shed 70 lbs. and covertly arranged for a friend in Santa Ana to mail me this suggestive material? Was Jenny Wilson, the girl who beat me up in fourth grade, working a step program that required her to make amends and in doing so passing on a plan that helped her break on through to the other side of friendship? Was this all an xanne practical joke?

To, there was nothing practical about it. I admit I have my obsessions, more than I care to admit at times, but weight is not one of them. Had the contents of this personalized "letter" loaded smoking cessation or debt consolidation, or even an astrological charting service, I may have believed someone sent it to me for me. I probably wouldn't have questioned the lack of return address or signature, chucking it up to some heartbroken friend who wanted to help, but lacked the nerve to point out my detrimental personal habits face to face.

But alas, the postal service was simply an unwitting accomplice to a market¬ing play designed to screw with my head (good thing I'm not fragile). My room¬mate came home amidst my ranting and said a mutual friend had received a similar piece of mail. In fact, I learned that we were not the only victims. Quite a few USF students had been hazed by Health Laboratories of North America, a corporation that apparently has its corpo¬rate headquarters in Carson City, Nev., but not a phone number. The customer service number put me in touch with a call center in Arizona, where a representa¬tive was happy to take my phone num¬ber so the marketing director could call me back.

I'm not holding my breath, and I no longer get a warm glow when I find a "personal" letter in the mailbox.
Y2K continued from Page 3
said it was important to ensure a smooth transition to the year 2000.

"The library's system cannot go down," Sanchez said. "People expect access 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Also, since each piece of material checked out of the library is marked with a due date, the Y2K bug, which could have caused computers to read 00 as 1900 and not 2000, might have wreaked havoc in the circulation department.

"You could have ended up with books marked overdue when they shouldn't be or books that don't show up due at all," Sanchez said. "Those sort of things would have been unpleasant, especially for library patrons."

But Sanchez said he has seen no glitches and heard no horror stories about books coming back 100 years overdue. Other departments did encounter minor problems.

Jennifer Clarke, the director of financial aid, said that some student awards showed up in negative amounts, but that the problem was resolved on the evening of Jan. 4. The only other trouble Clarke reported within the financial aid office was a half-day delay in Tampa with the program to print checks. She said Clarke, "That's what I really focus on."

In addition to competing in the race, he hopes to enhance his skills. "My goal is to try to improve as much as possible," Betzer said. "You might not go faster but you could probably improve techniques and become more efficient."

Winning is not his only motivation to keep swimming. Betzer likes the feeling of physical well being. "Even if I weren't a good swimmer, I would enjoy a sense of being in good shape."

And there are his teammates. "I enjoy the people very much — really a wonderful group of people."
By Akira Hibino

Peter Betzer won a bet 26 years ago, and it changed his life.

Betzer was paddling around in a pool on the St. Petersburg campus, taking a break from his teaching and research duties.

Among the swimmers in the pool were some members of the St. Petersburg Masters Swim Club. One of them, Charles Dugan, watched Betzer swim and then challenged him.

“You can’t finish the 100-meter backstroke race,” Dugan proclaimed. “I don’t think you can do it.”

Betzer’s response was simple: “Where is the meet?”

Dugan bet a beer that Betzer, now chair of the USF department of marine science, would give up halfway through the race.

Betzer drank free that night.

In addition, he set a Florida 30-34 age group record in the 100-meter backstroke.

“He was almost right,” Betzer said of Dugan’s prediction. It was Betzer’s first time swimming competitively in more than nine years.

The following month he raced at the national championships in Chicago, where he placed fifth in the 200-meter backstroke and sixth in the 100-meter backstroke. Since then he’s enjoyed masters swimming with his 250 teammates, ages 19 and older.

Soon after joining the team he started to compete in the breaststroke instead of the backstroke, which he had sworn since his days on the swimming team at Delavan-Darien High School in Wisconsin.

“I decided to work on some of the other strokes,” Betzer said. “The breaststroke was the one. It was very exciting because I got much faster than I was in college.”

At Lawrence College, where he was a co-captain of the swimming team, his 100-yard breaststroke personal best was one minute, 19 seconds. About 20 years later, as a masters swimmer, he’s gotten 10 seconds faster.

Betzer gained distinction in the breaststroke at the 1997 national championship in Orlando. Not only did he win championships in the 50-meter, 100-meter, and 200-meter breaststroke in the 55-59 age group, he set the record in the 100-meter.

His time of one minute, 25.45 seconds was the fastest in the nation that year. The United States Masters Swimming organization honored Betzer as an All-American.

But his feats haven’t come without hard work and an already demanding schedule. He wakes up at 4:40 a.m. each weekday, makes coffee for his wife, Susan, a medical doctor, and lunch for his daughter, Katherine, a St. Petersburg High School student. Then he leaves for practice starting at 5:30 a.m. at the North Shore Pool, where he is joined by about 50 teammates. Betzer swims 3,000 meters a day and 4,000 meters before competitions, under the guidance of George Bole, a former Olympic coach for England and Ireland.

“We have a wonderful coach,” Betzer said. “He is able to help almost anybody get a lot of better.”

Many of the members joined the team because of Bole’s fame as a coach. One swimmer moved from New Jersey to train under Bole’s instruction.

Betzer said Bole is the first coach he’s worked with who is a true swimming expert. Betzer credits the coach for his improvement in the breaststroke.

“The respect is mutual. He has a tremendous spirit. His chemistry affects the team, and he has a great work ethic. He is enthusiastic about everything like a boy.”

His teammates also acknowledged the competitiveness of the 57-year-old swimmer.

“At that age, he is terrific,” said Abbra Kranish, 77, a breaststroke swimmer. “He is highly motivated and never gives up. He swims 110 percent. He doesn’t do anything halfway.”

Frank Tillotson, an 84-year-old backstroke swimmer, said, “He is a tremendous competitor and a very fine person.”

Betzer said his fellow swimmers provide incentives for him.

“When he started in the masters program at age 31, he was astonished that people his age were still involved in competitive swimming.

“The older people are tremendous inspiration,” Betzer said. “It’s very inspiring to see older people in very good shape. I guess now I have become one of the older people.”

One day he discovered his new status when a woman, who just graduated from college, walked over after racing Betzer in the backstroke and said, “I can’t believe an old duffer like you beat me.” Betzer said.

Betzer continued on Page 7

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He’s opened for Chris Rock.
He’s opened for Drew Carey.
He’s from NYC.
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Harborside Productions presents HOOD
Feb. 4th in the CAC Core at 7:02 p.m. Come out to see this nationally recognized entertainer soon appearing on Conan O’Brien, just don’t laugh so hard the free refreshments come out your nose.

FREE with valid USF ID. Tickets available at the CAC front desk starting Jan. 24. Non-students $2