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Bahamas. He swam alongside a 30-foot shark off the coast of St. Petersburg. Dent isn’t sure what his most spectacular dive is.

"Asking a professional diver which is their favorite dive is like asking a parent which is their favorite child," Dent said. "I have had several dives that will stay ingrained in my memory. There have been dives that created a great sense of accomplishment, dives that left me in awe and dives that were just plain fun." And since 1983, dives that were part of the USF program.

Dent works for USF as an evening scuba instructor, and since 1993, as a diving safety officer. He continues to direct both programs.

The USF Diving Safety Program at USF is one of the largest in the nation. It allows the university to conduct underwater research in a safe, controlled fashion, said Dent.

The program deals with "scientific dives," a term originated in 1982 when the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration added scuba diving into three categories: commercial diving, recreational diving and scientific diving.

"Each dive has its own special rules that must be followed," Dent said. "USF’s program originated in the 1960s, when it became clear that scuba diving would be a useful tool for gathering research data."

It also became obvious that specialized training was necessary for researchers to participate in university-supported scuba diving because of the risks of being underwater on a life support system, he explained.

As a diving safety officer, Dent is responsible for day-to-day program operations. Among other tasks, he must ensure that all program standards are met, approve each scientific diver to dive, and review each dive plan. These standards include training requirements, skills testing and retraining. There are several levels of training offered within the program, ranging from scuba training to emergency first aid.

"The USF Diving Safety Program is one of the largest in the nation. According to AAUS statistics, USF consistently ranks in the top five nationally when both the numbers of divers in the program as well as the number of dives performed are considered. Most importantly, these high numbers have occurred with a phenomenal safety record. In 1998, USF had 123 active scientific divers performing over 2,300 dives without incident," said Dent.

by Claudia Bustamante

Lakeland gets new dean

A University of Kentucky department chairman with a long and prestigious background as a researcher and academic administrator was chosen to serve as the second permanent dean in the 12-year-old campus’ history, said Tighe.

"In Preston Mercer, I think we have found the perfect combination of breadth of experience, high academic standards and dedicated leadership to move the Lakeland campus to the next level of development," said Tighe.

Mercer holds degrees from the University of Texas (B.S., Chemistry, 1968) and Louisiana State University (Ph.D., Biochemistry, 1971). He was also a post-doctoral fellow in 1973 at the University of Alabama/Birmingham College of Medicine. Mercer is a certified nutrition specialist and is a fellow of the American College of Nutrition. After deciding which has its own special rules that must be followed, Dent said. "USF’s program originated in the 1960s, when it became clear that scuba diving would be a useful tool for gathering research data."

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Regents’ committee named for presidential search

A seven-member Board of Regents committee was named Monday to lead the search for a new USF president.

BOR Chairman Dennis Ross will chair the Regents Selection Committee (RSC), and Regent Elizabeth Lindley will be the vice chair. Both are USF alumni.

The other regents on the committee are Philip Lewis, Steven Uffelder, Jon Moyle, Gwendolyn McKin and a student regent to be named.

In announcing the appointments, Ross said the BOR hopes to name a replacement for outgoing President Betty Castor by mid-March. He likely will announce appointments to the Search Advisory Committee (SAC) within a week.

That committee of more than 30 members is comprised of representatives from the community and universities, including faculty, staff and students.

The RSC establishes the timetable and search process, which likely will include the use of a consultant. It interview candidates and nominates one to the BOR. It will hold its first meeting in late August.

The SAC develops specific criteria for the president based on broad guidelines supplied by the RSC and then submits them to the RSC for final approval.

It also works closely with the consultant and the RSC, interviews the candidates provided by the consultant, hosts campus visits of candidates and gives a report to the RSC.

Ross said it is important to establish a timeline that will have a new president named near the beginning of the legislative session, which starts in early March.

"In terms of presidential searches, this is an aggressive schedule," Ross said. "We look forward to the challenge and fully expect a high-quality field of candidates."

Castor announced her resignation in July to become the head of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in Washington, D.C. She begins her new role Oct. 1, but remains USF president until mid-September.

Points of USF Pride

Here, there and everywhere: More than 250 USF students studied abroad this summer. Thirty-nine students were from the College of Business Administration, and 26 were enrolled in the Costa Rica International Business Program.

Exchange rates: USF students Josh McTernan, Business; and Jason Fetter, English, will attend Kansas Gaidai University in Japan this year as exchange students.
In a dog-eat-dog world, some USF employees show their puppy power

Sibling rivalry. Rio should have it bad. After a grueling spring of prancing, grooming and holding up her head to a scrutinizing judge, she came in second — to her sister.

But Rio doesn’t seem to mind. She just rests her heads on Olga Joanow’s shoulders as she paces the Florida State Fairgrounds on July 16 and observes the crowd.

Mom Olga couldn’t be happier with Rio. She was up against 13 contestants, all of high breeding and trained to be demure. And at this debutante’s ball, Rio already a companion: Banner, the first dog Joanow adopted.

Joanow, an assistant general counsel at USF for five years, picked up Banner three years ago just because she liked the breed.

Joanow describes her little black dogs are “cats in dog’s clothing” — absent a tail.

“at wasn’t the dogs didn’t know anything about showing dogs when she got Banner. The breeder ‘strongly urged’ her to show the little guy.

Now Banner has won a champion in his class and Rio is on her way.

The American Kennel Club puts dogs into seven groups: hound, working, terrier, toy, herding, sporting and non-sporting. The schnauzers belong to the non-sporting category.

The groups are further broken down into ages and gender; as a dog wins a Class, it becomes a ‘candidate’ against other dogs, finally winning best of show.

Gerhard Meisels, professor and director of the Florida Coalition for Scientists’ Literacy on the St. Petersburg campus, is an old hand at dog shows. His wife and he shopped around for 40 years ago for the perfect pet, and kept West Highland white terriers ever since.

Meisels also fell into pet shows — his first terrier turned out to be blind. When he called the breeder, the breeder said he would swap him for another puppy — but only if Meisels agreed to show him.

“If you stay with showing for more than two or three years, it’s addictive,” Meisels said.

He now has three dogs, all champions, that he regularly shows.

Meisels and his wife also judge at the shows. To judge, one must learn the particular standards for each breed. That could be anything from全 “Apartment-sized” Schnauzers to the body should be to color or the shape of a dog’s head.

Meisels can attend anywhere from 20 to 60 shows a year. Multiply that by the almost-40 years he’s motored his pooches from show to show, and that figures to a lot of bones spent on the hobby.

Meisels’ greatest moment was actually his daughter’s. Laura Meisel, then 8 years old, once brought a 14-month-old puppy to a show in Texas. That westie went on to win Best of Show; top honors for the top dog.

The accomplishment is still a record-holder; Laura is the youngest contender to have a Best of Breed in that show.

But it’s a taxing life, in a dog-eat-dog world. Meisels bought a motor home so he can stay in the dog show circuit, which often takes him to North Carolina and Georgia, and at least once a year to Pennsylvania.

Joanow estimates she’s entered 15 shows in the past six months.

It’s no wonder Rio spends her downtime sitting on the couch and watching TV, resting for the next competition.

But the little dog’s progress is surprising: Rio won Best of Breed for females at the end of the St. Petersburg Dog Fanciers Show in July.

Banner came in second for males, placing under his father.

But the dogs have already won their most important treasure: Joanow’s heart.

Athletics adds women’s sailing

Women’s sailing will become the 18th intercollegiate program at USF, beginning next fall with the “transition year” in 1999-2000 and full certification in 2000.

The announcement was recently made at USF’s St. Petersburg campus, where sailing has been a successful club program.

“It’s exciting to add a sport that is already enjoying a significant participation rate from women on our campus,” said USF senior Associate Athletic Director Barbara Spainberger-Whinfield, who will administrate the women’s sailing program. “Additionally, we’re excited about the fact that this will be our first venture with athletics at one of our regional campuses, and we hope it will prove to be a model for future programs on other USF campuses.”

College sailing is administered by the NCAA’s Intercollegiate Sailing Association.

While the NCAA does not sponsor a sailing championship, USF will be able to count the program as an NCAA-certified program since sailing is an Olympic sport and a very popular sport at the University of South Florida.

Joanow estimates the national championships and USF participated in those championship events this past May in St. Petersburg.

Initially, the women’s sailing team will be coached by Stan Hyatt, USF’s coordinator for recreation and watercraft on the St. Petersburg campus. Hyatt is a former collegiate sailor himself, having participated at St. Mary’s (Maryland), one of the nation’s most distinguished sailing programs.

Although there is limited competition in the fall, the primary season will run through the spring, at which time USF will evaluate its first season and make permanent coaching and structural decisions.

USF hopes to build a solid base of participants in the fall, with a goal of rostering 15 student-athletes for the Spring.

The sailing will join USF’s women’s athletic programs in basketball, cross country, golf, soccer, softball, tennis, indoor track, outdoor track and volleyball.

USF sponsors men’s sports in baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, soccer, tennis and track.

Center offers grandparents a haven

About 200,000 of Florida’s children live with relatives who aren’t their parents. But no one knows for sure how many are living with and caring for grandparents who struggle with limited budgets, sometimes-failing health and a maze of government agencies.

USF’s Kinship Care Center, in the School of Social Work, plans to offer some solutions. Along with Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, it received $100,000 from the state legislature in June to provide support to kinship caregivers, train students and service providers, advocate for statewide policies for caregivers, create a support hotline and serve as a research clearinghouse.

“Want to run grandparent support groups, with assistance from University Community Hospital and the Family Enrichment Center,” said Professor Anne Strzozek.

She and Professor Aaron Smith travel around the Tampa Bay area, discussing the center’s services with grandparents, teachers, school administrators and others.

The cocaine epidemic, crime and the spread of HIV and AIDS led thousands of women to leave parenting to their mothers and fathers. Smith said.

“In Florida, women and children of color are still the primary groups affected. (But) it cuts across all racial and ethnic classes. The children often have emotional disorders and attention deficit disorder, Smith said.

“One of their concerns is that if they don’t help these children gain a sense of self, that they may become enmeshed in the same problems as their parents,” she told a reporter a few years ago.

Schools and state agencies should support these grandparents, Strzozek agreed, because they can simply provide more than foster care. “It provides the children with ties to their community, and grandparents enjoy the love they share when they tutor kids into bedtime each night.”

by Lisa Cunningham