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We Are...Marshall, December 5, 2012

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WE ARE... MARSHALL®

The Newsletter for Marshall University

December 5, 2012

Profile: Allan Stern



His first try at college mostly fizzled but that was okay, because it landed him in Hawaii. He teaches safety, but he's led a daredevil life ... rocketing around on a Harley, skydiving, bungee jumping, scuba diving, traveling to remote corners of the world and flying not one, but two airplanes he's built. His academic journey has been anything but orthodox. He earned three degrees then went to work as an auto mechanic. He never intended to be a teacher but he's been on the Marshall faculty for the past 34 years. And oh yes, he's a pretty good actor as well.

His life has been full of paradoxes, but Dr. Allan Stern doesn't mind. He's made lemonade out of lemons so many times he could open a concession stand. Growing up in Fullerton, Calif., with dreams of becoming a marine biologist, it surely never entered his mind that one day he would land at Marshall, deep in the hills of West Virginia, where's he's now the chair of the Division of Applied Science and Technology in the College of Information Technology and Engineering.

Although he's veered off the academic path more than once, actually he started out traditionally by enrolling in his hometown Fullerton College to earn a degree. That didn't work out well. So, hoping to bolster flagging grades and to pursue his long-held fantasy of becoming a marine biologist, he packed up and headed to the University of Hawaii, that sun-splashed land with its pristine beaches and legendary waves—and, unfortunately, calculus and organic chemistry, as it turned out. He hadn't counted on that. "I didn't realize that marine biologists had to take subjects like that," he says wryly. "That blew me out of the water. There was no way that career goal was going to happen."



So it was time to put a hastily formulated Plan B into action. Fortunately UH had an industrial education degree and since Stern has always been good with his hands, he changed course again and earned a B.Ed. degree. There was only one problem. He didn't want to teach and that's primarily what his degree prepared him to do. There were some big career decisions to be made, but whatever path he chose, he knew it was time to leave Hawaii. And

then another one of those lucky flukes, which seemed to dot his life, happened.

Stern got his first motorcycle in Hawaii. (He'd always wanted one, but his father had forbidden them in his household.) He was soon tooling around the islands, particularly in Waikiki and Honolulu, observing life up close and exploring locales well off the beaten tourist routes. It was a heady time to be young, free and living in a place most people could only dream of visiting. But in riding a motorcycle, he had to share the road with others and the congested island traffic could be brutal, he quickly found out, making riding safely a real challenge. "The traffic was really bad, extremely congested and I realized people were trying to kill me," he says candidly.

Fortunately a Miami University professor who had been to Hawaii on a sabbatical sent literature about their M.Ed. program at Miami, which mentioned they had a driver's education program. Soon he was off to Oxford, Ohio, with some very grandiose plans. "I had dreams of being the number one motorcycle safety expert in the country, so I went from marine biology to motorcycle safety."



He still didn't want to teach, but once again his accumulating degrees continued to push him in that direction. Reluctantly, he took a teaching assignment in Blue Ash, Ohio. That didn't go well; he was out of there at the end of the semester. "I just wasn't ready to teach," he says frankly. "I didn't have a great experience while I was there. I was like, 'Oh, if this is what teaching is going to be like, I don't think so.'"

By that time he was getting adroit at reevaluating his options, so, with his M.Ed. in hand, he headed home to Fullerton. He'd always been an academic maverick, so he had no qualms whatsoever about sliding down the academic ladder a notch, enrolling in Fullerton College, the institution he had abandoned years ago, but this time to pursue an A.A. with a major in auto mechanics. With his mechanical curiosity and hands-on know-how, that actually wasn't much of a stretch for him.

That's how it came about that, with three degrees in hand, he became a garage mechanic, and a good one at that. But even there he hit some bumps in the road. "I went to work in the middle of a recession, so people weren't repairing their cars and business was really slow. Fortunately I was living at home, or I would have starved."

But life still had another twist for him just around the bend. Because of his unique background he was offered an assistantship at Texas A&M, where they were working with traffic and motorcycle safety at the time, and it proved to be a perfect fit for him. He stayed on to complete an Ed.D in Industrial Education with a specialization in safety. "We had a big driver's ed program there, so it was basically traffic safety," he says. And then, after graduating in August 1977, the man who had resisted teaching throughout his entire career, whose brief foray into it had been less than successful, and who had repeatedly changed course to avoid it, finally found his calling and found somewhat to his surprise that not only was he very, very good at it, but he actually liked it, after all!

That's why it wasn't too big a leap when he came to Marshall in 1977. A minor in traffic safety was being offered through the College of Education. The program left COE in December 1999 and joined the division of Applied Science and Technology, part of the College of Information Technology and Engineering (CITE). Stern has served as the chair of Applied Science and Technology for the past eight years.

In 1986 he had the opportunity to spend a year working in Saudi Arabia as part of their Ministry of the Interior, helping with traffic safety. He worked with their Traffic Directorate. "It was kind of like a Police Department," he explains. "The work was challenging." The generally loquacious Stern actually has little to say about his stay in Saudi Arabia except to comment, "Let's just say it was 180 degrees from what I was used to and I was glad to get back to this country."

As the 1980s drew to a close, the traveling bug hit him big time. Fitting world travel in as time has permitted, to date he's been to 50 countries, including countless islands, and he'll be heading off later this month on an African safari. He has a particular fondness for cruises—so far he's been on 16.



Back in the 1990s he grew restless with just tooling around on his Harley, jumping off bridges on a bungee cord and exploring coral reefs, so he decided to take flying lessons, getting his license in 1993. If he was going to keep flying, he figured he needed an airplane, so he decided to build one. He purchased a kit in early 2002 and spent five years building it, taking the first flight in 2007. And a few years later, when he decided to build a second one, he cut the time down to two years. He figures if he ever goes for a third one he can make it in a year or so.

And Stern casually demystifies flying your own plane. With his aircraft now housed at Tri-State Airport, "basically you just pull out of the hangar and go wherever you want," he says nonchalantly. Sometimes he and a friend will hop aboard and make a breakfast run to Portsmouth. That can be pretty pricey however—airplane fuel runs \$6 a gallon and the plane burns eight gallons an hour, but it's fun, so it's worth it to him. And to no one's surprise, he's done some skydiving. He did a free-fall tandem jump in Hawaii and took a couple of static jumps "just to see what it was like." The grandfather of four, so far he hasn't taken his plane to Little Rock, Ark., where his daughter, Angela, lives but he won't rule that out as a future flight.

And just as he had no qualms at all taking flight in the sky, back on the ground the multi-faceted Stern delights in taking a flight of another kind, a flight of fancy on the theatrical stage. He's an accomplished actor who's been entertaining audiences with a local theater company that offers a mixture of improvisation and mayhem through *Murder in Merriment*, which stages audience-interactive mysteries at The Greenhouse in Teays Valley, Heritage Station in Huntington and other locations. The actors perform without a formal script, extemporaneously drawing the audience into their mischief. The roles are demanding because they require inventive versatility and lightning-quick improvisation skills, as the actors never know from show to show what characters they'll be playing or even what story will be unfolding. "We never know who's going to be killed off until we get there," he says. And the stories and settings change from

performance to performance. One night he might be the dastardly killer, the next, the hapless victim. He's run the gamut from good guys to really, really bad guys and he's played one character, Luca Rossi, so often he had business cards made up for him.

He's done his share of scripted shows for other community theater groups as well. In fact, audiences can catch him this month in the First Stage Theater's production of "Scrooge, the Musical" where he'll be Jacob Marley, that bedraggled harbinger of foreboding. He's actually played Scrooge in other productions, along with a long list of other colorful characters. He also was in the movie "We Are Marshall" as an extra and appeared in a few more locally produced movies. His acting also includes several television commercials. In fact, look for him in a current commercial for the Barnyard BBQ restaurant in Teays Valley.

His zest for life seems as limitless as the skies in which he flies and he delights in pushing boundaries to the edge. "I like to keep life interesting," he says in an understatement. "I've got to be doing something. I don't like to be bored."

Photos: Dr. Allan Stern in two of his recent acting roles, on a trip to Egypt and in China.

Herd fans invited to reception before Marshall-West Virginia men's game today

Marshall University and the Alumni Association invite all Marshall alumni, students, fans and friends to attend a complimentary reception prior to the Capital Classic basketball game.

Wednesday, December 5, 2012

Join Marching Band, Cheerleaders, Dance Troupe and Pep Band in the South Hall of the Charleston Civic Center from 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. as we prepare to cheer for the HERD as they face the WVU Mountaineers.

Free T-shirt to the first 175 guests to arrive. Check her availability.

Questions: Please call the Marshall University Alumni Office at 304-699-0104

 Marshall University Alumni Association



Friends and fans of Marshall University are invited to gather in the South Hall of the Charleston Civic Center today (Wednesday, Dec. 5) for a free reception that will precede the annual Chesapeake Energy Capital Classic men's basketball game between Marshall and West Virginia University.

The Marshall University Alumni Association is hosting the reception, which is sponsored by Pepsi and runs from 6 to 7:30 p.m. The first 175 people to arrive will receive a free 175th anniversary Kelly green T-shirt.

"Every Thundering Herd fan attending the game is encouraged to attend the reception," said Nancy Pelphrey, coordinator of alumni programs. "We love packing the South Hall wall-to-wall with fans wearing Kelly green as we prepare to take on WVU. This is always one of our most well-attended and fun events of the year and this year will be no different."

Pelphrey said the T-shirt giveaway is part of Marshall University 175th anniversary celebration, which has been ongoing for the past year.

“The reception and the T-shirt giveaway will bring to a fitting conclusion the celebration of our 175 years as a university,” Pelphrey said. “Hopefully we can celebrate with victories Tuesday over WVU in the women’s game and Wednesday in the men’s game.”

The MU and WVU women square off at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the civic center. The public is invited to a free reception sponsored by the Big Green that starts at 6 p.m. in Parlor A at the civic center. Complimentary appetizers and hors d’oeuvres will be served, and Coach Matt Daniel is expected to stop by.

Wednesday’s reception, which is free to the public, features complimentary hors d’oeuvres, a cash bar and a DJ providing music. The MU pep band and cheerleaders will stop by, as will Thundering Herd mascot Marco and the dance team.

Representatives from 14 campus organizations will take part in the reception, setting up displays and sharing information with visitors. Those planning displays are the College of Health Professions, the Graduate School of Education and Professional Development, Outreach and Continuing Studies, Career Services, the College of Business, the Marshall University Research Corporation, Planned Giving/Office of Development, the Office of Recruitment, the School of Medicine, the College of Education, the College of Fine Arts, Information Technology, the College of Information Technology and Engineering, and the School of Pharmacy.

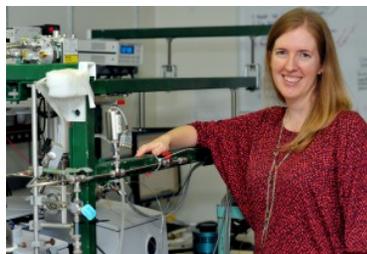
For more information on the reception, call Pelphrey at 304-696-3134. Click on the graphic to view larger size.

Annual holiday party set for Dec. 13

President and Mrs. Kopp will host Marshall’s annual holiday party for faculty, staff and their families from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 13, in the Don Morris Room. The event includes activities for kids and a chance to visit with Santa. [The invitation may be read online.](#)



Chemistry faculty member secures grant to involve students in petroleum research



Dr. Laura McCunn, a Marshall faculty member in chemistry, has secured a three-year, \$65,000 grant to do petroleum research with the assistance of undergraduate students.

The funding, which was awarded by the American Chemical Society Petroleum Research Fund through a competitive process, will begin in 2013.

According to McCunn, she and seven undergraduate students will use the funds to study how several specific molecules decompose when they are heated in the absence of oxygen. McCunn says the results of their research will help shed light on biofuels and the mechanisms for combustion of conventional fossil fuels like petroleum. She and the students are particularly interested in exploring the decomposition of aldehydes, which occur as byproducts in biofuels and can be emitted from biodiesel engines.

To conduct the experiments, McCunn and the students will use an instrument they constructed in her laboratory.

McCunn says her lab is already using the process to study one aldehyde, but the grant will allow them to extend their experiments to include two more.

The grant program funding the project is aimed specifically at involving undergraduates in advanced research activities in preparation for graduate school or employment.

McCunn said, "Research is a really important part of the students' education. They will learn things in my lab that can't be taught in a traditional classroom. The hands-on laboratory work teaches them problem-solving skills, perseverance and how to work independently."

She said another important skill the students will learn from the project is how to explain their research to various audiences.

"I'll be taking them to scientific meetings where they'll have the chance to present their work," she said. "It's important to be able to explain your research and your findings, because that's a big part of being a scientist."

She added that the students will also be participating in events like the annual Undergraduate Research Day at the West Virginia State Capitol, giving them the chance to talk about their work with non-scientists as well.

"Undergraduate Research Day is particularly exciting because the people in our state legislature get a chance to see how engaged our students are and what types of real-world research they are doing at Marshall. It's also a chance for the students to practice explaining to the general public what their research means," she added.

McCunn said undergraduate research programs like the one funded through this grant have enhanced Marshall's Department of Chemistry.

"Because of research opportunities like this, the quality of our students is just getting better and better. We are better as a whole because of undergraduate research," she said.

Photo: Dr. Laura McCunn, assistant professor of chemistry, has been awarded a grant from the American Chemical Society Petroleum Research Fund to do research with the assistance of seven undergraduate students. *Photo by Rick Hays.*

Visiting guitarist to perform Friday

Erisvaldo Borges, a Brazilian guitar player and teacher, will be visiting Marshall to perform for students, faculty and members of the community at 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 7, in the Smith Recital Hall.

Dr. Júlio Alves, associate professor of guitar at Marshall, said he looks for someone who can make a positive contribution to the academic experience when looking for a visiting artist.

"I focus on bringing guests who are not only talented performers, but who also like to share their artistry and are excited to work with our students," Alves said. "Such is the case of Mr. Borges. He is both an experienced teacher and an excellent performer."

Borges has performed in major cities in Brazil and in five other Latin American countries: Venezuela, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras. Some of his performances have been broadcast by radio stations and national television stations. He also recorded several CDs during the period from 1996 to 2008. He is the author of about 400 compositions and wrote the melody of the anthem of Teresina, the capital of the state of Piauí in Brazil. Borges has taught guitar at the Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica do Piauí and at the Universidade Federal do Piauí.

"The audience will be able to see not only a real display of technical virtuosity on the guitar, but also experience an evening of lyrical and relaxing music by one of Brazil's top guitar performers of nowadays," Alves said. "Another interesting feature of the performance is the fact that Mr. Borges will play some of his own compositions during the concert."

For further information, call the Department of Music at ext.6-3117.

Staff Council conducting holiday project

There is still time to participate in the Classified Staff's Holiday Project, which gives aid to a local area of need. This year Staff Council has chosen to collect items for two local nursing homes in Cabell County, Madison Park and Wayne Nursing and Rehab.

Suggested donations include toiletries (travel sizes are acceptable), personal care, clothing items, snacks and entertainment, and miscellaneous items.

Items may be dropped off at any of the following locations through Monday, Dec. 10:

- Old Main Basement Mailroom – Leonard Lovely
- Memorial Student Center 2W6 – William “Tootie” Carter
- Department of Housing, Holderby Hall 104 – Miriah Young
- Physical Plant, Sorrell Maintenance Building – Anita Hill
- South Charleston Campus – GC 304 – Joyce Harrah
- SOM Medical Center – Suite 3407 – Lisa Maynard

For more information, contact Katie Easter in the Staff Council Office at ext. 62222 or at easter@marshall.edu.

Fruth Pharmacy provides School of Pharmacy with scholarship support gift



The School of Pharmacy has received a \$10,000 gift for student scholarships from West Virginia-based Fruth Pharmacy. Dean Kevin Yingling, R.Ph, M.D., said the relationship with Fruth Pharmacy is fundamental to the growth of the school.

“We are grateful for the unwavering support from the Fruth Pharmacy family,” Yingling said. “Lynne Fruth and her team understand the importance of educating the pharmacists of tomorrow and they have become valued advisors to all of us at the Marshall School of Pharmacy.”

Fruth said the company has a robust history of providing help to many students.

“Fruth Pharmacy has long partnered with Marshall to provide scholarships for Fruth employees and other deserving students,” she said. “Specifically helping the Marshall School of Pharmacy is a natural partnership for us. Fruth Pharmacy is committed to assisting in the development of

the next generation of pharmacists that will be serving the rural communities of West Virginia and Ohio.”

Recipients of the *Fruth Pharmacy Scholarship for the School of Pharmacy* will be from Mason, Cabell, Kanawha, Putnam, Wayne, Roane, Jackson and Wood counties in West Virginia or Gallia, Jackson, Meigs, Lawrence, Athens, Washington and Pike counties in Ohio and have an interest in community pharmacy.

photo: Dr. Kevin Yingling, dean of the School of Pharmacy, seated at right, accepts a gift from Lynne Fruth, president and chairman of the board with Fruth Pharmacy, also seated. Standing are, left, Craig Kimble, Pharm. D., Director of Pharmacy and Clinical Services for Fruth, and Robert Stanton, M.B.A., Pharm.D., Director of Experiential Learning, Marshall School of Pharmacy.

Charity badges for 2013 Greenbrier Classic available soon; portion of proceeds will go to Marshall scholarships

Friends and fans of Marshall University and professional golf can make someone’s holiday truly “green” this year by giving them the gift of a 2013 Greenbrier Classic Charity Badge.

Next year’s Greenbrier Classic, a PGA TOUR FedEx Cup event at the Greenbrier Resort is scheduled July 1-7. Beginning Dec. 15, Marshall will appear on the tournament’s ticket sales website, www.Greenbriershopping.com, under the Badges for Charity icon. Marshall will receive a percentage of the proceeds purchased through the Badges for Charity program.

“The money that we receive from badges sold goes into our general scholarship fund,” said Dr. Ron Area, CEO of the MU Foundation and Senior Vice President for Development. “It’s a good way to celebrate the holiday season – give someone special the opportunity to attend the Greenbrier Classic in July while also supporting the Marshall University scholarship fund.”

Profits from the badge sales, Area said, are a source of revenue for Marshall during difficult economic times.

“We want to thank the Greenbrier operation and (resort owner) Jim Justice for including Marshall University in their approved charity list,” Area said. “We hope everyone marks their calendars for Dec. 15, the first day the badges can be purchased.”

The following badges will be available:

- **Weekly Grounds Badge, \$169**
This badge will provide tournament admittance for the entire week. Weekly parking is included. Tickets to the 2013 Greenbrier Classic Concert Series are complimentary with the purchase of a weekly badge.
- **Benefactor Badge, \$285**
This badge will provide tournament admittance for the entire week with access to special hospitality with air-conditioning, upgraded restroom facilities, flat-screen televisions to watch all the tournament action, and premium food and beverage items for purchase. Weekly parking is included. Tickets to the 2013 Greenbrier Classic Concert Series are complimentary with the purchase of a weekly Benefactor Badge.
- **Alumni Badge, \$495**
This badge will provide tournament admittance for the entire week with access to special hospitality with air-conditioning, upgraded restroom facilities, flat-screen televisions to watch all the tournament action, complimentary dry snacks and non-alcoholic beverages (Monday and Tuesday), and unlimited tailgate-style food and non-alcoholic beverages (Wednesday through Sunday). Special appearances will be made by Marshall coaches and alumni athletes. Weekly parking is included. Tickets to the 2013 Greenbrier Classic Concert Series are complimentary with the purchase of a weekly Alumni Badge.
- **Clubhouse Badge, \$5,000**
This badge will provide tournament admittance for the entire week with access to The Greenbrier Clubhouse and Slammin' Sammy's with unlimited food and beverage, in addition to all benefactor and alumni hospitality venues. Weekly parking is included. Tickets to the 2013 Greenbrier Classic Concert Series are complimentary with the purchase of a weekly Clubhouse Badge.

The tournament, in its fourth year, will have a field of 156 PGA TOUR professionals competing for a \$6.3 million purse

Dan Hollis is featured speaker at Commencement Dec. 16



Dan Hollis, associate professor of Journalism and Mass Communications and assistant dean of the W. Page Pitt School of Journalism and Mass Communications, will be the keynote speaker at Marshall's annual Winter Commencement Sunday, Dec. 16, at Cam Henderson Center on the Huntington campus.

Commencement begins at 2 p.m. and is for students who graduated in July or August 2012, or are tentatively scheduled to graduate in December.

Hollis was recently selected as the 2012 Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching West Virginia Professor of the Year.

“I think having a faculty member give the winter commencement address is a great tradition Marshall has,” Hollis said. “I’m happy and proud to represent my colleagues this year.

“It’s probably going to be the only time I’ll get to address such a large gathering of students at such an important point in their lives. I’m feeling the pressure a bit, but I hope to give the graduates a little something that motivates and honors them.”

Alyssa Salyers, one of Hollis’ students, is graduating and will attend commencement on Dec. 16. She has no doubts she and the other graduates in attendance are in for a treat. She said she knew even before meeting Hollis at the Scholastic Journalism Program that she wanted to be a journalist, but after meeting him knew she had to come to Marshall “to learn to be a journalist from that man.”

“Dan’s energy and enthusiasm are infectious,” she said. “His style of teaching interests and inspires his students.”

Hollis has been at Marshall since the fall of 1999. He was born in southwestern Indiana and received his undergraduate degree from the University of Southern Indiana in 1983. During college and after graduation, he worked at WFIE-TV in Evansville, Ind., as an award-winning photographer, producer and reporter. In 1989, he became a freelance videographer, often shooting recruiting videos for major colleges and universities.

In 1996, Hollis decided to return to school to pursue his true love: teaching. He received his master’s degree in communications from the University of Kentucky in 1997 and taught there two years before joining Marshall.

At Marshall, Hollis has received the Marshall & Shirley Reynolds Outstanding Teacher Award and the Pickens-Queen Excellence in Teaching Award. He also has taken first place in six consecutive years, and seven of the past eight, in the News/Sports/Public Affairs category of the National Broadcasting Society and Alpha Rho Epsilon Professional Electronic Media Awards for his creative work, which can also be seen on HerdVideo, Marshall’s YouTube channel.

The next issue of We Are...Marshall will be distributed Dec. 12, 2012. Please send any materials for consideration to [Pat Dickson](#) by noon, Dec. 10.