



Bryan Trubey '83 (standing) principal designer for HKS Sports & Entertainment Group, discusses the new Dallas Cowboys stadium he helped design, with team owner Jerry Jones looking on.



# LIVING THE DREAM

There are certain Aggies whose careers proudly define them and possibly even the term 'dream job.'

By David Ferrell '02

**P**eople choose to attend Texas A&M for many reasons. There is the high-quality education, the friendly atmosphere, the undeniable spirit and a host of other factors that go into making Aggieland uniquely attractive to prospective students.

But at the heart of every Aggie's desire to come to Texas A&M is a firm belief that the university has what it takes to make his or her ambitions come to life. Those ambitions come in all sizes and shapes, but Texas A&M has shown an ability to accommo-

date them all. And former students have likewise shown an ability to reach extraordinary heights.

Many former students' stories are deeply inspiring. Some have reached the top of their professions and have a profound influence on the way people think and live. Others see and do things that most people only dream about. But what is most important is that these people simply love going to work every day.

Here now are just a few accounts of people within the Aggie Network whose careers stir the imagination ... and perhaps even a bit of envy.

## Paul Hill '84 DIRECTOR OF MISSION OPERATIONS, NASA



*“When I listen and watch as our folks make key decisions ... I know we're honoring the legacy passed on to us from the Apollo generation and entrusted to us by the American people. That is my ultimate satisfaction.”*

**E**ver since he was born, it seemed as though Paul Hill's destiny was already written in the stars—a place he now might consider an extension of his office.

Hill's father, Larry '56, worked as an engineer at Kennedy Space Center during the 1960s, building many of the first launch pads there. As a child, Hill still remembers how those days at NASA captured his imagination and ignited a passion to follow in his dad's footsteps.

“My older brother and I learned to count down from 10 before we learned to count up thanks to my dad's job and our preoccupation with NASA,” said Hill. “We also sat on my grandparents' roof in Titusville (Florida) on several occasions to watch rockets blast off across the river from Kennedy Space Center.”

Hill used that early inspiration to fuel his own fast-paced career in space exploration. Now, as director of mission operations at Johnson Space Center, Hill is responsible for mission planning, flight techniques and procedures, flight controller and crew training, simulators and mission control and managing flight operations contracts. He oversees a \$400 million annual budget along with 500 civil servants and 3,000 contractor personnel.

How on earth does somebody prepare to do all that? According to Hill, attending Texas A&M is a good way to start. As a third-generation Aggie, his decision to attend school in College Station was as easy as his choice to pursue aerospace engineering. And as Hill now attests, the university laid a solid foun-

ation for his success.

“Personally,” said Hill, “I learned things about myself and leadership, formed friendships that got me through school and life, received a good education and had a hell of a lot of fun while doing it.”

In addition to gaining a strong background in engineering, Hill credits his experience in the Corps of Cadets with instilling unique discipline and focus in him—qualities that noticeably set him apart from others after he joined the Air Force out of school.

“The Corps had certainly prepared us to handle tough mental challenges, and that's served me well my entire professional career,” said Hill. “As an active duty U.S. Air Force officer, I was given higher responsibility faster than the norm largely due to the leadership skills I honed in the Corps.”

Hill became a captain in the Air Force and rose through the ranks as an engineer and flight director at NASA. These days, he sees himself not so much as a rocket scientist, but as the leader of a smart and passionate team that works to evolve while also upholding the standards set by previous leaders.

“My real responsibility now is to ensure that we continue to stay on the leading edge in manned space operations,” said Hill.

“When I listen and watch as our folks make key decisions ... I know we're honoring the legacy passed on to us from the Apollo generation and entrusted to us by the American people. That is my ultimate satisfaction.”





**Jennifer Bohac '87**  
DIRECTOR OF TRAVELING AGGIES,  
THE ASSOCIATION OF FORMER STUDENTS

*"Seeing the world is amazing, and I love experiencing the cultures and destinations. But the Aggies I get to know and travel with make it really special."*

**M**any Texas A&M grads would consider taking a trip around the world with fellow Aggies to be the perfect vacation. For Jennifer Bohac, it's just a normal part of the workweek.

For the last seven years, Bohac has overseen The Association's Traveling Aggies program, coordinating tours, cruises, safaris and other excursions specifically designed for groups of Aggies. It's a unique line of work that affords her equally unique opportunities.

"Seeing the world is amazing, and I love experiencing the cultures and destinations," said Bohac. "But the Aggies I get to know and travel with make it really special."

Bohac, who earned bachelor's degrees in animal science and agricultural economics as well as a master's and doctorate in educational administration from Texas A&M, came to The Association after having spent eight

years working in student-athlete development. When she first heard about the Traveling Aggies job, she was apprehensive about changing careers. But upon realizing the program's main intent, her concern gave way to excitement.

"After learning that it was mainly about people and relationships, I thought, 'Why not?' I have been so happy ever since."

Comparable to previous years, there are nearly 50 separate Traveling Aggie trips scheduled in 2008—to places as near as New Orleans and to destinations as distant as the Far East. Bohac, as always, will be involved in planning them all and will travel as a host on the majority of those journeys.

Although Bohac's job is easily viewed as fun and interesting, it is also understandably fast-paced and highly erratic. She spent a little more than half of last year on trips across the globe and away from home. And despite the allure of

visiting exotic locales, her work demands that she stay firmly focused on others' experiences.

"Being on a trip is very busy," said Bohac. "From sun up to sundown it is non-stop, ensuring all goes well with the travel provider, transportation, hotels and tour guides to make the trip flawless and wonderful for everyone."

When she is in the office, Bohac is providing customer service to travelers as well as budgeting, marketing and coordinating future trips. Currently, she is making plans for the 2009 trip schedule and looking forward to seeing some old friends while also making new ones.

"Many of our travelers are repeat customers, so it is like traveling with family," said Bohac. "And I love getting to know our new travelers and helping them experience the world. The trips we offer are unbelievable, but the people we travel with are the trip. The Aggies make my job fabulous."

“**R**eally, I can’t remember a time when I didn’t want to be an architect,” said Bryan Trubey, looking back at how his career has taken shape, perhaps almost as impressively as one of his buildings.

He recalls visiting the local library on Saturdays as a kid, voraciously reading anything he could on architecture and great architects like Frank Lloyd Wright. In the third grade, he even drew a picture that his mom still has framed in her house. It is an image of him as an architect alone on an island.

It seems as though Trubey’s early vision for his future was true to form, with one key exception. These days, when he designs something, there will always be plenty of people around to enjoy it—tens of thousands of yelling, screaming people, actually.

As design principal for the sports-focused division of HKS Inc.—the Dallas-based and Aggie-founded international architectural firm—Trubey has led the way in designing, renovating and re-branding about two dozen of the world’s premier, state-of-the-art athletic venues.

The long list of places he’s had a major hand in creating include a stadium opening later this year for the Indianapolis Colts and, of course, the eagerly anticipated \$1 billion new home of the Dallas Cowboys. Both of those venues, though similar in use, will look entirely different, and that, Trubey says, is what makes his job both challenging and fun.

“These different stadiums are all distinctly recognizable for each team’s individual brand, and we value that highly,” said Trubey. “No two projects will ever look alike or be exactly the same.”

Trubey went to Texas A&M to earn a degree in environmental design, but he came away with much more. Through his coursework and extracurricular activities, including a “phenomenal” experience with the Singing Cadets, Trubey gained technical skills and learned valuable lessons in time management and personal character.

“The whole A&M experience is staggering,” he says. “It was really a defining



period of my life.”

His first job out of school came when he was hired by a fellow Aggie, Harry Allison ’67, in Arlington. After 10 years of working on smaller projects, Trubey looked for something bigger on the horizon.

He made his way to a large firm in Chicago and then to another one in Kansas City that specialized in sports architecture. When HKS Inc. got into the sports scene in 1992, Trubey made his way back to Texas and has been happily masterminding structural sports marvels ever since.

“I’ve been able to work with what I consider to be the finest creative people in the world,” said Trubey. “And I just love designing things that, once they are built and used, have positive effects on people.”

## **Bryan Trubey ’83** DESIGN PRINCIPAL, HKS SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

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## Cmdr. Michele Finn '88 GULFSTREAM IV AIRCRAFT COMMANDER, NOAA

*“As a manager, I enjoy helping my junior officers and civilian employees attain their goals. I get a tremendous amount of satisfaction watching my junior officers and civilian employees succeed, especially when I know that they are working outside of their comfort zones and taking on new challenges.”*

In her job with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—a federal agency focused on planetary observation—Michele Finn loves to get a bird’s eye view of Mother Nature’s dark side.

Finn pilots heavily instrumented jets designed to support tropical cyclone surveillance and acquire data for severe storm prediction models. If that sounds a bit too complicated to fully grasp, just refer to the label that is sometimes given to a person in her vocation—a “hurricane hunter.”

It is a job that has kept Finn quite busy in recent years. In 2005, for example, when 26 named hurricanes tore through the Atlantic Ocean, Finn flew more than 250 flight hours and 105,000 nautical miles in surveillance efforts. While those storms were unavoidably devastating, Finn relished the chance to be of service.

“Watching our center respond to big challenges as a high-performing team is very satisfying,” said Finn. “The 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons provided many opportunities for us to shine as a group.”

Finn grew up in Broken Arrow, Okla., and quickly developed a keen interest in

science, particularly in marine biology after summer vacations to the Texas coast. When Texas A&M University at Galveston offered Finn a scholarship, her career began taking flight. But it was a visiting NOAA recruiter on campus who solidified her professional path.

“The recruiter had a ‘be all you can be’ sales approach that made me believe that I could learn to do amazing things like drive a ship, fly an aircraft and become a working diver, all while traveling around the United States and the world,” said Finn. “I was sold.”

Finn also attributes a summer job aboard TAMUG’s training ship, the *Texas Clipper*, as a factor in her decision to consider NOAA. And she values the connections she made in school as a driving force in her life.

“The relationships that I established in school, both with other students and with my professors, were very strong,” said Finn. “I still keep in touch with professors and count my college friends as my best friends today.”

Finn began her NOAA career as a deck officer on a research vessel before being stationed in Oahu, Hawaii, as a logistical coordinator and field biologist for the Hawaiian Monk Seal Research Project. Eventually, she entered the NOAA flight program and began to realize a personal dream.

“I love to fly,” said Finn. “And I particularly love to fly in support of a mission.”

Since 1994, Finn has concerned herself primarily with aviation-related staff and management functions at the NOAA’s Aircraft Operations Center. As chief of the operations division, Finn essentially manages all pilots, mechanics and flight operations—providing her with another great passion.

“As a manager, I enjoy helping my junior officers and civilian employees attain their goals,” said Finn. “I get a tremendous amount of satisfaction watching my junior officers and civilian employees succeed, especially when I know that they are working outside of their comfort zones and taking on new challenges.”





**Charean Williams '86**  
SPORTSWRITER, FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

*“I couldn’t think of a better job. How many people get to talk to Peyton Manning one-on-one or have Warren Sapp or Ty Warren ’03 call just to chat?”*

**P**lenty of Aggies follow football, but not too many make a living doing it. As a veteran sportswriter, Charean Williams does in fact get paid to watch the pros. And her analysis cements many of their legacies, too.

Williams has been closely covering the National Football League for 15 years. In 2006, she broke ground by becoming the first woman voter for the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Williams cites that distinction as the greatest honor of her thrilling career—a career that started quite simply as a young football fan.

The Beaumont, Texas, native took an uncanny liking to the sport as a child under the guidance of her “mam-maw,” a Dallas Cowboys enthusiast. It didn’t take long for Williams to make football an obsession. After discovering a knack for writing later on, a life in sports reporting made perfect sense.

“I knew from the time I got to high school that this is what I wanted to do,” said Williams. “It’s nice when things work out.”

Although her career path was determined early on, Williams pursued an education with less certainty. She found herself at Texas A&M only after following a few high school classmates there after graduation. Once she got to campus, though, it became evident she had come to the right place.

“It was one of the best decisions I have ever made,” said Williams. “Professor Bob Rogers taught me everything I know while I was at A&M, and I ended up working for him at the *Bryan-College Station Eagle* after I graduated.”

In fact, Williams cites the Aggie Network as a catalyst to her career’s development. Upon graduation from Texas A&M, Williams was first hired by John Curylo ’72 to work at the *Orange Leader* in Orange, Texas. Then came the job at the *Eagle*, where she worked for six years covering the Aggies. After that, Williams wrote for the *Orlando Sentinel* and followed the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for six seasons until she joined the *Star-Telegram* eight years ago.

Williams has lived and breathed the NFL over that time, tracking countless players’ careers and reporting some of the biggest stories in all of sports. She covered her 15th Super Bowl in January and is one of only 44 people to select inductees for the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Williams readily admits that her profession is a dream come true, especially for a diehard football fan. She of course takes her job quite seriously and works hard through hectic schedules to meet tight deadlines, yet she cannot help but love every minute of it.

“I couldn’t think of a better job,” says Williams. “How many people get to talk to Peyton Manning one-on-one or have Warren Sapp or Ty Warren ’03 call just to chat?”

“When I was a kid, I’d wait forever after games for stars like these guys to come out, hoping I’d get an autograph. I never would have dreamed I would one day get a chance to see inside their world just a little bit.”

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