

The **ALCALDE**

FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS • JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2009

SPECIAL ★ REPORT

POWERS

Where is President Bill Powers taking us, and how far have we gone in his first 1,000 days?

STEERING

plus

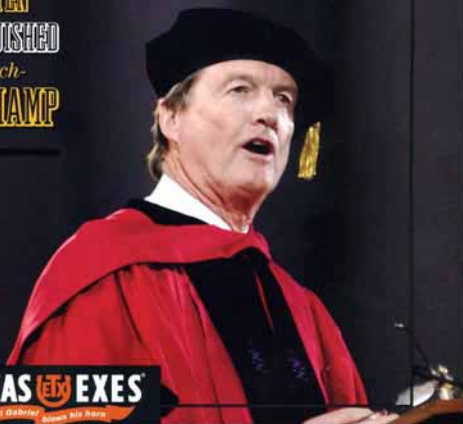
THE TOWER *has seen a better day*

CNN Anchor **BETTY NGUYEN**

Who are the newest **DISTINGUISHED**

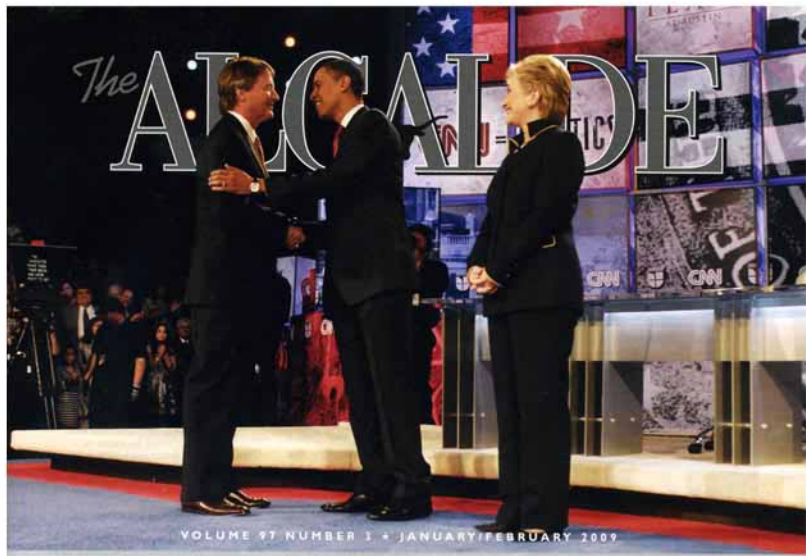
ALUMNI? *and Head-Coach-*

in-Waiting **WILL MUSCHAMP**



TEXAS  EXES

211 St. George Street, Austin, TX 78701



Features

30 POWERS STEERING

The Driving Destination President Bill Powers Has in Mind — Best Research University in America — and the Route He's Taking to Get There ★ by Avrel Seale

40 A BLIGHT ON THE ICON

Approaching its 75th birthday, the venerable UT Tower bears an orange that's rusty, not burnt. But can the aging process be reversed? ★ by Lynn Freehill

44 WORD-PERFECT

In high heels or in high water, CNN anchor and Outstanding Young Texas Ex Betty Nguyen, BJ '95, Life Member, always knows just what to say. ★ by Rebecca Fontenot

49 DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

A diplomat and trade expert. An oil and gas producer. An Oscar-winning actress. A university president. An investor and sports team owner. The Palestinian prime minister. Meet your new Distinguished Alumni. ★ by Ted Barnhill

58 CERTIFIABLE

Fleary first-year defensive coordinator Will Muschamp blazes into Mack Brown's job — just not yet ★ by Mark Swarson

Departments

- 2 Letters
- 4 Sports Calendar
- 6 Texas Exes Calendar
- 8 University Calendar
- 10 Austin Essentials The Austin Marathon
- 12 Forty Acres Campus News
- 16 The New School of Human Ecology
- 18 2110 San Jacinto The Campus Addiction
- 20 Philanthropy at Texas
- 24 Old School Man in a Hurry: Sociologist C. Wright Mills
- 28 Texas Treasure The Beatles!
- 62 Longhorn Life
 - Buffett Biographer Alice Schroeder, BBA '78, MBA '80
- 64 New to the Nightstand New Books
- 72 Association News
- 78 Alumni Notes
- 92 Bevo's Calf Corral
- 94 In Memoriam
- 96 Self Starter Joe Harberg, BBA '83

ON THE COVER: President Bill Powers speaks at UT Commencement.
ABOVE: "Other Duties As Assigned" — Powers greets then-candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton before their debate on the UT campus last February.
 Both photos by Marsha Miller, UT Public Affairs

Joe Harberg

BBA '83, Co-Founder, Current Energy

Houston's Galleria mall, a 2.4-million-square-foot consumer cathedral, opened when Joe Harberg was 9. A doctor's son from the stately Memorial area, Harberg, BBA '83, Life Member, begged to be dropped off at the new mall. He quickly figured out it was "where the girls were," he jokes. And once he took up a job at its chocolate store, the Galleria became where the money was, too. Harberg, 47, has been a big believer in malls ever since. His faith also extends to "specialty retail" areas like Dallas' Knox Street, where a range of niche stores are clustered.

Harberg made Knox Street the site of his great, green venture two years ago, opening a one-stop shop there for homeowners looking to save energy. Current Energy, co-founded by Harberg and his brother-in-law, invites shoppers to stroll in and order home-energy audits, compare electricity plans, and buy products from a \$3 LED flashlight to a \$10,000 air-conditioning unit. "Lightbulbs, thermostats, tankless water heaters — those are not sexy items. But you need them," Harberg says. "We put it in a format in our store that brings it down to common sense and shows it off in a really nice way."

Giving it the Old College Try

At UT, Harberg started down the pre-med track. But a funny thing happened on the way to class his freshman year, he says: He and his Zeta Beta Tau buddies Allan Levitt, Morty Levey, and Kip Platt went in together on a \$3,000 Space Invaders arcade game. Within weeks of installing it in their fraternity house, the coin-operated machine had paid for itself, Harberg says. The four formed Texas Entertainment Enterprises, acquired at least 15 more machines, and sold the company two years later.

Harberg shifted into the business school, where University legend Bill Cunningham's marketing course inspired him. "There was so much presentation," Harberg says. "He sold it to us, so it wasn't hard to turn around and see how you could sell to others."

And so Harberg's collegiate ventures continued. He started up two more businesses that catered to fraternity needs, selling maid service (necessary before parents visited) and roses (popular before formals).

HARBERG'S BEST BUSINESS TIP:

Be bold in starting out — and adaptable along the way. "A big deal is if you have an idea, don't be afraid to try it," Harberg says. "I'm a serial entrepreneur. I've had my share of ideas that didn't work. If something doesn't work, you don't walk away. You try to find another angle or make it better."

Accruing Experience

Harberg again took a tried-and-true path after college, earning a law degree from the University of Houston. Then he bolted west to San Francisco, where the Sharper Image retail chain was on the starting blocks. Harberg helped it sprint ahead, opening 50 of the first 70 stores as head of its real estate group. A few years later, he started his own consulting firm, Harberg Masinter Co., advising restaurant and retail chains like Eddie Bauer, Apple Computer, and Circuit City. Seeking less travel time and more family time in Dallas, he sold his share of the firm to his partners in 2004.

And Then, the Light Bulb

Having a Dallas home built for wife Amy and their three children in 2004, Harberg sought to make it energy efficient.

His builder had never assembled such a house, however, and the two went on a quest to find the optimum windows, doors, lighting, and more. "I was intrigued by the fact that nobody at that point had really put a program together to help homeowners save on gas, water, and electricity," Harberg says. Meanwhile, his brother-in-law, Josh Stern, had started a small business called Power Brokers,

helping companies pick power providers. To serve homeowners as well, the two men teamed together to form Current Energy.

The company has grown from 27 employees to 177, in part because they needed a small army of home installers and in part because they've expanded to Russia. Although Stern and Harberg initially expected to have opened 40 more stores across the U.S., Current Energy still has just two locations in Dallas, with plans to open a store in Houston and another in Austin within the next year. "This is an incredibly complex retail model to make work."

"We're a big concierge service," Harberg says. "Whatever they want, we'll have it installed."

—Lynn Frechill

