THE STORY OF

IMAGINATION

HOW GEORGIA STATE BECAME THE KEEPER OF AN EXTRAORDINARY RELIC FROM THE EARLIEST DAYS OF ELECTRONICS — PART VIDEO GAME CONSOLE, PART PERSONAL COMPUTER — DESIGNED BY AN UNHERALDED AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMPUTING ENGINEER.
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3-D ILLUSTRATION BY WILLIAM DAVIS (B.A. ’11)

FOR MORE INFORMATION: VISIT PANTHERALUMNI.COM/40UNDER40
CLASS OF 2019 NOMINATIONS OPEN FALL 2018
DOWNTOWN MAKEOVER
A massive new project will transform gathering spaces and entire city blocks on our Atlanta Campus into vibrant greenspaces.

“I’M EXCITED TO REPORT” work has begun on the Greenway, Georgia State’s signature greenspace that will thread through the core of our Atlanta Campus to recreate Library Plaza and connect Woodruff Park to the Parker H. Petit Science Center.

The Greenway will comprise a necklace of landscaped quadrangles and courtyards that link to surrounding streets and public spaces. Replacing long stretches of concrete with beautiful outdoor study and social spaces, we will dramatically improve the student experience while contributing to the revitalization of downtown Atlanta.

I originally announced this plan to make our campus a far more inviting, attractive, safe and livable space in fall 2013. The project has been welcomed enthusiastically, and we’ve spent several years working out the details.

Thanks to the hard work of our Government Affairs office, we secured $5 million from the State of Georgia last year and can now begin work on the multimillion dollar, multiphase project that first calls for the demolition of Kell Hall.

Mark P. Becker
President

surplus materials by 1946, Kell Hall was the university’s first permanent building and has endured as a longtime icon of the university’s enterprise-spirit. Nearly a century after its construction, the building will make way for the next step of our university’s remarkable ascent.

Students will climb its ramps for the last time this spring, and we hope to begin demolition in December. We are already relocating offices, including the university Post Office, which has moved to a storefront on the first floor of T Deck at Edgewood and Peachtree Center avenues.

Once Kell Hall has been removed, future phases will call for extensive modifications to Library Plaza as well as Arts & Humanities, Langdale Hall, Library North and Sparks Hall. Construction timelines may depend on another significant campus improvement, the redesign and replacement of the faculty and staff.

We call Georgia State a university without boundaries partly because it blends so seamlessly into the city surrounding it. When we create a more welcoming and productive environment for our students, faculty and staff, we are contributing once again to the revitalization of downtown Atlanta. It is part of the vision and mission of a leading modern urban research university.

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CLASS NOTES
Your fellow classmates are a successful bunch. From mayors, to marketers, to published authors, business owners and “Jeopardy!” winners, there are Panthers out there doing fantastic things. Got a promotion? A new addition to the family? Go ahead, brag a little. Post your good news and read about your fellow alumni by visiting news.gsu.edu/magazine/class-notes. You can share Class Notes through Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

NEW LOOK
Thanks to everyone who participated in our recent online readership survey. We’ve made a few changes based on your feedback. As always, we want to hear from you. Let us know what you think of the look of the new magazine, the stories we tell and anything else.

Send your letters to the editor to magazine@gsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Mark P. Becker
President

Keisha Lance Bottoms
J.D. ’94

Keisha Lance Bottoms (J.D. ’94) has been elected the 60th mayor of Atlanta. Prior to her election, Mayor Bottoms served as Councilmember of District 11 for nearly eight years. In addition to her service on the city council, Mayor Bottoms was executive director of the Atlanta-Fulton County Recreation Authority.

I'M EXCITED TO REPORT

Former Atlanta mayor Sam Massell (B.C.S.’51) (center) sits for a picture outside his office at Buckhead’s Tower Place 100. Photographer Ben Rollins (lower left) crafts a shot while editor William Inman (right) chats with Massell. Read the exchange between Massell and the author of his new biography, Charles McNair, in “Atlanta Has a Sam” on p. 14.

THE MAYOR

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I WAS PSYCHED to graduate from Georgia State in May 2012, but in my mind, I was already on to the next thing. Or place. In my case, it was Germany.

I arrived in Berlin just five weeks after my graduation. I didn’t know the first thing about visas, citizenship, foreign banking, or German housing and employment laws — not to mention, you know, Deutschsprech. But I dove in headfirst. Within five days of my arrival, I secured the internship I came for, negotiated a temporary sublet and got the ball rolling on the big, bureaucratic visa process.

Looking back, I can clearly see how my intensely independent student experience at Georgia State prepared me for the challenges of moving abroad.

Georgia State is not a coddling, insular campus that holds students’ hands. It’s a badge of honor to work your way to a degree — whether you part-time jobbed your way through with a Pell Grant, having to take courses only in the summer or matriculated in four taut years. Georgia State in May 2012, but in my mind, I was already on to the next thing. Or place. In my case, it was Germany.

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Josalin Saffer (B.A. ’11), Wellington, New Zealand

After graduating with her journalism degree, Saffer started a teaching certificate program in Thailand. You pay for it, train for a month, earn the degree and have a guaranteed job on the other side. So, she threw herself into Thai language and customs for the year.

At the end of the year, Josalin returned to Atlanta and found herself grounded back where she’d started — a tough break after having already flown the coop.

“I graduated, I lived abroad, and now I was back in my home city working at a burger restaurant,” Saffer said. “So that really kind of hit me hard. Then I decided, you know what? I know who would hire me — the rest of the world.”

So she set out again, this time to the Czech Republic (recently renamed Czecchia), where she taught English. That’s where she met Filip, a Czech man, and the pair moved to Wellington, New Zealand, together in July 2016 on working holiday visas. In Wellington, she’s putting her Georgia State degree to work as a writer and Web content editor for a travel media company.

Saffer says that, ultimately, she found a sense of home in her partnership.

“I realized that I’ve got this great relationship and this relationship is willing to move with me. That was when I kind of accepted that this is my home,” she said.
with an office covered in classic film posters and Atlanta-themed art and curios, Christopher Escobar can’t hide his love for the city and great movies. Escobar is the executive director of the Atlanta Film Society, and nothing illustrates his devotion better than his beloved Plaza Theatre at the corner of Highland and Ponce de Leon avenues.

Taking a personal interest in Atlanta’s cinematic heritage, Escobar teamed up with some friends last fall to purchase the venerable movie palace, which has survived the city’s relentless change for more than 70 years.

“The Plaza is in a position — and has an obligation — to preserve the cinematic experience,” said Escobar, who earned a place in the Georgia State Alumni Association’s inaugural “40 Under 40” class of distinguished alumni.

A single-screen cinema showing classic and independent films, the Plaza occupies a special niche in Atlanta — a quirky institution outside mainstream culture that locals adore.

“For people whose religion is movies, the Plaza is their temple,” Escobar said. “And service is not on Sunday mornings but on Fridays at midnight for ‘The Rocky Horror Picture Show.’ That’s part of the magic, things you can get there and only there.”

The Atlanta Film Society — which keeps its offices on the 10th floor of Georgia State’s 25 Park Place Building — organizes the annual Atlanta Film Festival, which made the Plaza its home base in the early 2000s. Escobar has been the executive director for the Atlanta Film Festival since 2012. He says the decision to buy the Plaza was due in part to the ties between the film society and the theater, and his desire to keep the festival there.

As the nearby Freedom Park testifies, preserving special buildings and unique places has rarely been Atlanta’s first priority. It’s a beautiful place now, but it used to be a thriving neighborhood full of historic houses called Copenhill. The district was razed in the 1970s to make way for a new freeway interchange. After citizens revolted, the freeway plans were scrapped, but the damage had been done. To cover the scar, the state turned over the land to the city, which turned it into a park.

The theater may have survived the bungled freeway project, but it’s still at risk. The community has long feared the Plaza could also get lost to development.

“ Sometimes, Atlanta isn’t just the city too busy to hate,” said Escobar, echoing a famous 1960s slogan. “It’s also the city too busy to remember.”

For Escobar, development isn’t necessarily bad, but Atlanta needs more balance to preserve those things it can no longer replace.

“For people whose religion is movies, the Plaza is their temple.”

“What’s in a Name?

Lewis College’s new name is a nod to growth. In January, Georgia State kicked off a yearlong salute to the 50th anniversary of the Byrdine F. Lewis College of Nursing & Health Professions. At the kickstarting program celebrates its milestone birthday and decades of contributions to healthcare in Atlanta, it also celebrates a new name.

On Aug. 1, 2017, the university’s Administrative Council voted unanimously to change the program’s name from “Lewis School” to “Lewis College.”

“The new designation clarifies the college’s organizational structure and reflects its growth in academic program offerings and student enrollment,” said Nancy Kropl, professor and dean of the Lewis College.

Founded in 1968 as part of the School of Allied Health, the Lewis College has graduated more than 11,200 health professionals, educators and researchers. It houses Georgia’s largest nursing and respiratory therapy programs as well as the state’s oldest physical therapy program.

In 2003, the School of Nursing was named to honor Byrdine F. Lewis, a longtime bedside nurse and mother of Kenneth Lewis (BA ’69), former chief executive officer and president of Bank of America. In 2011, the newly consolidated School of Nursing & Health Professions took on the Lewis name.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Atlanta Film Society Executive Director Christopher Escobar (B.A. ’08, M.A. ’13) spliced his love of cinema and passion for preservation when he helped buy the iconic Plaza Theatre.

BY JEREMY CRAIG  PHOTO BY STEVE THACKSTON

WINNING WAYS

University senior leader garners national recognition for strides in higher education.

Timothy Renick, senior vice president for student success, was named among the winners of the 2018 Harold W. McGraw Jr. Prize in Education, which recognizes outstanding individuals who have dedicated themselves to improving education through successful, innovative approaches.

A prestigious award, the McGraw Prize is administered through a collaboration among The Harold W. McGraw Jr. Family Foundation, McGraw-Hill Education and Arizona State University.

McGraw prizes were awarded in three categories. Renick won the higher education prize for using analytics to increase graduation rates and eliminate achievement gaps at Georgia State.

“This year’s winners exemplify the highest standards of educational leadership,” said Harold McGraw III, the former chairman and chief executive officer of McGraw-Hill Companies. “They’ve also delivered outstanding and measurable results that have improved achievement and created opportunities for students in the classroom and beyond.”

Percent recycled content in the magazine you’re holding.

Georgia State is working hard to create a culture of sustainability, which we’ll be covering in our next issue.

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

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A neuroinflammation expert, joined the university’s with founding director Javier Stern at the helm. Stern, for Neuroinflammation & Cardiometabolic Diseases depression and Alzheimer’s disease. They’re con- health complications such as hypertension, stroke, Georgia State scientists are on a mission to find in the brain.

“Every year, Georgia State helps transform the lives of thousands of students,” said Timothy Renick, senior vice president for student success. “It also helps to gainful jobs. Georgia State ranked first in the state and 25th in the nation in a Brookings Institution study of social mobility, which ranks institutions on how effectively they enroll students from low-income backgrounds and how many of those students graduate and find gainful jobs. In addition, the university was among the top 100 public colleges and universities in the U.S. in Kiplinger’s Personal Finance magazine’s Best College Values rankings. Military Times also ranked Georgia State ninth in the nation for support of military learners and their graduation rates.

“T’s the center works to convert laboratory break- he center will unite faculty in areas of existing program.

In support of their ninth studio album, “Concrete and Gold,” which debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard charts last September, the band will take the south end-zone stage at 7 p.m. on April 28.

“This will be a great concert to showcase our facility,” said Charlie Cobb, Georgia State’s athletics director. “It will be the first of many at the stadium.”

**HIGH MARKS**

Geography State earns lofty rankings in national survey on student outcomes.

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“Every year, Georgia State helps transform the lives of thousands of students,” said Timothy Renick, senior vice president for student success. “It also helps to create a skilled workforce, higher employment levels, a better tax base and cutting-edge research that spurs economic growth.”

**STADIUM ROCK**

**THE FOO FIGHTERS**

are going to perform the first concert at Georgia State Stadium.

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**BY KYSA ANDERSON DANIELS  PHOTO BY BEN ROLLINS**
ALL-TIME SLUGGERS
Senior softball players Megan Litumbe and live Drake entered the spring as the No. 1 and No. 2 career home run hitters in school history. The duo have more than 100 career home runs, the most of any two active teammates in NCAA Division I.

Both were picked to the preseason All-Sun Belt team, and they have wasted no time adding to their gaudy numbers to start the season. Litumbe, an outfielder, sits at 55 home runs thus far, and Drake, the starting catcher, has 50.

BEACH SEASON
Georgia State opened the beach volleyball season ranked No. 12 nationally. For Coach Beth Van Fleet (B.B.A. ’99), the goal is to finish in the top eight and earn a trip to the national championship tournament.

Van Fleet recently welcomed three graduate transfers and five freshmen to the roster, and she expects all of them to be playing time.

The Panthers have nine returning players, including sophomore Georgia Johnson, who amassed a 21-8 record last season. Other contributors include Brooke Weiner, Olivia Stasuevich and Amia Heald, who all earned double-digit victory totals last year.

“Our ultimate goals are to compete for a conference and a national championship,” Van Fleet said. “But right now, our focus is on the match in front of us and taking each set point by point.”

WONDER TWINS
Two twins and Max Herrmann have led the men’s golf team to three straight trips to the NCAA Regional Tournament, and the seniors from Worthseee, Germany, are poised for yet another appearance. The Panthers are the defending Sun Belt Conference champions.

The Herrmann brothers are All-Sun Belt Sun Belt Conference performers, and Max Herrmann was the 2016 Sun Belt Conference individual champ.

MELTING POT
The women’s tennis team is truly an international ensemble. All eight team members hail from eight different countries, and no player is from the U.S.

Sophomore Anina Talayenko is the farthest from home. She’s from Almaty, Kazakhstan, about a 20-hour flight from Atlanta.

THE BOOK ON PANTHER SPORTS
Ed Gadrix (B.B.A. ’65) pens the history of Georgia State athletics from its humble beginnings to its inaugural season in a major league stadium.

BY JARREL RUSHIN (B.A. ’19)
Ed Gadrix Jr. is a true-blue believer. Ever since he stepped foot on campus, he yearned for the day when the Panthers could make it to the Big Dance or win a bowl game.

“He’s always wanted Georgia State to be big time,” he said.

Back in the 1960s, he co-founded Georgia State’s first athletics booster group, the “Panther Club,” and sold Coca-Cola and candy to basketball fans when the team played at the old O’Keefe High School gym near Georgia Tech.

“There couldn’t have been more than 50 people there a night,” Gadrix said.

Not long after he graduated, Gadrix, an attorney, began compiling the history of Georgia State sports, a labor of love he’s kept up for more than three decades. The result of his work is his new book, “Panther Pride,” that chronicles Georgia State’s sports history since the school’s founding in 1913.

Gadrix researched athletics records from Georgia State and Georgia Tech and spent hours in the archives of the Georgia State Library, poring through yearbooks and issues of The Signal, Georgia State’s student newspaper.

“The Signal is the reason I could get a lot of this information,” he said.

Gadrix served eight years on the Georgia State Athletics Board and was an enthusiastic booster for football. In his book, he lays out the myriad challenges Georgia State experienced to get to those NCAA Basketball Tournament wins and last year’s AutoNation Cure Bowl Football victory.

“Panther Pride” opens with the line: “Struggle — continuous struggle — characterizes Georgia State’s history. ... Interalumni sports programs struggled to survive, first in their formation, then through the disdains and the ‘dark ages’ of the 1960s and 70s.”

“It’s amazing to think that now we have this incredible stadium, and our football team just won a bowl game,” Gadrix said. “We’ve come further than any college athletics program in history. I really believe that.”

LEONARD OF THE MOUNTAIN
President J. Thomas Steitz, Ph.D., was named a 2018 Highly Cited Researcher by Clarivate Analytics.

This recognition is given to researchers who have demonstrated “researcher influence in their fields for the year and the last decade,” according to Clarivate.

Steitz was one of 73 scientists and engineers in the engineering/technology field listed as Highly Cited Researchers for 2018.

STORMDANCE
Georgia State had the nation’s top-winning percentage of any college athletics program in history. I really believe that.”

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But even before that, Georgia Tech was an early proponent for football. In his book, he lays out the myriad challenges that Georgia Tech had to overcome to bring football to the South. One of the most significant was the 1936 Georgia Tech-Morton High School game. The game attracted massive crowds from all over the South, but Georgia Tech lost 7-6. The school estimated 120,000 people were in attendance.

“The resulting study focused on the oldest stars, known as “cool subdwarfs,” formed six to nine billion years ago. The team also pinpointed 29 potential new stars, the hemoglobin in (HA) stalk, which is the same in all influenza viruses. By contrast, seasonal flu vaccines target the exterior head of this surface protein, which varies widely in each virus. This super vaccine would combine the parts of the virus’ three surface proteins that rarely differ but can each induce an immune response from the human body.

Whereas seasonal vaccines target the variable HA protein, Kang and his team are targeting the virus’ more constant M2 protein.

To do so, they’ve created particles that contain the protein, resemble the influenza virus and are about as big — about 100 nanometers across. They then transmit the particles using the baculovirus, which can only replicate in insects, not mammals or humans.

“There’s no way for it to become infectious, but it mimics the size, structure and shape of the flu virus,” Kang said.

In a recent study published in the journal Frontiers in Immunology, Kang and his colleagues demonstrated their vaccine worked better than the seasonal vaccine to protect against several flu viruses, including H1N1, H3N2 and H5N1, a strain of the avian flu.

COLLEGIATE ALL-STARS
Senior softball players Megan Litumbe and live Drake entered the spring as the No. 1 and No. 2 career home run hitters in school history.

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Four years ago, Pulitzer Prize–nominated author Charles McNair wrote a feature story for the Georgia State University Magazine on Sam Massell (B.C.S. ’51), the inimitable former mayor of Atlanta. McNair’s prose impressed Massell so much he approached the writer to pen his biography. The result is “Play It Again, Sam: The Notable Life of Sam Massell, Atlanta’s First Minority Mayor,” a warts-and-all book that follows Sam from his days as a 9-year-old entrepreneur running a “Co’Cola” stand in Atlanta’s Druid Hills neighborhood through his exceptional life of public service.

Massell was the city’s first Jewish mayor, and his one term from 1970 to 1974 was filled with accomplishments. He appointed the first African-Americans to offices of influence, including the first woman on the Atlanta City Council. He oversaw the development of the Omni Coliseum, created Atlanta’s Urban Design Commission and established MARTA, Atlanta’s public transit system.

He lost a bitter race for reelection to Maynard Jackson, Atlanta’s first African-American mayor, but he is widely credited as being a conduit for change in City Hall and a champion of Atlanta’s dynamic growth at a pivotal time in history.

William Inman, editor of the Georgia State University Magazine, sat down to discuss the book with Massell, now 90, who still works six days a week as the director of the Buckhead Coalition. McNair, who lives and works in Bogota, Colombia, joined in via Skype.

Inman: I like to take a tiny bit of credit for this book and for bringing the two of you together.

Massell: Well, the origin of the book is the two of you and the Georgia State magazine. As you might imagine, having spent 22 years in elected office and a lifetime in civic service, I’ve had a lot written about me — some of it favorable, a lot not so much. I believe everybody has a book in them, and when I saw what Charles wrote — his writing, his style, it was so good, it just spills out — I said, “That’s it. There it is. I’m going to do it.” And soon after, we sat down and got started.

McNair: The way we worked on the book was I would look at Sam, and he would start talking. And about every 30 minutes, I would say “uh huh,” and he would start talking again, and we did that about 40 times — about twice a week for 20 weeks. Those were some of the best afternoons I’ve had in my career as a writer. It was really rich having an oracle and a shaper of Atlanta’s history tell Atlanta’s story.

Massell: I enjoyed every bit of it as well, and we never had a cross word. I imagine that’s pretty unusual between an author and a subject. From the very beginning, he said he wouldn’t write this book unless it contained some of the negative as well as the positive because it wouldn’t be honest or interesting. That was the only part of the whole deal that I didn’t like (laughing), but I understood and respected it. If I had to polish it, I would have made me 6 feet tall instead of 5 foot 5.

Inman: Sam is an exceptional storyteller. Charles, what’s your favorite Sam story?

McNair: Without any question, the stories of his childhood in Druid Hills. Those resonated with me because it was a distant time that still had the echoes of the old South I heard about from my parents and grandparents. Sam’s descriptions of those days were so colorful and so wry. He’s very funny. There was a guy who lived next door to Sam who wanted to convert him into a Christian, and he would give him Nilla Wafers and Kool-Aid. I remember Sam told me, “I always ate the cookies, but I never drank the Kool-Aid.” I must’ve told that story 10 times over the next two hours in all my friends.

Massell: There is work on a documentary about Druid Hills, and they invited me to be part of it because of that reference in the book. So, I spent an hour or more telling these same stories on film. We made it big!

Inman: Mayor Massell, your life is written out on these pages. What would you say makes you the proudest? Or, what is your favorite part of the book?

McNair: That part about Sam.
Massell: I’ll take that as a compliment. It’s fitting that you mention the subject of Jewish people being accepted in the South. I was the first Jewish person to run citywide and get elected to president of city council before I was the mayor. After my election as mayor, we were able to follow that up with the appointment of gays to the community relations commission, the first woman to the city council and blacks to lead important city departments. All along the way, Atlanta learned how to operate as one, and that’s important. Atlanta has learned how to make things better, and we know that we’re stronger as one. We know how to operate as one, and we strive to do so every step of the way.

Inman: There’s a story in the book that takes place after your loss to Maynard Jackson in the 1973 mayoral election. You and Doris went to Jamaica afterwards to get away from it all, and during dinner one night, in walks Maynard Jackson and his entourage.

McNair: (laughing) You know, our theme for the book, “Play it Again, Sam,” comes from the movie “Casablanca,” and while telling this story, Sam stopped and looked at me and said, just like (Humphrey) Bogart, “Of all the gin joints in the world, he walks into this one.”

Massell: Yes, I remember it very well.

Inman: Another part that really stands out in the book is the value you place on education.

Massell: I was not a good student. But I felt like, if I would go and sit there, I’d get something by osmosis if no other way. Showing up is half the business. And it worked, evidently. Even though I spent time at the University of Georgia, Emory, Georgia Tech, Atlanta Law School and Woodrow Wilson Law School, Georgia State University is the place where those pieces of parchment I earned are the most meaningful.

McNair: Have you met anyone else who went to two different night schools at the same time? And he walks out of Georgia State with not just one or two degrees, but three degrees!

Massell: I have so many good memories from my time there, and I’m very proud of the school. I’ve had close relations to Georgia State at all different levels. From when it was just a garage to what it is today. I gave the eulogy for (former Georgia State president) Noah Langdale. Now, Georgia State keeps getting bigger, better and stronger. Look what’s happening there now. So, now I get to take some credit. I was president of the Atlanta City Council when we approved the contract to build Atlanta–Fulton County Stadium, and Georgia State owns that property now.

McNair: There are so many Sam stories like that. That’s why Sam is Sam. Actually, there are two reasons: First, he has such an inventive and ingenious mind. He thinks of things other people wouldn’t think of. But he’s also intransigent. He has a broad mind and a bigger heart and isn’t afraid to consider things that are different and new in business and politics.

Massell: My overriding legacy — and I hope this comes through — is that I had the responsibility, or a better word, opportunity, to transform the city government peacefully from an all-white to a predominantly black power structure. A lot of cities in the South were not able to do that peacefully and still suffer from it today. I’m very proud that our city moves forward together.

McNair: Atlanta had a Sam. There could have been any number of people in that position at that time who would have gotten it dead wrong. There’s a chance Atlanta would have never become the international city it is today without him. It was a balancing act of the first order, and Atlanta owes a tremendous amount to this guy sitting here. I use this word without embarrassment — greatness. Sam has greatness in him, and you just don’t meet a fellow like him every day.

Massell: I’m glad I had you to spell it out to people. I don’t think anyone noticed before!

McNair: (laughing) Something happens with the leadership in cities. Selfish decisions can be made, and you can see the stunted growth. And that’s the difference in a lot of cities. Many places didn’t have a Sam. Atlanta was lucky. Sam is a man who earned a book like this — earned it with his whole life and deserves it. And it was a privilege to be able to sit down with him. I wish I was still doing it. Sam, let’s do a sequel!

Massell earned a bachelor of commercial science in 1951, a postgraduate certificate in selling in 1952 and a postgraduate diploma in real estate in 1953.

“There could have been any number of people in that position at that time who would have gotten it dead wrong. There’s a chance Atlanta would have never become the international city it is today without him.”

— CHARLES MCNAIR

The name of Massell’s “Co-Cola” stand.

Massell married Doris Middlebrooks in 1952, and the two were together until her death in 2015 at the age of 89.
A GENEROUS DONATION MAKES GEORGIA STATE THE PROUD OWNER OF A TREASURED RELIC FROM THE EARLIEST DAYS OF PERSONAL COMPUTING...

A MACHINE SO INNOVATIVE FOR ITS TIME THAT IT HAS ITS OWN STORY TO TELL.
Last September, Ying Zhu, an associate professor in Georgia State’s Creative Media Industries Institute (CMII), received an unexpected phone call.

On the other end of the line was Kathy Scott, a public relations specialist whose daughter had recently begun her freshman year at Georgia State as a computer science major.

Scott got right down to it: “What do you know about the Imagination Machine?”

Zhu had no idea what Scott was talking about. The words sounded like they should be splashed in psychedelic colors on the side of the Scooby-Doo gang’s van.

“I’ve never heard of it,” said Zhu.

“It’s an old video game console,” Scott replied. “I’d like to donate it to the school. Quite interested!”

Zhu had recently moved from the Computer Science Department to CMII, an interdisciplinary institute meant to cultivate talent for Georgia’s growing film, television, music and gaming industries. Zhu had spent most of his career as a software engineer, but he’d never heard of an Imagination Machine.

He said he didn’t know if he was interested. He’d have to do some research.

“Imagination Machine” on a notepad and asked Scott to email him more information.

Then he started searching the Web. It turned out the Imagination Machine was an extremely rare hybrid of a video game console and a personal computer from a much more innocent time in gaming and computing — before Xbox, “Mario Bros.” or even “Pac-Man.”

And the mind behind the Machine was 19-year-old Ed Smith, who had recently graduated from any other systems, the sales team

I was foaming at the mouth,” Smith says. “It was the most exciting thing I had ever heard. It was exactly what I wanted to do.”

First, Smith had to figure out how to make a console. He started by reverse-engineering the Atari VCS (later known as the Atari 2600), the most popular console at the time, to figure out how a video game console worked. The VCS sold for $99 and a volume dial and came with a straightforward shooting game called “Combat” and initially supported eight other game cartridges you could purchase, insert and play.

Smith opened up the VCS to see what made it tick in order to replicate, and perhaps improve upon, its functions. Working at a small company during the earliest stages of console design, Smith did a bit of everything.

“I had to understand exactly what those components did and how they worked and then take that information back to the engineering team,” he says.

Primarily a hardware designer, Smith built the prototypes and drafted the engineering documents for the MP1000 console, the cartridges and the computer base that came later. Smith’s building blocks included circuits, resistors and capacitors. His tools included soldering irons, magnifying glasses, oscilloscopes and spectrum analyzers.

He was a pioneer in an immature industry that hadn’t yet been shaped by decades of trial and error. For a young black man in the late 1970s, he painted an unusual picture.

“I was one of those guys who walked around in a lab coat with 15 pens in my pocket with a pocket protector,” he says. “That was my world.”

As a hardware guy, he let the software people do their work. But somebody had to make sure the console and the games worked properly.

“I would spend half a day at my desk playing games,” he says. “It was amazing.”

But it wasn’t all fun. In fact, he found the gameplay draining. He had to make sure there were no bugs, so he would be under great pressure to get to the final levels — not always an easy task with the game’s programmers continually popping in and out of his office to ask, “What level are you on now?”

Smith’s job didn’t end there. As the engineer behind the Imagination Machine, he understood it better than anyone else at APF. Because it looked so different from any other systems, the sales team

FATHER OF THE MACHINE

Growing up in public housing in Brooklyn, a notorious Brownsville neighbor, Ed Smith was always a curious boy. Back in the 1960s, Brownsville was known for riots and Mafia hits. His mother was a housemaid, and his father, who drove trucks for a living, often instructed the young Smith to prepare for a life of driving trucks just like daddy.

But Smith had always loved fixing things at home — radios, door bells, vacuum cleaners, lights — and had other career plans. As a teenager, he transferred out of his traditional high school to study electronics at George Westinghouse Career and Technical Education High School, the same school JAY-Z and the Notorious B.I.G. would later attend. There, he learned technical details of wiring, motors and bunglar alarm systems.

One of his first jobs was engineering traffic signals for a company called Marbelite. While most of the signals were mechanical or solid state, the newest ones were starting to use micro-processors, so Marbelite sent Smith to get training in the emerging technology.

He liked his job, but Marbelite’s work environment left much to be desired. “It was like a sweatshop,” says Smith.

“It was in a seedy area of Brooklyn, in one of those old factories where half the windows are broken out.”

In his mid-20s, he landed an interview with a company in midtown Manhattan called APF Electronics.

During his interview, an APF engineer gave Smith a schematic for an RF modulator and told him, “Build that.” Smith finished it well before the engineer returned.

He got the job.

ELECTRIC CHIMERA

In the early to mid-1970s, APF specialized in calculators, and Smith started off designing the “cosmetics” of calculator keyboards and displays. But the real magic happened when the system to compete with Atari, he was during the console’s first year on the market.

APF sold 400,000 units.

With that early success, APF wanted to make its mark in this young, exciting industry.

When Smith’s bosses at APF said they understood it better than anyone else at APF. Because it looked so different from any other systems, the sales team

2-IN-1

For those who don’t know much about computers and video games, seeing the Imagination Machine for the first time could be a trifle confusing. It doesn’t look quite like anything else. Each component is familiar — keyboard, cassette deck, speakers, game console — but they’re all part of one machine. It’s like a mad computer scientist’s Frankenstein monster.

“The confusion stems partly from the fact the Imagination Machine combines two things into one piece of equipment.

First, there’s the base. An off-white rectangular plastic box, it houses a clicking mechanical keyboard on the bottom left and a cassette deck in the top right above a small speaker and a volume dial.

The second part of the Imagination Machine sits to the left of the cassette deck on a flat surface the size of a small shoebox cover: the MP1000 video game console. Similar to an old Atari or ColecoVision from the early 1980s, the MP1000 is black with two controllers, each with a joystick, a red “fire” button on top and a numeric keypad. Like the 8-bit Nintendo Entertainment System, the console has power and reset buttons and a place to insert rectangular cartridges. A radiofrequency (RF) adapter allows users to hook up the MP1000 to a television and play it like other video game consoles.

But the real magic happens when the two units are connected to each other. When a user inserts a black, J-shaped connector into the cartridge port of the MP1000 and the back of the base, the two units become the Imagination Machine, a personal computer with 9 kilobytes of memory that allows users to program using BASIC (Beginner’s All-Purpose Symbolic Instruction Code), a visual calculator and a text editor. With an “Expansion Box,” available for a little extra money, the Imagination Machine could support a printer, modem or additional memory cartridge. While these capabilities are an infinitesimal fraction of what today’s computers can do, they were state of the art in the late 1970s. At least for a minute.

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 peanuts, such as APF, followed suit and started releasing their own games with standalone consoles that could plug into a television.

In 1975, Atari successfully brought “Pong,” the pioneering Ping-Pong arcade game, to home consoles. Other companies, such as APF, followed suit and started releasing their own games with standalone consoles that could plug into a television.

In 1976, APF created a series of TV Fun consoles, which featured a handful of simple built-in games like tennis, hockey, squash and handball. The first version had two controllers, and two more controller knobs built right into the faux-wood base that came later. During the console’s first year on the market, APF sold 400,000 units.

With that early success, APF wanted to make its mark in this young, exciting industry.

When Smith’s bosses at APF said they wanted him to build a new video game system to compete with Atari, he was over the moon.

Two hard-wired controllers each feature a joystick, fire button and numeric keypad.

The computer base unit features an integrated keyboard and a built-in cassette tape drive for extra data storage.

A J-shaped connector plugs into the MP1000’s cartridge port and links the system.

The MP1000 game unit, powered by an 8-bit microprocessor, serves the core of a larger computer system.

With the two units combined, the Imagination Machine has 9 kilobytes of memory in total.

UNIQUE UNDER THE HOOD

Unlike other early home computers, the Imagination Machine is a modular, two-part system that combines a video game console with a computer base unit to transform into a personal computer.
struggled to sell it and came to Smith for help. Eventually, Smith was asked to go out in the field with them and help sell the new product himself. In no time, he’d gone from research and design engineer to game tester to salesperson. He even gave one pitch at the top of the Sears Tower in Chicago. Smith had elevated himself from poverty in Brownsville to human engineering’s literal zenith.

“I looked out that window from the Sears Tower at that expansive and thought: ‘Man, I’ve finally gotten to where I need to be,’” he says.

The company put out colorful ads in publications such as BYTE Magazine with “Imagination Machine” splattered in rainbow-colored letters and the console flying through space like the Millennium Falcon, its cultural contemporary. The tagline read: “Your life will never be the same.”

The MP1000 went on sale in the public in 1978, and Smith’s sales trip would lead to about 50,000 units sold. The computer base went on sale a year or so later, completing the Imagination Machine. (Designing the computer base was a whole other challenge that required Smith to reverse-engineer the Apple I, Commodore PET and RadioShack's TRS-80 Model I.)

For his first computer, 14-year-old Larry Greenfield in Orange County, Calif., knew exactly what he wanted. He subscribed to Popular Science magazine and had seen ads for a talking personal computer. It had two joysticks and a built-in cassette deck. He could use it to program in BASIC. He’d saved a sizeable amount of birthday money and begged his parents to let him buy it. He was dying to get his hands on it. But it wasn’t an easy sale.

The ads he’d seen were from a liquidator called Protecito Enterprises. They were selling an Interact Model One home computer, an early personal computer that was released in 1978. But when young Greenfield used his beloved Imagination Machine about 10 years ago. On his site, you can hear the opening audio segment for “Space Destroyers,” the game Greenfield most fondly remembers playing and enjoying, which came on a tape. (Games made for the Imagination Machine could come in either cartridge or cassette format.) The voice is deep and dramatic, mimicking the voiceover for an old B-movie trailer: “For all of you who dreamed of battling and conquering the unknown, APP presents "Space Destroyers," a computerized intergalactical game that pits your strategy and skill against an ominous force… In the never-ending battle of us versus them, this is the ultimate space fight. Score well.”

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When APF brought in Ed Smith to create the Imagination Machine in 1977, personal computing and home video gaming were developing at a breakneck pace. By 1978, so many different companies were doing their own thing that engineers struggled to keep up. Smith’s employers needed to release a machine that stood out, that’d be APF’s stake in this wide, wild field that evolved faster than anyone anticipated.

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The young Greenfield used his beloved Imagination Machine for about three years before selling it to help pay for a RadioShack TRS-80, one of the earliest mass-produced personal computers.

“I was really sad to see it go,” he says. “Unfortunately, like everything that comes to an end, there was a time we said goodbye. Video game historian Benj Edwards is the editor-in-chief of Vintage Computing and Gaming magazine.

The Imagination Machine is mostly a lost, underserved personal computer because it’s not well known. And nobody really knows anything about it. It was a really cool idea, and it’s amazing we have an artifact like this at Georgia State,” Edwards says. “I didn’t get the attention of an Apple II, which is the most publicized concept. The Imagination Machine went back in its box and was just a rare item but couldn’t find much more. But just before APF released the Imagination Machine with a built-in cassette deck, Apple released a 5⅛-inch floppy disk drive designed by Steve Wozniak. By the time the Imagination Machine went on sale, it was already obsolete.

PLAY YOUR OWN GAME

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There was a slight problem, though. Norton hadn’t done much of that herself. She’d have to set out on a journey of her own before she could pass on any insight. It’s a good thing she knew right where to start.

Norton first heard about Dannette and Jeannette Millbrook, twin sisters from Augusta, Ga., who went missing in 1990, in fall 2016. The case disturbed Norton profoundly and had grown increasingly cold, year after year.

The 15-year-old girls had stopped at a convenience store to buy some snacks on their way home and then disappeared without a trace. No one knew what happened to them, and nothing indicated they had left on their own volition. Equally disturbing, the Richmond County police recorded every single aspect of the case incorrectly — the order of events, the locations, even the twins’ own names and birthday — which means every single report thereafter spread nothing but error and contradiction.

But it only gets worse. The police treated the missing teens as “runaways” from the very start, did no investigation and then improperly closed the case just a year later. Even though they hadn’t even tried to make progress on the girls’ whereabouts, they went so far as to reclassify them as “located” and thoroughly wiped them from the system at the local and national levels. And then the case files went missing, too. These are all things that, according to police procedure, simply couldn’t have happened. But they did.

“The case failed at every level,” Norton says. “No one helped the family. No one looked for the girls. No one was questioned. No one covered the story.”

Effectively quashed by media and police, the case never entered the public consciousness. When Norton began researching the story, the Web brimmed with hits and leads regarding similar cases of the same era, but she could find only three reports about the Millbrook twins — all from 2013, 23 years after they vanished, when Sheriff Richard Roundtree quietly reopened the case at the family’s request.

She couldn’t believe it, so she hit the archives and rooted through decades’ worth of Atlanta Journal-Constitution and Augusta Chronicle newspapers. Nothing. There had been absolutely zero coverage.

“It was so upsetting,” she recalls. “I got angry, and then I started thinking about what I could do.”

Channeling her anger into productive obsession, Norton shared the case with her rhetoric and composition students and kept digging. She wanted to help publicize the case, but she also needed experience making a podcast so she could teach her new class. This was her chance to do both.

Norton contacted the twins’ younger sister, Shanta Sturgis, and obtained her enthusiastic endorsement to tackle the case. Sturgis and her mother, Louise, had never given up on the girls. Making hundreds of phone calls and barking up every conceivable tree, they’d been struggling to get any kind of attention or help for decades.

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“there’s another fall line. I mean the line in society where everything falls through the cracks and certain people tend to disappear.”

— LAURAH NORTON

Norton found a partner in Brooke Hargrove, a close friend from college as well as a therapist who specializes in grief counseling. Norton would handle the scriptwriting and narration, and Hargrove would use her experience dealing with awkward situations and strong emotions to handle the interviews.

Driven to expose the systemic barriers that divide this family’s struggle from those on higher ground, Norton and Hargrove called their podcast “The Fall Line.”

“Because there’s another fall line, too,” Norton says. “I mean the line in society where everything falls through the cracks and certain people tend to disappear.”

Taking its name from that wall of water and rock that splits Georgia in two, Norton and Hargrove continued to pursue missing cases and cold cases to bring attention to the systemic barriers that divide a family’s struggle from those on higher ground. They responded with prison inmates to establish links between the evidence and the possible suspects. Using social media to amplify their message, Norton reached out to state government, the district attorney, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, and media outlets near and far to ratchet up the pressure on investigators and make Duannette and Jeannette Millbrook household names. The inaccurate public records with the erroneous names, locations, birthdates and timelines that hampered the investigation from the very beginning? They worked with the family and police to fix those, too, and detectives are now using the correct information.

Equal parts clairvoyant and crusader, the podcast captured an audience with its compelling narrative about ordinary citizens gumshoeing their way through a labyrinth of error and intrigue. After just a few episodes, “The Fall Line” earned a detailed mention in the hit podcast “My Favorite Murder” in September 2017, and its popularity mushroomed overnight. "The case just made me lose my temper, and I wanted to do something about it. I can write and research and talk. So, I thought I’d make a little podcast and get some experience, and that’d be it. But it blew up and just kept going. It’s crazy.”

Just a month after concluding their inaugural season, Norton and Hargrove started another one about a similar missing persons case from Brunswick, Ga. While local police had a longtime suspect, the podcast did a lot to weave threads together, publicize the case and give the family a platform. By the time they wrapped it up in December, the duo had pushed the investigation so far they expect an arrest to be made.

Meanwhile, “The Fall Line” had grown from a one-off miniseries into an ongoing serial. Far from surface-level, the podcast did a lot to weave threads together, publicize the case and give the family a platform. By the time they wrapped it up in December, the duo had pushed the investigation so far they expect an arrest to be made. “It’s definitely going to be the biggest one we’ve done,” Norton says.

Several collaborated to design and print “missing” posters, which they then tacked up throughout Augusta. Lawyers offered free legal advice, and a private investigator shared some trade secrets. Businesses teamed up with fans to volunteer an $8,000 reward for information leading to an arrest. Others have planned a day to remember and celebrate the twins in Augusta on March 18, which marks the 28th anniversary of their disappearance.

Over the Wall

It’s safe to say Norton’s prepared to teach her class now. The daughter of a longtime newspaper reporter, Norton has unwittingly become proficient with skills she never dreamed she’d share with her father. She knows her way around a microfiche machine. She can record and mix sound. She’s comfortable writing and reading aloud for the audio format, a far cry from her bread-and-butter literary fiction. She knows how to read between the lines of news reports. She can head to head with government agencies to combat falsehoods and expose incompetence. She has connections throughout the criminal justice industry — homicide detectives, forensic psychologists, star podcasters from Atlanta to Canada and many more. Norton’s even arranged for many of these folks to visit her class for guest lectures and workshops.

“Now that I’ve had this experience, maybe my kids won’t have to make the same mistakes I made,” she says. “I feel like I can teach my podcasting class now.”

“Laurah is a superb teacher with an innate understanding of student needs,” says Lynée Gallet, chair of the English Department. “Our faculty are blown away by what she’s doing. In my 33 years of teaching, I’ve rarely encountered a teacher of this magnitude. She makes us look good.”
As the Panthers’ first esports teams plug in, Georgia State leads the charge among national universities in bringing one of the world’s fastest growing sports to campus: competitive video gaming.
In September 2017, students were invited to try out for the Georgia State University esports program. "Andrew Jespersen has played video games — a lot of video games. It started with the Game Boy Advance," his parents bought him when he was 6 years old and the hours he spent thumbing through "Yu-Gi-Oh! Duels," "Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup" and various Pokémon titles.

By fourth grade, Jespersen had discovered "World of Warcraft," the popular online fantasy role-playing game, where he linked up with gamers all over the globe.

"League of Legends," a multiplayer online battle arena game that tapped into Jespersen’s hyper-competitive nature. "It started with the PlayStation 2, then the Game Cube, then it became the 360, and then the Xbox one, and now it’s all online," he says.

Jespersen’s dad would spend an hour reading or playing basketball outside for every hour spent battling online. Jespersen’s dad would institute a one-for-one rule: one restriction such as size, strength or speed, save for the twitch, a quick-on-the-trigger dexterity is called "twitch," a skill so vital to competitive gameplay that the industry’s leading live video streaming network is named after it. (Online at twitch.tv, Twitch hosts more than two million broadcasts every month and streams to more than 15 million users every day.)

Today, professional gamers compete for millions of dollars in prizes in worldwide tournaments and leagues that are followed by tens of millions of people. E-athletes also draw sponsorships from playing before millions of viewers who stream games live on Twitch. The upper echelon of gamers can reach a tax bracket shared by some of the more famous traditional athletes. But while e-athletes might dream of making the big time one day, the university and most students see a much more practical application for gaming. For Cheshier, esports fit nicely under the mission of the CMII, which sprang up in 2014 to connect students with the most advanced technology and create a model for media entrepreneurship — a one-stop shop for media companies who want to partner with students versed in film, media and entertainment. E-athletes aren’t just playing the games. Some are coming to CMII to learn how to conceive, create and market them.

"They’re learning the industry’s essential job skills," says Cheshier. "Coding, programming, immersive world creation, animation and entrepreneurship." And that industry, along with film and music, is a growth market in Atlanta. Major game producers such as Hi-Rez Studios and Blue Mammoth Games are based here and part of an electronic gaming business that pumps anywhere from $500 million to $3 billion into the local economy.

"Twenty years ago, all games were made by two or three big studios," Cheshier says. "Now it’s all small startups. Those places want an educated workforce and an ecosystem that encourages investment. We want to help build that sector here.”

Even for those students who aren’t interested in the technical or artistic aspects of gaming, there is growth potential in marketing esports, organizing leagues and tournaments, producing Twitch streams and television broadcasts, and even becoming commentators. After the university initially announced the program in August, Cheshier says some 340 students showed up for the general information sessions downtown. He estimates that only 20 percent of those young men and women came because they were interested in tournament competition. "Most wanted to connect in other ways," he says. With only 33 other schools in the NACE, Georgia
State is among the pioneers in this emerging field and the first in Georgia. And while Georgia Tech and the Savannah College of Art & Design might be more traditionally obvious pipelines for local talent in information technology or electronic design, the Panthers have something unique to offer.

“The video game industry faces a diversity crisis,” says Cheshier. “It’s overwhelmingly male and white. The genuine diversity of our student body gives us a unique advantage in solving that.”

Offering one of the only eSports programs in the land also gives Georgia State a recruiting boost. The university can attract students who want to pursue a career in video games as well as other youths who grew up with competitive gaming and just want to keep playing (and reap a little scholarship money) while working toward degrees in something completely different.

“We’ve found staggering levels of interest in bright high school students who want to connect their love of video games with their college careers,” says Cheshier. “My guess is that there are plenty more students who are interested in many creative aspects of the video game industry who just haven’t seen a way to tie it all together into a cohesive educational experience.”

ACHIEVEMENT UNLOCKED

A
t’s a trail blazer, Georgia State has also had to deal with special obstacles, especially at the outset. Starting an eSports program isn’t like starting a football team. There’s no blueprint. Even the few other collegiate eSports programs are only a year or two old. It’s largely unexplored territory. To begin with, the world was a different place when much of the administration and faculty grew up. This means the people in charge of the new program are sometimes unfamiliar with the pixelated, 3-D, role-playing universe students have known from birth.

“Aside from a six-month addiction to ‘Astrordis,’ I didn’t play anything growing up,” says Cheshier. “We only had ‘Pong’ in my house.”

That’s where Bailey and Aimee Vu, student director of eSports, come in. Bailey is 24 years old, has played video games all his life and has followed the eSports scene for eight years. A native of Greensboro, N.C., Bailey came to Georgia State after teaching debate at Henry W. Grady High School, where he managed teams and competitions.

“After joining the program, I noticed the administration and faculty were interested in many creative aspects of the video game industry. The original tryout format trial to assess each individual’s ability, but with so many players, it proved difficult to distinguish who was best suited for which role. So, a second tryout was held. The second time, we had them go up against each other — five versus five. ‘We only had four, so five versus five,’” says Vu. “The teams were assembled at random so we could assess how they would work against each other and together on a team.”

Finally, in January 2018, the rosters were announced — 19 keyboard warriors to represent the inaugural Georgia State Panthers eSports program.

MID LANE: Relentlessly engages the enemy, often becoming the star of the team.

ATTACK DAMAGE CARRY (ADC): Patrols the bottom lane with the support. Starts weak and vulnerable but grows powerful over time, often becoming the most damage late in the game.

SUPPORT: Protects the ADC early in the game and, later on, uses powerful “crowd control” abilities to frustrate and disrupt the enemy’s every move.

JUNGLE: Kills monsters in the jungle and drops in the lanes as needed to assist teammates — especially to double up on an enemy champion and prevent his escape, which is called “ganking.”

State has already seen vast possibilities in the virtual arena, and its future reality game succeeds it? Who’s to say that, at some point, 25,000 screaming, face-painted Panther fans won’t pack into Georgia State Stadium to watch a clash of titans on the big screen in “League of Legends” or whatever virtual clash of titans on the big screen in “League of Legends” or whatever virtual clash of titans on the big screen in “League of Legends” or whatever virtual
IN THE ARCADE - In 1917 at the height of World War I, Georgia State’s first dean, Wayne Kell, made a shrewd business decision to keep the fledgling institution in the black — he opened its doors to women. By 1918, the school had outgrown its first home in a modest building on Walton Street. Then known as the Evening School of Commerce, it moved to the newly opened Peachtree Arcade (below), the city’s first enclosed shopping center, at 2 Peachtree St. NW in fall 1918 just as enrollment jumped from 190 to 310.

The institution occupied four rooms on the second floor of the Peachtree Arcade along with 15 other shops and businesses. Georgia State’s home until 1921, the building was demolished in 1964 to make way for the new headquarters of the First National Bank of Atlanta. At the same time, the top half of the bank’s former building at the corner of Peachtree and Marietta streets was removed. That building now houses the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies.

Do you have a question about Georgia State history? Ask the archivist. Send an email to archives@gsu.edu or contact @gsu_archives on Twitter or Instagram. We’ll include a few of the top questions and answers here in our next issue.
KEEP THE DRIVE ALIVE

SPRING GAME: APRIL 7
AT GEORGIA STATE STADIUM

2018 PANTHER FOOTBALL HOME GAMES

2 P.M.: Free youth clinic with football team
3:30 P.M.: Kickoff

Purchase Season Tickets at GeorgiaStateSports.com