Dr. Bill Johnson, of the Department of Geography at the University of Kansas, will present "Climate Change at the End of the Last Ice Age and Emergence of Grasslands in the Central Great Plains," at 4 p.m. on April 7 in Thompson 101. The presentation is part of the Department of Geology's Geology Seminar Series.
Twenty-two University of Kansas students have been chosen as assistants for KU's new student orientation programs this summer.

Ten of the students are returning for another year as orientation assistants, including senior Elizabeth Bartkowski of Basehor.

Orientation assistants are hired through a process that includes essay writing, group interaction activities, a five-minute speech and final interview.

The assistants prepare for orientation sessions by attending three weeks of training that covers KU academic and student services, public speaking, interaction with the public and diversity issues.

New student orientation programs, which are tailored to students' fields of study, offer information about KU to first-time freshmen, transfer students and readmitted students.

The programs are designed to help students with their academic, social and personal transitions to KU and to reduce anxieties about attending college.

Summer and fall orientation dates will be announced in April. During the summer, the schedule will include 13 freshman sessions, two transfer sessions and one transfer and re-admit session during the summer. The two fall sessions will offer one for freshmen and another for both freshmen and transfer students.
Kansas librarian starts history project for gays, lesbians
in Kansas.

BY MIKE YODER
LAWRENCE JOURNAL-WORLD

LAWRENCE — Tami Albin was always very careful. The 11-year-old didn’t go to the library with friends. She never wrote down the call numbers of the books she was looking up. She dodged well-meaning librarians whenever possible.

She trolled the aisles, constantly in a state of childhood fear of anyone knowing she might be up to something.

She was reading anything from the tiny shelf labeled “HQ76.5.”

“Of course, librarians want to be helpful and would ask me if I needed help, and I’d run and hide,” says Albin, now 38 and a librarian in her own right at Kansas University’s Anschutz Library. “It was one of those things where it’s like a deer caught in the headlights. It’s like — blink, blink — oh my God, you know what I’m doing! I’ve been exposed! And you run off, you scamper away.”

What she was doing was exploring the feelings she had felt from age 6 — that she was different. Armed with vocabulary created from insults slung her way across the playground, she dove into books in the HQ76.5 section — the call numbers of the gay and lesbian books. Sitting alone with her finds, she read, gleaning whatever information was available.

Now, Albin is making sure Kansans who believe they might be or who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer (GLBTIQ) know they aren’t misfits. She’s proving it by interviewing people in Kansas’ GLBTIQ community for an oral history collection called “Under the Rainbow: Oral Histories of GLBTIQ People in Kansas.”

The project, funded by a two-year new faculty research grant, is seven months in, and Albin already has crisscrossed the state to interview 20 people, ranging in age from 25 to 80. And she’s got people lined up, waiting to tell their stories.

“Initially, it was like, if I can get 20 people to be interviewed, that’ll be great, because I didn’t know how many people would want to be interviewed,” Albin says of her initial goal. “I could just stop the project, but I won’t because so many people want to talk to me. I have easily another 85 people who still want to talk to me.”

Bruce McKinney is one of those who wanted to be interviewed.

McKinney has been a voice in Wichita’s gay community for 35 years, when he came to the city to study education at Wichita State University. He formed the first gay group at WSU, but then ended up leaving the school empty-handed because of his pride.

His advisers, worried about a movement toward keeping gays from teaching, told him his senior year that because he was so outspoken about his homosexuality he would not be recommended for a teaching certificate.

“What good is a teaching degree without a certificate?” he says. “I was devastated.”

He was devastated but determined to be a voice for the gay community. These days, McKinney is on the boards of the Wichita Pride and Kansas Equality Coalition. He provided Albin with a window into the late ’70s in Wichita.

“I told her about the events in 1977, ’78. That’s
when Wichita went through the effort of getting the civil rights ordinance to include gay and lesbian people, and then on May 9, 1978, (Wichita was one of five cities to repeal it)," he says. "And we lost it at a 5-1 vote, which was pretty devastating to the community. It forever warped our sensibility about who we were. People left town. Kansas did not want us here, and many of the leaders left."

Anchored by a good job and family, McKinney stayed and fought. And now he's making sure Albin records every last bit of that time.

"I've always wanted to remember what happened 30 years ago because it was so horrible and we need to remember that," he says. "It was not holocaust, but in our little tiny community in little Wichita, Kansas, it had a big impact."

Albin plans to squeeze in as many interviews as she can in addition to her job as the undergraduate instruction and outreach librarian and women's studies subject specialist at Anschutz.

She hopes to get the first transcripts of her interviews up in September on KU's ScholarWorks Web site, a digital repository. The site will be home to the oral collection and means that the address will be stable and easily located by a keyword search in Google.

The all-access pass to the information is especially important to Albin, who knows that the Internet plays a huge role for those wanting information about being gay. She doesn't want anyone to miss out on the history and stories of the GLBTIQ community in Kansas.

"A lot of gay kids commit suicide because they don't understand what's going on," Albin says. "And if you have access to information to understand that, then you know you're OK, you're OK with what you're feeling, it's not the end of the world.

"I think that can save a life."
‘HMS Pinafore’ sails into Lied Center

By BILL EMMENHEIM
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

LAWRENCE—A touring production of Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera, "HMS Pinafore," sails into the Lied Center on Tuesday night bearing a cargo hold full of mirth, silliness and infectious tunes.

The Carl Rosa Opera, Britain's oldest opera company, will stage its touring production of "H.M.S. Pinafore" at 7:30 p.m. in the performance hall on the University of Kansas campus.

Alternatively titled "The Lass That Loved a Sailor," the opera deals with a lowly sailor, Ralph Rackstraw, who falls hopelessly in love with Josephine, the daughter of his ship's captain. She secretly loves him and spurns the advances of the suitor favored by her father, Sir Joseph Porter. As with most Gilbert and Sullivan operas, there is a twist in the tale before everything is resolved and the curtain falls.

Tickets, which are $49 and $40 for adults, $48 and $39 for seniors 62 and older and $24.50 and $20 for KU and Haskell Indian Nations University students and youths to age 18, can be purchased by calling (785) 864-ARTS or going to www.lied.ku.edu.

The Carl Rosa Opera, Britain’s oldest opera company, will stage its touring production of Gilbert and Sullivan's “HMS Pinafore” at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in the Lied Center.
Pianist improvises classical music on stage

By Bill Blankenship
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

LAWRENCE — Improvisation, a skill prized in the world of jazz, isn’t one encouraged in classical music where players tend to stick to the centuries-old notes on the page.

However, Bach, Mozart and Beethoven all could improvise on the spot. These masters even delighted in improvisation duets akin to a Sonny Rollins versus John Coltrane jazz duel.

Venezuelan-born pianist Gabriela Montero, who performs Thursday night at the Lied Center, has earned prizes and accolades interpreting classical scores, but she also has used the same music as a jumping-off point to create masterworks from her mind.

Improvising is something she does routinely in Webcasts from her home page, www.gabrielamontero.com, where she takes suggestions for biweekly “Live from My Living Room” concerts.

At her concert hall performances, Montero has been known to play anything from a baroque-flavored “La Cucaracha” to the Beatles’ “Yesterday” in the style of Rachmaninov.

At the Lied Center, she will take audience suggestions for improvised tunes, as well as play works by Bach, Chopin, Debussy and Liszt. Improv suggestions can be e-mailed in advance to lied@ku.edu.

Montero calls her improvisational skills a gift, something she has possessed since she was 7 months old and her parents put in her crib a two-octave piano originally purchased as a Christmas gift for an older cousin.

By the time she was 18 months old, Montero was picking out tunes by ear, and she made her concerto debut at age 8 with the Venezuelan Youth Orchestra.

Montero’s CDs have topped the classical music charts, and Morley Safer profiled her in a Dec. 3, 2006, segment of CBS’s “60 Minutes.”

Bill Blankenship can be reached at (785) 295-1284 or bill.blankenship@cjonline.com.

Venezuelan-born pianist Gabriela Montero, who is known for her improvisations on classical works, will perform Thursday night in the Lied Center.
Mayor not wavering day after helicopter crash

By Steve Fry
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

Mayor Bill Bunten on Saturday said he hoped insurance money would replace the police helicopter that was severely damaged in a crash landing late Friday, but he remains steadfast in his veto of another helicopter for local law enforcement.

Thirteen hours before the crash at 11:55 p.m. Friday, Bunten signed a veto blocking the purchase for $820,000 of a new Robinson R44 Raven II police helicopter. The Topeka City Council had voted 5-4 on Tuesday to buy the helicopter.

"I would not reverse my veto," the mayor reiterated Saturday.

Bunten vetoed the helicopter purchase because the city earlier on Friday had two serviceable helicopters in operation, including a backup craft, a Schweitzer 300C helicopter, before the crash-landing.

The Schweitzer remains in service, Bunten pointed out Saturday. However, Police Chief Ron Miller grounded the police helicopter unit until investigations into the crash were completed.

The police department's current R44 lost power while patrolling Friday night and was making a controlled landing when its rotor clipped a light pole on the Washburn University campus, flipping the craft onto its left side. Bunten said he learned of the crash when he read a story in Saturday's Topeka Capital-Journal.

"I'm sure (the R44) is insured, and that money could be used to replace it, but I don't believe this affects my veto in any way," he said. "I assume that they will immediately look into replacing the helicopter."

The city needs to look at whether to continue the helicopter program, Bunten said, returning to his earlier suggestion that the city consider unmanned aircraft to replace helicopters.

Bunten has met with University of Kansas staff members researching use of unmanned craft to do surveillance, he said.

Bunten said he was concerned not only for the safety of police officers but also for people on the ground who could be harmed by a helicopter crashing in a populated area.

Reached at his home on Saturday afternoon, Bunten noted that three Topeka police officers have been killed in two crashes of department helicopters. The first officer was killed in 1974, and two were killed in one crash in 2000.

Bunten and council members were unified in their concern Saturday for the three people on board the helicopter and grateful the two pilots and one observer weren't injured seriously.

But they were mixed on whether they would support buying an additional R44 if the matter were placed in front of them.

Councilwoman Lana Kennedy said she wanted to see conclusions of federal investigations of the crash before she would decide whether to vote for or against an additional R44.

"I support the helicopter program," Kennedy said, but "I want the official report before I make my decision."

Investigators on Saturday from the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board were probing the cause of the crash.

Councilman Sylvia Ortiz questioned whether the city was insured for the severe damage to the R44.

Deputy Mayor Jeff Preisner and council members Bret Blackburn, Deborah Swank and Jack Woelfel said they would support purchase of an additional R44.

"I would absolutely support that purchase," Preisner said.

"We should have had the second R44 already in July" after it earlier was approved, Blackburn said.

Councilmen John Alcala and Bill Haynes didn't return messages from The Capital-Journal. Councilman Richard Harmon returned a message, which the reporter missed.

Steve Fry can be reached at (785) 295-1206 or steve.fry@cjonline.com.
KU student stars in Jerusalem musical

By Beth Lipoff  
Staff Writer

When Matt Rissien took a yearlong break from his studies at the University of Kansas, he had no idea he’d end up starring in a musical in Israel. Rissien, a 21-year-old religious-studies major at KU, is playing the lead in “tick... tick... BOOM!” now through April 10 at the Center Stage Theater at Merkaz HaMa’aminim Hasdassah, a community center in Jerusalem.

Although Rissien acted in plays in high school at the Human Brand Hebrew Academy and performed in musicals at Camellot Academy, a local performing arts camp, he’d never won the lead role in a musical.

“This is the first time I’ve been the main character, singing and acting together,” Rissien said in an email.

Rissien, who will be a junior when he returns to KU, is spending a year studying at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem and got involved with the show after seeing a sign advertising auditions to Pardes students and people in the Jerusalem community. The show is being performed in English for an audience of immigrants and would-be immigrants to Israel.

“Originally, I was very hesitant to audition because I didn’t know if I wanted to potentially take on the commitment of a lead in a musical, but I decided I would go for it,” Rissien said. “I asked my friends about it and they told me that while we are studying in Israel, we have chances to do things that we may not necessarily get to otherwise.”

The subject of “tick... tick... BOOM!” also interested him. The show’s author, Jonathan Larson, also wrote Rissien’s favorite musical, “Rent.” The main character in “tick...tick” is an embodiment of the author.

“His whole life, all he wanted was to make a difference in the world through his songs and the messages within them. The thing I like best about the part is ... that I can spread his messages and show people his struggles by literally playing Jonathan,” Rissien said.

Rissien said he learned about stage presence at Camellot Academy, but he really honed his acting chops his last two years at the Hebrew Academy, working in straight plays under the direction of teacher Seth Dimbert.

The musical’s Israeli director and musical director are both 17 years old and speak perfect English, Rissien said. Their youth doesn’t bother Rissien, whom they asked to grow a beard to look old enough for the part of a 30-year-old.

The pianist for the musical does not speak English, however. “That has been the most frustrating thing for me to go to rehearsals and practice my Hebrew with him while rehearsing for the play,” Rissien said.

The group started rehearsing two months ago, which is a shorter lead time than Rissien is used to having. He’s been working hard to keep up with all of his commitments.

“I’ve had to balance Pardes classes, daily rehearsals, a social life and sleeping. It’s been a very difficult thing to do, but sometimes you have to make sacrifices in order to make it better in the end,” Rissien said.

Living in Israel

Rissien went to Israel to take part in a yearlong study program at the Pardes Institute, which usually only takes college graduates.

He chose to attend KU “to experience the non-private school world” after studying at the Academy for 13 years, but he felt like something was missing from his experience there.

“After two years, I realized that while Chabad and Hillel and the Jewish Studies department at KU had provided me with an amazing Jewish atmosphere and education, I missed the everyday, hard-core, intensive Jewish studies that Hebrew Brand had offered me,” Rissien said.

Rissien’s goal is to become a rabbi, and he asked Rabbi Alan Cohen of Congregation Beth Shalom for advice while seeking a year program in Israel.

“He pointed out Pardes. Pardes is a non-denomination al institution that offers all different kinds of classes. It’s cooled and brings in people from various backgrounds from all over the world,” Rissien said.

Even though he enjoys his studies, being away from home can be difficult sometimes, Rissien said.

“My first realization of this was when I was sitting in Rosh Hashanah services, and the rabbis got up to lead at a synagogue in Israel,” Rissien said. “I realized this was the first time I wasn’t sitting in Kl, and my dad wasn’t up singing with the choir, and I wasn’t sitting with my family watching him.”

Living in Israel has made him appreciate Kansas City’s Jewish community, he said.

“Everywhere I go, people are from New York, or California, or any other big, known state. When I say Kansas, it’s always followed by the cliché Dorothy joke. But then people are always amazed and interested in how big our community is; what makes us unique.

“We are lucky to live in such a close-knit community where we can come together and have community programming and Jewish arts festivals. Not many Jewish communities can pull that off, and it’s made me realize that being able to be welcome in any synagogue in my community is not something I should take for granted,” Rissien said.
Matt Rissien (left) rehearse for ‘tick... tick... BOOM!’ in Jerusalem.
Student nominates teacher for award

Former student Eric Ammerman nominated Shawnee Mission North science teacher Steve Fluty for the Wolfe Teaching Excellence Award.

The award administered by the University of Kansas is given to a teacher who has encouraged and positively influenced their students academically and socially, and who has contributed to them achieving their dreams.

Recipients of the Wolfe Teaching Excellence Award will be honored during KU's commencement weekend. The recipients receive a $3,000 award and their respective high school receives $1,000.
Mulally shares dreams

Ford president, CEO gives talk at Butler

By Jordan Watson
Butler Lantern Editor-In-Chief

“I'm really glad to be back home,” Alan Mulally, Ford Motor Company president and CEO, said to open up his speech last Tuesday.

Mulally was born in Lawrence and is a University of Kansas graduate. Naturally, he was extremely excited about the KU game on March 28. His alma mater was even scheduled to play on Ford Field in Detroit.

“I know we're doing everything we can to give the Jayhawks a competitive edge,” Mulally said jokingly.

He then jumped into a story about his times at KU. Sitting on the bleachers in Allen Fieldhouse, Mulally looked down to the other side of the bleachers and met eyes with Wilt Chamberlin. Chamberlin scored 52 points that night.

With such an extensive career, Mulally could not help

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photo by Chris Neal/Butler Lantern

Alan Mulally, president and CEO of Ford Motor Company, speaks at Butler Community College last week.
Butler: Mullaly gives talk

but notice a line in Butler's mission statement which read "involved lifelong learners." Responding to this, Mulally pointed out that he is still at the peak of his own learning.

"What you are doing here at Butler is a phenomenal thing," Mulally said.

The story of how he became CEO of both Boeing Commercial Airplanes and Ford Motor Company would come next.

When Mulally was young he wanted to be an astronaut. In college he even enrolled in the astronaut program. But his time in this program was short because around the time the U.S. was looking to land on the moon, seeing all shades of gray was important, because the moon has so many shades of gray. After a couple of tests, they found that Mulally was somewhat colorblind.

He then took a trip to Seattle to see airplanes built and was fascinated by it. Encouraged by his professors to look into airplane design, Mulally began to look into working in the aerospace industry.

This is how he came to design so many airplanes and to be there for the entire design and flight of the Boeing 777.

After rising to the ranks of C.E.O of Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Mulally began collaborating with Ford Motor Company on projects.

Soon he received a call from Bill Ford.

"I kept thinking; Bill Ford! The guy with the blue oval," Mulally said.

Mulally is now the C.E.O of Ford Motor Company.

Mulally kept it short and sweet for his first portion of the speech and took questions from the crowd afterwards.

It was not only an event but a conversation with a truly successful businessman and engineer.
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