On March 17, 1888, what was then called Puget Sound University was incorporated in Tacoma. In the years since, our little college has sent about 40,000 versatile, curious, industrious graduates out into the world to lead by example.

Here, on the university’s 120th birthday, the stories of an inspiring 12 of them.
HE REFUSED TO TOLERATE UNEQUAL TREATMENT

Jack Tanner ’51

The son of a longshoreman and union organizer, Jack Tanner was a Tacoman, born and bred. He graduated from Stadium High School, then enlisted in the Army and was assigned to a segregated unit in the Pacific during World War II. After the war he joined his father on the docks to work his way through the College of Puget Sound and the University of Washington School of Law. He passed the state bar exam on his first try.

When Tanner hung out his shingle in 1955, he kept his longshoreman job while he struggled to establish a practice. Before long he was defending Northwest tribes in their battle for fishing rights and earning a reputation as a persuasive civil rights leader. After the assassination of NAACP leader Medgar Evers in 1963, President Kennedy called him to the White House to discuss race relations. In 1966 he became Washington’s first African-American candidate for governor and finished mid-pack in the Democratic primary.

With enthusiastic support from Washington state senators Warren Magnuson and Henry Jackson, President Jimmy Carter appointed Tanner to the federal bench in 1978. He was the first African-American federal judge west of the Mississippi.

Criminals quickly learned to expect no leniency in Tanner’s court (they called him “Maximum Jack”), but the downtrodden found a fair ear. One ruling in 1980 declared that the state penitentiary at Walla Walla had violated the Eighth Amendment right against cruel and unusual punishment. And in 1983 he found the State of Washington guilty of sex discrimination in its employment. That decision was ultimately reversed by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which said the existing wage gap was not proof of bias, but the case received national attention and became a benchmark for expanding the economic rights of women.

Tanner’s court wasn’t without controversy—his rulings often were overturned on appeal—but no one questioned Tanner’s passion. He died in 2006 at age 86, still a sitting judge working a reduced caseload.

“He was the consummate public servant who lived his beliefs,” Gov. Christine Gregoire said at his memorial service.
INTO THE WOODS, CUSHILY

Larry Penberthy ’36, John Lea ’36, Neil Anderson ’43, Jim Lea ’43

When the Supersonic Transport program crashed in 1971, thousands of Boeing engineers got the boot. Among them: mechanical engineer Jim Lea ’43. Out of gainful employment but not out of ideas, Jim, an avid hiker and peak bagger, and climbing buddy John Burroughs (also a Boeing engineer) one day were talking about the horrible state of camping mattresses. It wasn’t long before Lea was at work with Delta Kappa Phi fraternity brother Neil Anderson ’43 designing the camping pad of the future. Marrying materials and ideas borrowed from garden kneeling pads and nylon-covered life jackets, prototypes of the first Therm-a-Rest mattresses were born. The self-inflating sleeping pad, with an open-cell foam interior bonded to an airtight skin of urethane-coated nylon, was light in weight and compact but delivered more insulation than thin foam pads and more comfort than floppy air mattresses. No longer was a night in the outdoors a feat of painful endurance.

Although Lea originally planned to license the pad’s manufacturing rights, he became engrossed by the engineering details and the entrepreneurial challenge of field-testing, and the aircraft designer in him was obsessed with maintaining production quality. With money he’d saved while at Boeing; additional cash, legal counsel, and financial advice from his attorney brother John Lea ’36; and marketing savvy, sales know-how, and capital provided by Burroughs, the three launched Cascade Designs Inc. in 1972.

For five years, the company survived by its proverbial bootstraps. It generated enough income to pay its bills and a few hired hands, but not its principals. Jim Lea went back to work for Boeing in 1973, while John Lea continued working as a claims department manager for Northern Life Insurance. After giving the day to one master, they’d gather at the company and work nights for themselves. Bedtime often came after 2 a.m.

In 1978 Jim Lea’s wife gave him an ultimatum: Boeing or Cascade Designs, not both. With Cascade Designs now able to pay him a salary, Jim left the aerospace industry for the recreational-gear industry. Brother John was also finding the strain of two jobs taxing, but he opted to remain in insurance and let Cascade Designs hire a new comptroller. As a board member, his ideas and input continued to shape the big picture.

Today the company manufactures a range of products for outdoor adventurers, travelers, and the military, and another venture applies the principles behind Therm-a-Rest to a line of wheelchair pads and supports. Cascade Designs is still based in Seattle, and Therm-a-Rest pads are still manufactured there so the company can keep a close watch on quality.

Jim Lea retired as CEO and chairman of the board in 2001.
In 1969 Larry Penberthy ’36, another engineer and avid mountaineer, became interested in testing the strength and reliability of climbing gear. He founded Mountain Safety Research, and the company immediately began producing technologically innovative products that transformed the outdoor-equipment industry: the first aluminum-shaft ice axe, a succession of revolutionary backpacking stoves, tents, snowshoes, water filters—the list goes on and on—and MSR became a name known to every man and woman who ever trekked the backcountry. Penberthy is credited with other inventions, too—everything from a kind of lead-impregnated glass used as shielding for nuclear materials to deep-sea diving gear. He ran for the U.S. House and Senate and Washington’s lieutenant governor, advocating nuclear energy. MSR was sold to REI in 1981, and the MSR brand was acquired by Cascade Designs in 2001. Penberthy died the same year at age 85.

THE SKY ISN’T FALLING, IT’S DISSOLVING

Richard Stolarski ’63

In 1969 Larry Penberthy ’36, another engineer and avid mountaineer, became interested in testing the strength and reliability of climbing gear. He founded Mountain Safety Research, and the company immediately began producing technologically innovative products that transformed the outdoor-equipment industry: the first aluminum-shaft ice axe, a succession of revolutionary backpacking stoves, tents, snowshoes, water filters—the list goes on and on—and MSR became a name known to every man and woman who ever trekked the backcountry. Penberthy is credited with other inventions, too—everything from a kind of lead-impregnated glass used as shielding for nuclear materials to deep-sea diving gear. He ran for the U.S. House and Senate and Washington’s lieutenant governor, advocating nuclear energy. MSR was sold to REI in 1981, and the MSR brand was acquired by Cascade Designs in 2001. Penberthy died the same year at age 85.

**TESTING, TESTING.** At 10,000 feet on the west side of Mt. Rainier, Larry Penberthy holds a heart monitor and uses a rock as a stair-stepper to help a doctor research acute mountain sickness. The photo was taken in 1972, when Penberthy was 56.

It’s safe to say that Richard Stolarski has affected the lives of everyone on the planet. In the early 1970s the NASA scientist was studying how rocket exhaust from the space shuttle affected the upper atmosphere. The spent fuel contained chlorine, and every chemist knew that chlorine destroyed ozone. But nobody thought there was a significant source of chlorine in the upper atmosphere. Nobody, that is, until it was discovered that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) from refrigerants, insecticides, and aerosols were rising into the stratosphere where the sun’s ultraviolet rays broke them apart, thus exposing the ozone layer to chlorine. This was not good, since atmospheric ozone protects life on earth from damaging UV radiation. In September 1974, in an article published in *Science*, Stolarski and colleague Ralph Cicerone were among the first to warn that the sky might be dissolving.

The world reacted. In 1987 a widely hailed international treaty, the Montreal Protocol, began phasing out the production of ozone-depleting chemicals.

Have we fixed the problem? Maybe. The 191 countries that have signed the treaty do seem to be adhering to its requirements. If we keep CFCs and chlorine out of the stratosphere, the atmosphere is expected to cleanse itself over a 50-year period. Meanwhile ozone is a renewable resource—the sun is creating ozone in the upper atmosphere at an incredible rate. So the ozone hole and the ozone layer should recover. Still, we’ve got a long way to go. In 2006 the ozone hole over Antarctica was the biggest it’s ever been.

“I’m prepared to be surprised by what happens,” Stolarski told *Arches* in 2003. “The climate is changing, and we’re dumping so much into the atmosphere.”
ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Griselda “Babe” Lyon Lehrer ’42

At the age of 19, Babe Lyon left the College of Puget Sound, and, with $350, stocked a storefront in downtown Tacoma with a couple dozen coats and dresses. Six years later she and Herman Lehrer married, and together they built Lyon’s Apparel into a chain of 15 dress shops in Washington and Oregon. They sold the business in 1985.

Since her “retirement” Babe has been working nonstop to reinvigorate Tacoma’s downtown, as well as numerous points of artistic, educational, and cultural richness in the city. Last year a News Tribune article titled, “No One Can Say No to Babe” credited her with raising almost $15 million for her hometown during 20 years of active volunteer leadership. Among projects she championed was a sculpture at Lowell Elementary School memorializing Marvin Klegman, a sixth-grade safety patroller who was killed by falling bricks while shielding another student during the 1949 earthquake.

In 2007 Lehrer was involved in four capital campaigns and served on the boards of the Broadway Center for the Performing Arts and Tacoma Community College. Not easily surprised, Babe was recently rendered speechless upon learning that the new Japanese Garden at Tacoma Community College (which she of course helped raise the funds to create) will be named in her honor.

For this and other volunteer work she received a 1998 City of Destiny award, a 2006 South Sound Business Examiner Woman of Influence award, a 2007 UPS Alumni Award, and many, many other accolades.

A tribute to liberal arts adaptability, Lehrer is also a writer. She collaborated on Mush On and Smile, the story of the red-haired Yukon saloon dancer Klondike Kate Rockwell, and Men, They Just Don’t Get It, a collection of stories written by women about courtship, birth, and family life, in which it is stated: “Women don’t make fools of men—most of them are the do-it-yourself types.”

WELCOME HOME, AMERICAN

John A. Dramesi ’66

On April 2, 1967, antiaircraft fire hit Air Force Capt. John Dramesi’s F-105 while flying a bombing mission near the city of Ba Don, North Vietnam. When he bailed out he was knocked unconscious and came to only after he was on the ground. Helicopters came to his rescue, but before they could maneuver to pick him up Dramesi was shot in the right leg by North Vietnamese soldiers and captured. He was taken to a small village and a week later arrived at his first prison camp. His wound was still untreated.

Eight days later Dramesi dismantled the side of his cell and, as his guards slept, escaped. He limped more than nine miles before he was caught. In retaliation, the local commissar incited a crowd to stone and beat him. The next day he was taken by truck to the infamous “Hanoi Hilton” and later to the “Zoo.”

On May 10, 1969, after a year of planning, Dramesi and a fellow POW, Edwin L. Atterberry, made an almost miraculous escape. The two slipped through the roof of their cell and traveled three miles over 12 hours before they were recaptured.

As punishment for the escape attempt, Dramesi was put face down on a table, and, while one guard held his head, two others beat him with a four-foot length of rubber taken from an old automobile tire. This went on for days, in 90-minute sessions, after which the left side of Dramesi’s head swelled up like a pumpkin. At other times during the next two weeks, Dramesi’s arms were bound tightly together behind him and his wrists and ankles cuffed in heavy irons. A rope was looped around a two-inch-thick bar attached to his ankle irons and taken around his shoulders. His head was then drawn between his knees. He was held in this position for 24 hours without sleep. His circulation impaired, the flesh on his ankles died.

After two weeks, the Vietnamese realized he might lose his feet, so they removed the irons and treated the wounds, but then replaced the restraints. Dramesi wore the irons continuously for six months, removing them only once a week when allowed to wash.

After 38 days of this torture, Dramesi was near death. Atterberry was similarly punished, but did not survive.

The Vietnamese asked Dramesi to write a magazine article describing their lenient treatment of the POWs, promising to remove the irons if he did. He refused.

Dramesi was given only one letter from home in six years. In fact his POW status was not known for some time because he steadfastly refused to make propaganda tapes or statements.

He was released in March 1973.

Dramesi wrote a book, Code of Honor, in 1975. It is widely regarded as one of the most forthright books on the American POW experience in Vietnam. Dramesi went on to become the chief war planner for U.S. Air Forces in Europe and later commanded a Strategic Air Command F-111 wing. He retired from the Air Force as a colonel.

This story was compiled by the Homecoming II Project, updated by the POW Network, and printed with the network’s permission.
HIDDEN TREASURE  During his captivity, Vietnam POW John Dramesi handmade an American flag using threads collected from pieces of clothing and a needle made from a piece of copper he found in the prison compound yard. When he was released he smuggled this treasure out by sewing it between two handkerchiefs.
Who knew this was going to be a good idea?

John Kelly ’67

As his UPS graduation approached, so the story goes, business administration major John Kelly wrote to three airlines offering his services as a vice president. The people at Continental were so amazed by the young man’s audacity that they did offer him a job, although not quite as high up the corporate ladder as he’d proposed. John Kelly began his career in the airline industry as a very ambitious ticket agent.

In 1976 Alaska Airlines wooed him away, and within a few years he was promoted to vice president of marketing. Anyone living in the Northwest during the early ’80s will remember the funny TV ads Kelly produced, with his mother starring as a beleaguered traveler.

By 1995 he was chairman of Alaska Air Group, dealing with federal deregulation and competition from low-fare carriers like Southwest. Under his direction, Alaska pioneered technologies such as global positioning navigation systems, online ticket sales, Internet check-in, and electronic airport check-in kiosks.

Meeting the business threat of the discount carriers was a stunning accomplishment, but in January 2000 Kelly really showed what he was made of. It was then that the nation watched in horror as crews searched for survivors after Alaska Flight 261 plunged into the Pacific Ocean off the coast of California. All 88 people on board were killed and the airline’s safety procedures came under fire. Another CEO might have delegated the media inquiries to a company spokesperson—but not Kelly.

“When you lead a company, you do it 100 percent of the time, not 99 percent,” he told Arches in 2004. “You get paid to deal with the good, the bad, and the ugly. My involvement didn’t bring those people back, but by being open and upfront, I believe we conveyed how sorry we were and won back the public’s trust. Those were the darkest days of my career, but I can’t imagine not handling the questions or the meetings with the families myself.”
A NEW, NONVIOLENT THEOLOGY

Rebecca Ann Parker ’75

As a young United Methodist minister in Seattle, Rebecca Parker was troubled when a woman came to her asking if it was God’s will to bear her husband’s beatings gladly—as Jesus bore the cross—in order to keep her family intact. Why, Parker wondered, do so many religions teach that sacrifice is spiritually redeeming?

“What if the consequence of sacrifice is simply pain, the diminishment of life, fragmentation of the soul, abasement, shame? What if the performance of sacrifice is a ritual in which some human beings bear loss and others are protected from accountability or moral expectations?” she wrote in Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us, which Parker co-authored in 2001 with Rita Nakashima Brock. The sanctioning of violence can’t be what atonement is about. So what happens when instinct tells us our faith’s teachings don’t offer answers that seem right or true for what we’re confronting in life?

At such times, she said in a talk on campus in 2002, you have three choices: 1) Hold to your faith and deny your experience. 2) Hold to your experience and walk away from the church. 3) Become a theologian. Parker chose the third option and has been writing thoughtfully and furiously. Her Blessing the World: What can Save Us Now is a collection of essays, addresses, and sermons taking on the apocalyptic notion pervading the world today that violence can redeem what violence has broken.

In a new book written with Brock, Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire, due out in July, the authors tell of their travels in the Mediterranean, searching for art depicting Jesus. They discovered something that traditional histories of Christianity and Christian art had underplayed or sought to explain away: It took Jesus 1,000 years to die. During Christianity’s first millennium, sanctuaries showed Christ as a shepherd, a teacher, a healer. When he appeared with the cross, he stood in front of it, serene, resurrected. The world around him was ablaze with images of paradise. But somewhere along the way, this early vision of beauty evolved into a vision of torture. What happened in society and theology, the authors wondered, to bring about such a change? In their new book, Parker and Brock reconstruct the idea that salvation is paradise in this world. They ground justice and peace for humanity in love for the earth, and open a new future for Christianity through a theology of redemptive beauty.

Parker is president and professor of theology at Starr King School for the Ministry at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Calif. She hails from a very long line of Puget Sound graduates going back three generations, including her grandparents, Katherine Bradley Ernst ’27 and J. Henry Ernst ’26, HON’52; her parents, Bruce G. Parker ’50 and Gretchen E. Parker ’49; her brothers, Howard Parker ’72 (an editor of The Trail) and Theodore Parker ’76; and too many in-laws, uncles, aunts, and cousins to count. Both her father and grandfather served on the UPS board of trustees.
TAKE THAT, OLD BOYS

Lucinda Stewart ’92

Don’t let the girl-next-door smile fool you: Lucinda Stewart puts the power in powerhouse.

A former investment banker who received her M.B.A. from Northwestern’s Kellogg School of Management, Stewart has managed to do what few women have done before her: Put a sizable crack in one of the oldest dams in American business—the male-dominated venture-capital industry. The first and only female partner at the Kirkland, Wash.,-based OVP Venture Partners, Stewart has overseen multimillion dollar investments in the wireless, software, and digital media sectors since joining the 25-year-old firm in 2001. It’s an accomplishment that speaks to the shattering of one industry’s built-in glass ceiling—fewer than 10 percent of all venture capitalists are women—and a tireless, lifelong craving to, in her words, “Work hard, kick butt, and take names.”

Stewart says the seeds of her scrappiness (her favorite word) were planted early and deep while majoring in political science at UPS, where she reveled in an academic environment that “pushed your thinking, especially in Bill Haltom’s class. I was very inspired by my professors.”

Stewart, who also was captain of the UPS women’s soccer team and earned money for school during the summer working on an Alaska fishing boat, said she fully realized her potential for, well, scrappiness, just after graduation when it became painfully clear that even a 3.5 grade point average wasn’t enough when it came to scoring a decent first job. “I literally had no offers,” she says, also recalling how it felt to be “put in the deep end of the real world.”

But the great thing about a UPS education, says Stewart, is that it encouraged her—no, forced her—to create her own offramp out of college and into the business world, she says. “Trying harder because I was competing against Ivy Leaguers. Because I had to. This approach has stuck with me my entire career.”

It worked. Following a stint with the Chicago start-up, National Surgery Centers (“I begged my way in!”), and the completion of her M.B.A., Stewart was off to Wall Street where she cut her investment-banking chops. By 1999 she was back in the Northwest in her first venture-capital job at Frazier Healthcare in Seattle, where she worked for two years before joining OVP. Today, the married mother of two sons says she revels in “big ideas and helping shape new businesses” at OVP, while staying true to her earliest tendencies. “I still work like I’m the underdog,” she says, laughing. “I don’t think I’ll ever lose that scrappy mentality.”

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

Walter Howard Clifford ’34

Word for the day: polymath. Never heard of it? Howie Clifford is the living definition. He was a prize-winning newspaper photojournalist, a commercial airline pilot, a race-car driver, a sports announcer, a film producer, a public relations manager and consultant, a law officer, a U.S. Marine during World War II (serving in the Pacific), a ski instructor, the inventor of a water-ski safety binding, an editor, a publisher, and a writer of eight books, mostly on Alaska travel and history. He photographed every U.S. president from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Bill Clinton and has the pictures hanging on a wall in his Normandy Park, Wash., home. We’ve seen them.

But his most talked about adventure was the run for his life he made on Nov. 7, 1940, when the first Tacoma Narrows Bridge began collapsing beneath his feet.

Clifford was a rookie photographer for the Tacoma Ledger (now The News Tribune), and, when word came in to the newsroom that the brand new bridge had been closed to traffic in a windstorm and was undulating like a giant anaconda, the city editor sent him to get a picture.

Despite being cautioned not to take any chances, the ever-game Clifford proceeded to walk out onto “Gertie” as the bridge gave its galloping best.

“I got about 10 yards from the tower and stopped,” Clifford told Arches in 2005. He looked into his camera viewfinder and saw the center span buckle and then break apart.

“I pressed the trigger and started to run. I heard the bridge cracking and snapping behind me. The pavement dropped out from under me and then bounced back and knocked me to my knees. That happened over and over, slamming me and the camera against the pavement.”

Clifford, a former Stadium High School football player, says he tuckered the camera under his arm and charged low toward the Tacoma shore.

Not pleased with the pictures he’d taken, Clifford hurried, with torn trousers and bloody knees, to a bluff and took one more shot as the center section dropped into The Narrows. Within hours he was transmitting the famous photos of the collapse to media outlets around the world.