

# GRADUATE FACES UNUSUAL CHALLENGE

By Kelly Hancock  
Student Intern

Maggie (Sites) Gearing knows as well as anyone that making it through college has its challenges and triumphs.

During her sophomore year, Gearing found out she was pregnant. She took a semester off from school, saying that was a hard thing to do. She didn't want to delay graduating in any way, but there wasn't much choice. She told herself that she would come back and finish. After her daughter, Madison, was born she held to her word and came back.

Then, in March of 2003, she and her boyfriend found out that he would be sent overseas for the war. The news arrived on Wednesday. On Friday at 2 p.m., Jamie Gearing proposed with a paper ring, and they were married at 4 p.m. the same day. On Sunday, March 23, 2003, Jamie left for Kuwait.

Gearing gets a chance to talk to her husband on the phone about every two days, and she can talk to him online through an instant messenger.

"Madison will pound on the keys. That's her way of talking to him," Gearing noted. She also said that every night before bed, they sing a song about how much Madison's daddy loves her.



Madison with her father in uniform.

Gearing has faced the challenges of raising a daughter while keeping on top of her school work. Without the support of her family, she said she doesn't know if she would have made it.

Gearing has found that she needs to rely on other people more than she might like. She has a babysitter who watches Madison during the day. When Gearing has class or some other activity at night, her parents are willing to take care of Madison. The hardest task, she noted, is to make time for everything.

"Madison comes first," she said, "That means I don't get started on school work until after she goes to bed. I don't always get much sleep, but that's just the way it has to be."

When starting to plan for graduation, Gearing didn't intend to participate in the ceremony. She decided to do so because a faculty member, Dr. Natalie Abell, told her that it was important to feel the sense of accomplishment that comes with graduating. Gearing also wanted to show her daughter, along with everyone else, the success that she has achieved.

Even though it was not always easy, she stuck with it and finished what she started. Gearing is excited that she will finally be able to support her family in ways previously not possible. She said that graduation is a time to refocus on your goals and figure out what is most important in life.

She remarked, "Graduation is a chance to close one chapter in your book, so you can open another one."

Gearing will be one of 387 students who will graduate Dec. 6 at 2 p.m. in the Koehler Complex.

A total of 181 graduate degrees will be awarded. These include 82 master of business administration degrees, 60 master of arts in education degrees, 20



The Gearings with daughter, Madison

master of science in environmental, safety and health management degrees, 15 master of TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages) and bilingual education degrees and four master of arts in liberal studies degrees.

A total of 206 undergraduate degrees will be conferred, including 117 bachelor of science degrees, 22 bachelor of arts degrees, 33 bachelor of science in business management degrees, seven bachelor of science in environmental management degrees, three bachelor of science in criminal justice degrees and 24 associate of arts degrees.

The commencement speaker this fall is Dr. Jerry Mallett, director of the Mazza Museum and professor of education.

With the University since 1968, Dr. Mallett was instrumental in starting the Mazza Museum, the largest teaching gallery in the world specializing in the art of children's picture books, at UF in 1982.



In addition, the Honorable John P. Stozich, mayor of the City of Findlay, will receive an honorary doctor of public administration degree.

# FOR YOUR INFORMATION

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## 'AWESOME MEMORIES' CREATED AT GAME

By Kelly Hancock  
Student Intern

For one couple, Saturday, Oct. 25, 2003, will always be a special day.

The Oiler Brass Marching Band had just finished its last song of the halftime show for the UF football game that day. Then, the announcer called senior band member Sara Ruggles to the 50-yard line. Ruggles was a little confused.

"Am I getting an award or something?" she thought.

As she made her way to the center of the field, she saw her boyfriend, Adam Boutwell. From the moment she saw him, she knew exactly what was going on and couldn't help but wonder if she was having a dream.

As Boutwell took the referee's microphone, he professed his feelings for her. The crowd was really getting into it, too. They started yelling for him to get down on one knee. So he did just that, pulled out the small box, and asked the most important question of his life: "Sara, will you make me the happiest man alive? Will you marry me?"

"Right away, I planted a big one on him and gave him the biggest hug ever," Ruggles noted, "and then I said, 'Of course! YES, YES, YES!'"

The couple had started dating seven months earlier. After meeting at church, Boutwell took Ruggles to Olive Garden and a movie for their first date. Ruggles said she knew from the first date that Boutwell was the man she was going to spend the rest of her life with.

Boutwell remarked, "I had strong suspicions from the first date, but I'm



Sara Ruggles expresses her surprise when her boyfriend (now fiance) Adam Boutwell popped the question after the band performed at a recent football game.

not the type to dive into things too quickly."

The couple had previously discussed marriage and decided that when he wanted to pop the question, it should be just the two of them alone or around family and friends. Boutwell started making plans.

He said, "The football game was just something that occurred to me while I was brainstorming." After thinking about it for a while, he decided he liked that idea best.

He asked Ruggles' father for her hand in marriage and tried to persuade as many family members and friends to go to the game as possible, without letting them in on the secret. For the final

touch, Boutwell arranged for a limousine (complete with purple roses) to take the couple to dinner at The Bistro after the football game.

Currently, they are working out the details for the wedding. "We're looking at Sept. 18, as long as all the arrangements can be made," Boutwell noted.

Still, several weeks later, the two of them are overwhelmed with excitement. Both commented that they've told the story time after time, but they don't mind. It gives them the chance to keep reliving the moment.

"I still get really excited just thinking about it," noted Ruggles. She said, "Awesome memories," as she gazed into her fiance's eyes, "truly a blessing."

# HAL HOLBROOK SHARES LIFE STORY

By Kathryn J. Kelly  
Director of Marketing & Media Relations

“A man of integrity with a dedicated heart.” That’s the phrase Scott Hayes, director of the theatre program, used to describe veteran stage, screen and television actor Hal Holbrook during his visit to campus Nov. 6-7.

Born in Cleveland in 1925 and raised by his grandfather in Massachusetts, Holbrook is truly an Ohioan, having returned to the state to attend Denison University, and now



hailed as “The Voice of Ohio” for his work done for Ohio’s Bicentennial in *Portrait of America*.

During a public interview, Holbrook explained how he caught the acting bug after picking up an “easy” dramatics class at Culver Military Academy.

“We thought they [actors] were all strange, weird people,” said Holbrook. “I joined up, and in a very short time I really liked these people.”

His first stage experience was playing a caretaker in his high school’s production of *Seven Keys to Baldpate*.

He described, “When I went out on stage, there was this great, dark presence. It was the first time I had the sensation that people were listening to

me. I fell in love with that right away.”

While at Denison, Holbrook met his mentor, Ed Wright, who arranged for Holbrook and his first wife, Ruby, to create a show and take it on a 30-week tour to schools. One of the characters was to be Mark Twain.

In 1948, Holbrook and his wife toured the southwestern United States, performing 370 50-minute shows. They drove more than 30,000 miles in a station wagon. The man who loaned Holbrook the money for the station wagon also loaned him his first white suit for Twain, a possession Holbrook still has.

Holbrook then moved on to perform in Lakeside, Ohio. He was given an offer to tour schools for five more years, but an encounter with a woman on the street changed his direction.

“She said, ‘You must stop playing those schools, because, children, you are artists and you must be seen by audiences that appreciate you,’” he recalled.

With no money or family, Holbrook and his wife moved to New York City. He finally landed a part on the soap opera *The Brighter Day*. He played a wayward preacher’s son on the show for five years.

Because of his work on *The Brighter Day*, Holbrook found it difficult to get work on evening programs.

He decided to take a vacation to California and auditioned to do his Twain show at the Purple Onion nightclub. He got the two-week job and returned to New York to open his own club in Greenwich Village. There, he managed the business and performed Mark Twain in front of a number of celebrities, including Marlon Brandon and Ed Sullivan.

Eventually invited to audition for Sullivan’s show, Holbrook described the experience. “He asked, ‘So, how much

do you want, Hal?’ I had never thought about being paid. I just thought about being on the Ed Sullivan Show,” he said.

In time, Holbrook took his Mark Twain gig off Broadway. “I was just hoping to see the word ‘excellent’ in the New York Times,” he explained. “The show was in three acts. I was so scared my knees were shaking. Some of the critics picked up on that as part of the characterization,” he said. “By the second act, I stopped shaking and realized I was going to make it.”

And the reviews were glowing, with *Life Magazine* citing that Holbrook’s show had the best set of revues since *My Fair Lady*.

Now, 50 years later, Holbrook is still doing Twain. No other person has ever performed a single role for that long. He has always done his own make-up for the show, saying it allows him to generate the intellectual energy he needs before going on stage.

Not until he was 40 years old did Holbrook find his way to the big screen. His second wife got him a job in *The Group*, a film featuring Candace Bergman and Larry Hagman. More films followed, such as *Wall Street* and *The Firm*. His more recent television work includes *Designing Women*, which starred his wife, Dixie Carter.

A Tony Award winner who has been nominated 12 times for an Emmy, Holbrook has won five Emmys.

From his start in a borrowed suit to now more than 2,000 appearances as Twain, Holbrook is a true humanitarian, honored this month by President George W. Bush with the National Medal of Humanities for scholarly contributions.

Holbrook’s visit to campus was made possible due to an endowment fund established by Barb Hennigs. Performing Twain in Ohio, Holbrook chose to spend his time between shows at UF.

As Hayes explained, “This shows the character of this man.”

# THANKSGIVING NEARS, YET CAMPUS STAYS BUSY



Author, poet and entertainer Jack Prelutsky was the presenter for the Mazza Holiday Treat and Holiday Shop Grand Opening Nov. 6. He is the author of more than 60 books of original verse.



These students took time to write letters of support to the families of those who have been lost during the war.



Allen Pinkham, former tribal chairman of the Nez Perce Tribe, presented at UF on Nov. 12.



On a rainy afternoon, these students line up to receive free movie tickets at the Alumni Memorial Union.



Sophomores Nathan Taylor and Mike Brodwolf participate in the Fall Sponge Art Day Nov. 12 in the Alumni Memorial Union. The event was sponsored by the Office of Student Activities and Commuter Student Services.



Actor Hal Holbrook (right) pauses at a reception in his honor to be photographed with Scott Hayes and Barb Hennigs. Holbrook’s visit was made possible by the Don and Barb Hennigs Chair for Theatre Guest Artists, which was started earlier this year to bring to campus national or international actors to share their expertise with UF theatre students.