

DISTINGUISHING P R O F I L E S

by Ted Barnhill and Scott Randall



THE DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI OF 2005

On October 14, five Texas Exes received the highest honor the Association can bestow, the Distinguished Alumnus Award. Here is how they got there



Rodney Ellis MPAFF '77, JD '79

Rodney Ellis never stands still for long. Whether it's passing a bill in the Texas Senate or gaining support for a charitable cause, he rarely takes much time to relax or even sleep. For the state senator from Houston, even resting can get in the way of having a new experience, generating a new idea, or making a new friend.

"A lot of his friends are used to early a.m. calls," says wife Licia Green Ellis. "Five, six o'clock in the morning. E-mails. By the time you get [to your desk] in the morning, Rodney has been e-mailing you all night."

"I've seen him with presidents and presidents-to-be," says Houston mayor Bill White. "I've also been out in the neighborhoods with him. And he's comfortable with everybody."

Ellis was born in Houston in 1954. As the youngest of three children in a two-bedroom house, he developed his skill for debate.

"I'm very close to both my older brother and my older sister since we shared the same bathroom," he remembers, "all five folks in the household. So you learned a lot about sharing and getting along, and how to communicate because it was important in close quarters to be able to make your point."

With each parent working two jobs, Ellis could see the value of a college education. After high school, he spent a year attending Xavier University before earning his undergraduate degree from Texas Southern University.

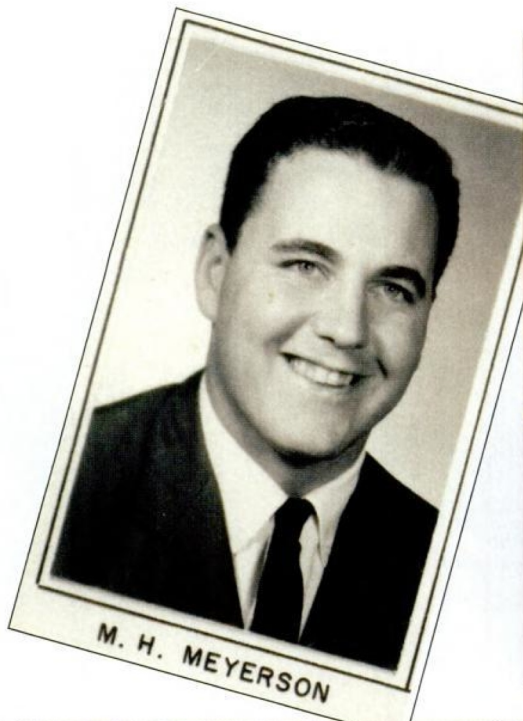
With an eye on a career in public service, Rodney earned his master's at the LBJ School of Public Affairs in 1977 and started UT law school later that year. Once he began working for Lieutenant Governor Bill Hobby, he admits law school didn't seem to have quite the same attraction.

Bill White says, "I think Senator Ellis may have an academic record at the UT law school: the highest GPA per hour of class attended."

Ellis earned his law degree in 1979. He served as legal council for Texas Railroad Commissioner Buddy Temple before catching the attention of U.S. congressman Mickey Leland. At age 27, Ellis became Leland's chief of staff and got a taste of national politics and global issues.

"It was just a great experience," says Ellis. "I think for the two years that I was his chief of staff, I never spent two weeks in a row in Washington. Either I'd come back to Houston, go somewhere else in the country, or somewhere in the world."

When a seat opened up on the Houston City Council, Ellis enlisted his family and political friends to support his first



Morton Meyerson

Morton Meyerson BA '61

If there's one thing Morton Meyerson enjoys most, it's a challenge — whether it's building a new company or turning an old electric utility building into his state-of-the-art home. No matter the scope or the subject matter, Meyerson takes on projects with unique gusto and enthusiasm.

"He's a very intuitive fellow," says friend Terry Pendleton, "with good instincts, and he's a risk taker."

"My mother told me when I was very young that you should not do anything illegal, immoral, or fattening, but you should take risks," says Meyerson, "and if you fail, it's okay."

Meyerson was born in 1938 in Fort Worth. His family faced early tragedy when his younger brother, Sandy, died when Mort was 10.

"I was old enough to understand the concept of death," says Meyerson, "but I was young enough that I didn't have any idea what the meaning of this was."

After his brother's death, Meyerson worked twice as hard in the classroom to make his parents proud. He learned to sing and play piano. And as he grew older, he was drawn to the benefits of joining the football team. "I was pretty shy and a piano player. And by the eighth grade I noticed that football players were more popular with girls, and I gave up the piano and started playing football."

A football injury kept Meyerson from joining the Air Force Academy. With strong math and science skills, he instead enrolled in UT's College of Engineering.

"They gave us a No. 4 pen," Meyerson remembers, "a big piece of paper, a gum eraser, and this template, and they said, 'Start drawing.' About two hours later I said, 'I'm out of here,' and I left and transferred to what was then arts and sciences, now liberal arts."

Outside of class, Meyerson had a full schedule with Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity, the Texas Cowboys, ROTC, Student Government, and the *a cappella* choir. He even served as president of the Texas Intercollegiate Students Association. But he gave up long-term political aspirations when he lost a run for student body president.

Meyerson emerged from UT with degrees in economics and philosophy and spent two years as an officer in the Army. He found his calling when another officer recommended he learn computer programming.

"The colonel said to him, 'Mort, I'm sending you to Fort Mammoth, New Jersey,'" Meyerson's mother, Bernice, remembers. "He said, 'What for?' The colonel replied, 'We've got a computer here, and no one knows how to operate it.'"

After the Army, Meyerson went to work in the insurance business for his father, Brudus. "I thought he would take over the business," says his father. "I had it built up. I had a lot of clients. I had an agency. He told me he wasn't interested."

Meyerson instead took his computer skills to work for Bell Helicopters. He'd just been offered a promotion and a great future, when he was lured away by Ross Perot to work at a small company called Electronic Data Systems.

"I was the 54th employee at EDS and had no idea what I was getting into," he remembers. "But I liked the people. I liked the philosophy. They offered me 800 shares, stock options. And I said, 'I'll give it a roll.' Of course my mother declared me insane."

Meyerson's mother says, "He said, 'I didn't know whether to be a little thing at the big company or a big thing at the little company. So I've made up my mind. I'm gonna be a big thing at the little company. I'll grow with the company.' I said, 'Well that's the craziest thing I've ever heard.'"

Meyerson began managing EDS' five-person health insurance division in 1966. Medicare and Medicaid had just been created, and, over the next two-and-a-half years, Meyerson's team grew to more than 1,500 employees. "We couldn't hire enough people. Couldn't get enough desks and couldn't get enough computers. Couldn't get enough tapes. It was just chaos. I loved it."

By 1978, Meyerson was named president of EDS.

He retired in 1986. While concentrating on investing in new companies, he spent two years consulting and mentoring a young Michael Dell, helping him build his computer company. Then, in 1992, when Ross Perot began his bid for president, he asked Meyerson to run Perot Systems. Meyerson



Jim Mulva

agreed, but took a whole new approach to leading the company.

"I just felt that there was a better way to do it, and you could work less, be more family oriented, be more community oriented, and still be financially successful. I wanted to see if that was possible."

Rick Slaven says, "I think he believes it's better to be more informal, more available, more accessible. And that promotes a more straight-talking relationship with people than a sort of bureaucratic situation."

Under Meyerson's new leadership, annual revenue rose from \$160 million to nearly \$1 billion in six years.

Meyerson retired again in January of 1998, but tragedy struck when his son, David, died later that year. Meyerson took some time to reassessed his priorities.

"It's not an epiphany. It's a sudden shift of what's important. And that's what happened. Since that time I have paid a lot more attention and spent a lot more time with my grandchildren and surviving daughters because I know that's important and can't be replaced."

He started the Morton H. Meyerson Family Tzedakah Fund, supporting humanitarian efforts in Texas and Israel as well as musical organizations and medical research.

Pendleton says, "I think he feels like he's a very fortunate man. He's made a lot of his breaks, but because of that and because of his attitude about why we're here, he feels like it's time to give back, and I think that's what drives him more than anything."

At UT, Meyerson has served on the Commission of 125 and has funded professorships in the College of Fine Arts and the McCombs School of Business. He has also endowed a chair in the College of Liberal Arts and lent his singing talents to a UT-based choral group.

Since 2004, Meyerson has been a "non-executive chairman" of E2M Partners. The electric utility building he calls home is right across the street from his office. He spends most of his time working on his foundation and being with his parents, daughters Leslie and Marti, and five grandchildren.

Meyerson's mother says, "He made it seem so easy. It was really amazing. It seemed like it was his fate and fortune that those things would happen to him."

Meyerson is a unique businessman whose compassion for others and zest for life is interwoven with everything he does. "In business you can say, 'I want the customer to win, and I want to win, and I want the environment to win, and I want the community to win. I want it all.' And that's possible."

Jim Mulva BBA '68, MBA '69

As a CEO in the high-stakes business of global oil, Jim Mulva keeps a cool head. For this softspoken leader, there's no greater goal than the success of the company he's been with his entire career.

Longtime friend Bryan Whitworth says, "It's a very competitive industry with major international players of signifi-



cant financial magnitude, and all he wants to do is win."

Mulva was born in 1946 far from the Texas oil industry. Growing up in Green Bay, he preferred aviation and got a job at an airport in the eighth grade.

"I know when I first joined Phillips petroleum company, one of the old-timers said, 'You're relatively young. Son, you will never learn how it is to pump gas.' And I said, 'Well, I used to fuel airplanes and when it's -20 or -30 degrees in a blizzard, you learn how to pump gas.'"

Mulva took his first solo flight at age 16 and came to UT on a Navy ROTC scholarship in 1966. His father's career in banking led him to major in business finance.

"When I went to school, the idea was to study business. Maybe someday it could be applicable to me as a career. But of course everything was earmarked towards studying, graduating, and becoming an officer in the Navy," he says.

While enjoying a swim the summer before his junior year, Mulva met a lifeguard named Miriam. Before finishing business school, he had successfully orchestrated his first merger.

"The second time I asked her to go out, she said she had another date. So I said 'You need to break it.' And she did. So we went out, and we pretty well knew pretty quickly that we were ultimately going to marry each other."

But marriage would have to wait until after college. So Mulva earned his bachelor's degree, received his master's in finance a year later, and married Miriam in the summer of 1969.

In 1970, the Navy stationed Mulva on the island of Bahrain. There he saw his future, but not in the military.

"You could see pretty clearly that things were changing politically. The British were withdrawing from east of Suez. The Americans were moving into that part of the world. We could tell the importance of oil ... at some point in time."

After four years in the Navy, Mulva looked for work at all of the world's top oil companies. Phillips Petroleum impressed him the most when he landed an interview with the Treasury Department. They asked Mulva how high he planned to go in the company. "I kind of decided you don't wanna shoot too low and not too high, so I said, 'Well, maybe someday I