Tone gets taste of fame in PBS Pill documentary

By Jennifer Lee
Staff Writer

Students who revel in educational TV shows over may have caught an interesting episode of American Experience, PBS’ highly-acclaimed documentary series, a few weeks ago. “American Experience: The Pill,” which documented the history, development and impact of the contraceptive pill when it was approved for sale by the FDA in 1960, was interesting not only because of its subject matter but also because it featured a Tech professor, Dr. Andrew Tone.

Tone is a history professor in the School of History, Technology and Society, and also serves as its Director of Graduate Studies. She is also active in women’s issues at Tech: she has lectured at events for the Women’s Student Union, as well being a faculty mentor for the Women, Science and Technology Learning Community.

A dual citizen of the United States and Canada, Tone did her undergraduate work in history at Queens University in Ontario, Canada, graduating with her bachelor’s degree in 1986. “My original plan was to go to law school,” she said. “And I did go to law school, [but I] dropped out after a couple of weeks to go with what I really liked, which was history.” Therefore, she ended up at Emory, focusing on women’s history, social history and industrial history, and graduated with her doctorate in Dec. 1992.

While Tone was finishing her dissertation at Emory, she did some volunteer work at a women’s health clinic in Atlanta, which led her to think about writing. “I think it was the merger of the scholarly focus on women’s history and thinking about birth control as a technology… along with the hands-on experience of working in a women’s clinic that made me think, well, I really need to merge these two,” she explained.

Since then, she published her first book in 1997, and edited another, Controlling Reproduction: An American History, in the same year. Her work on these books was a stepping stone to her next book.

“Up until that point, a lot had already been written on the history of birth control, but it focused primarily on reproductive rights activists such as Margaret Sanger, and lawmakers and physicians,” she explained. “I wanted to write a history that I thought would add something new, that would focus more on how people across time encountered these technologies. So [my book] looks at birth control as a technology, but [also] as a social experience from the 1870s to the 1970s.”

Devices and Desire: A History of Contraceptives in America was published in late May 2001, and was ultimately responsible for her involvement in "The Pill.”

Tone was contracted soon after her book’s publication by the director, writer and producer of “The Pill,” Chana Gazit, an award-winning filmmaker who has also done...
teaching commitments. Also, McMath said, it can be difficult for professors to be objective when writing about their own university, so the writing could be viewed as a "puff piece."

After consulting other colleagues in the department, McMath and four other professors, including Ronald Bayor, went back to Petit and told him that they would write the book on a few conditions, which they did not think Petit would agree to. The conditions were: a decrease in the team’s teaching and research commitments, full editorial control over the project, funding and complete access to the school’s records.

Instead of the "no" the team was expecting, Petit said, "when can you start?"

The project was unique in that it combined professors with overlapping interests in the history of technology, the south, education and urbanization.

In just two short years, the team had completed the research and writing and "Engineering the New South: Georgia Tech, 1885-1985" was published in 1985. Further along in his time at Tech, McMath was chosen to be one of two associate deans to help organize the Ivan Allen College during its formation.

After a couple of years, McMath went on to become Chair of the School of History, Technology and Society. In 1996, he traveled to Italy as a Fulbright Lecturer. While in Italy, McMath learned that President Clough had created the position of Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies and Academic Affairs. McMath applied for the position after he returned to Tech in the fall and subsequently became "the lucky winner" of the position.

As Vice Provost, McMath oversees student academic services and coordinates campus wide initiatives designed to improve the learning environment for students. One of his major projects right now is the building and the development of the Undergraduate Learning Center, which will begin construction as soon as funding is secured from the state.

The learning center will be the new home of freshman science labs, a few classes, academic support offices, tutoring assistance, advising and other information for students. "It’s both an academic building and part of the library informations system and kind of a gathering place for students right in the center of campus," said McMath.

McMath still continues to teach history courses as well, despite his busy administrative schedule. He notes that teaching is very rewarding and satisfying to him, and he is usually happiest in the day after he’s come out of teaching one of his classes. His classes have included a class on the history of Georgia Tech (taught twice in 1985 and 1999), history of the south courses and special topics classes.

His current course is a history class designed to help students understand political and social affairs in the United States from 1960s to the present.

"Personally it’s very satisfying to me to interact and teach undergraduates," said McMath. McMath said he considers working with students the most rewarding part of his job. During his tenure at Tech, McMath has received numerous awards including the George W. Griffith Award for Outstanding Teaching, the Dean James E. Dull Administrator of the Year Award and the Governor’s Award for the Humanities.

Outside of Georgia Tech, McMath is currently collaborating with his wife, Linda, a public school administrator in Dekalb County, on a historical travel guide to the eastern shore of Virginia and Maryland.
Double the challenge: the trials of being a woman and a minority

By Joshua Cuneo
Staff Writer

Georgia Tech's growing ethnic diversity can be traced back at least to 1961, when African-Americans — both men and women — were admitted on campus for the first time.

Following the Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education that eventually led to the desegregation of every public school in the country, the Georgia Tech administration began working quietly behind the scenes to prepare for peaceful desegregation. This action was deemed necessary due to the riotous behavior at Little Rock, UGA, and other southern schools when they were forcefully desegregated.

In the fall of 1961, three African-American men were enrolled with little fuss, the press was ordered to stay off campus and life resumed as usual, making Georgia Tech the only southern public school in history to peacefully desegregate without a court order.

Yet despite Tech's general acceptance of ethnic diversity, the campus is hardly a safe haven from the discrimination still felt by the African-American community, as Adria Miller, a senior Building Construction major, and Tiffany Robinson, a fifth-year Civil Engineering major, can attest.

"My PL told me that guys at Tech have 'yellow fever.'"

Tina Denq
Second-year IE

"Just because of her ethnicity, she said. "I actually feel that I relate best to other dual degree/transfer students," said Robinson. "Due to the number of transfer [students] from the Atlanta University Center, these students tend to be African-American."

Miller concurred. "What I have learned, though, is that it is really a cultural difference, not an ethnic difference," she said. "I cannot relate to certain people because we do not do the same things or value the same things or cannot relate to racial issues."

The integration crisis of the mid-20th century was the most dramatic shift in the ethnic diversity of Tech's student body. The assimilation of other cultures was more subtle, and because Tech opened its doors to women before many other minorities, the arrival and increase of women of diverse ethnic back-grounds was just as subtle. Sally Lam Woo, for instance, became the first Asian woman to graduate from Tech in 1966, but the event didn't make headlines as strongly as some of the previous events for women or ethnically diverse students did. Yet the diversity has grown, and today it's readily apparent in both gender and students.

"Part of that diversity comes with the different challenges each ethnic group faces. Whereas African-Americans have to face negative prejudices from some of their classmates and professors, for instance, Asians and Asian-Americans often have the opposite problem."

"The first thing I remember about someone noticing my 'Asian-ness' was my PL, who told me that guys at Tech have 'yellow fever,'" said Tina Denq, an industrial engineering junior.

Nevertheless, Denq feels that Tech still harbors its own share of negative prejudice to all minorities, including her own, and to women. "I mean, I've heard of guys on campus making the gross mistake of spitting on a fellow (female) student just because of her ethnicity," she said. "So ignorance is still a big problem at Tech and nationally as well." She also said that Asian women suffer under their own prejudice.

"I think [some] may expect me to be a 'good girl'...[because] Asian girls are submissive...Even the fact that I listen to Metallica surprises some people." Nevertheless, she said, "I think Tech is still more accept-
“We’d like to bring you up to New York to film you for this documentary. Would you be game?” And I love New York City, so of course I’d be game.

Andrea Tone

HTS Professor and Director of Graduate Studies

Tone from page 17 documentaries on Native American rights and environmental history. “I remember, literally, the phone ringing, picking it up and a woman saying, ‘Hi, I’m Chona Gazit; I’m going to be doing a film on the pill for PBS’s American Experience,’ which, at least in the hierarchy of historical documentaries, is probably right at the top,” she said.

“So it’s a huge honor to be asked by anyone associated with them to be involved. They said, we really, really like your book, and we just want to talk to you more about how you would approach this film.”

Tone was the film’s lead historical advisor, and much of the film was drawn directly from her book. However, from the beginning, she said, “It was very clear that [the director and I] weren’t always going to see eye to eye on the meaning of the pill.”

She explained, “For instance, I think one of the flaws of the film is that they portray the 1950s as a time when all women were desperate—that there was nothing available. Then the pill comes along, and... women’s liberation ensues; women can finally become doctors and lawyers. [But] one of the points of my book in fact was to show that throughout American history, even when birth control was illegal or taboo, people used it.”

“The technologies were there, a lot of these methods were perfectly safe and reliable and people weren’t nearly as ignorant or underpowered as people might think,” she added, citing the condom, as well as women’s ability to negotiate with their partners, as effective examples of "birth control.”

Despite her differences with the director, Tone was also asked to be a filmed historian for the documentary. “I wasn’t sure that my politics were going to work out with theirs,” she said, “but in the end, they simply said, ‘We’d like to bring you up to New York to film you for this documentary. Would you be game?’ And I love New York City, so of course I’d be game.”

The shoot took place at the end of June 2001, lasted for a draining four and a half hours—and was during a heat wave in New York. “They had air conditioning, but they had to turn it off because of audio problems,” Tone recalled. “So I’d be under these hot lights, and I’d just be dripping.”

“It’s interesting to see how films are made,” she said. “What you don’t realize, probably, when you see documentaries, is how much interview time there is initially.”

Another interesting aspect was when the opinions of Tone and the director clashed during the interview. “When I was being filmed, I think there were times when I was sort of prompting, and I remember looking at her at one point and knowing where she wanted me to go and saying, ‘I can’t say that, that’s not what I think,’” Tone recalled, though she added, “They were okay with that; they just moved on.”

American Experience also hired Tone to be a critic of the film, and she, along with some graduate students at Tech, were shown the very first version of “The Pill.”

“There were some things that were factually incorrect,” she said, “and I wrote a very long, seven-page critique of it, and to their credit, they were able to address about half the substantive concerns I had.”

“And a lot of things they chose not to address,” she added, “and that’s their artistic license. I think the film a little more celebratory of this technology than I would be, but I wasn’t my film to make, it was just my film to contribute to.”

Overall, however, she was happy with the work she did. “I thought in the end, it was a really good product. I don’t think there’s such a thing as a perfect documentary, but [‘The Pill’] came close to the mark.”

After the documentary had finished production, Tone was sent a copy of the final film and got to view it at home.

“It is scary to see yourself on TV for the first time,” she laughed. Having started a radio tour for the book, it wasn’t the first time she had talked publicly about her views on birth control, but television, she conceded, was different.

“I remember bringing the film home, putting it on, forcing my husband to watch it and not really being sure of what I was going to think.”

“Now that I’ve been on TV a couple times, I’m not as nervous about it,” Tone said.

Of course, her work with the documentary also affected her in more profound ways.

“One of the really satisfying things about... working on documentaries is that, as professors, we often wonder what our mission is here: is it limited to educating people in the classroom? The great thing about doing a documentary,” she explained, “is the opportunity to bring an educational message to a larger audience. Millions of people saw ‘The Pill.’

Now, she says, “I would never go back to thinking about writing only for a handful of experts. I loved it—I loved the opportunity to be more of a public intellectual.”

“...n fact,” she said, beaming, “I just got an email from [the director] this morning. I’m going to see her in New York City next week, and she wants to figure out a way to work with me again on my next project.”


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Dr. Tone
HTS Professor

Column from page 14 offering more languages, it still lags behind other major universities in both the number of languages offered and the levels of advancement offered within the various programs. In my Spanish class this spring, the professor had to change the format of the course because too many students enrolled, making spoken presentations logistically impossible.

“When speaking is even more important than listening, students need a class size that allows them to participate often, which usually means fewer than twenty students. The professors in the department are doing a fantastic job dealing with the present challenges, but they need more attention from the Tech community to further improve the program.”

I’ve found language study to be both an extremely challenging and an extremely rewarding experience. Obviously, if the rest of Tech students didn’t agree, they wouldn’t be clamoring for registration overloads or crowding into cramped classrooms to have the chance for language study.

In engineering, science, and even INTA majors, speaking a foreign language (or not) can make or break a chance at a promotion or a pool international assignment. When my study abroad group met a Tech alumnus who worked in Belgium, he lamented that he never a good opportunity to learn language skills in college. If you think that learning French is hard now, try doing it in ten or fifteen years from now when you’ve forgotten how to study.

Without better funding and support, more class offerings and smaller class sizes, Tech students are bound to fall behind when competing in an increasingly global corporate world. Tech has always benefited from having an edge in educational quality—we can hardly afford to remain so vastly outstripped in the area of foreign language education.
Winner of the Tech Up Close contest receives a *Technique* T-shirt and a coupon for a free student combo at Li’l Dino’s.

Last week’s Tech Up Close:
Chimney top behind the French building.

Last week’s winner:
Anup Shah

Crosswords Answers from Page 24:

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AELINA, STOLEN, EDIT
ALONSO, DAS, LIES
ALLOY, IMP, DENDRIA
HOW, AND, OOD, DENG
STOOL, KAHUNA, LENO
TOMpson, CARD, ONES
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MEN, ANN, N,O,
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Women from page 19

ing, though, as I haven’t had any difficulties finding acceptance.

This may be true in part to the large Asian population at Tech—Asians comprise the largest minori-
ty on campus. Their presence has brought about wide-scale support for their cultural heritage, includ-
ing the establishment of the prominent Chinese Student Association, which gives students like Deng a forum through which she can meet others of her ethnic background. This is important, she said, since “on a very personal level, Asians still are better able to understand my feelings…There are some cultural values that pretty much only Chi-
inese people really understand. Subtle differences in our upbringing, things like that.” She listed com-
munity, competition, ambition, a higher scholastic achievement that often the source of bragging rights, a smaller but still significant minority on campus. “My parents came to Ameri-
ca because there weren’t good enough opportu-
nities for Pales-
tinians where they grew up,” said Stacy Farah, a second-year chemical engi-
neering major. “That definitely makes me appreci-
ate what I have more, and I work really hard to take advantage of that.”

Farah is particularly optimistic about Tech’s acceptance of ethnic diversity, noting that “after Septem-
ber 11, I got a few odd looks when I said that I was Palestinian, but not by any friends of mine, so their opin-
ions didn’t really matter much to me. [Tech has] a very diverse popula-
tion that is very accepting. I talked to Middle Eastern students at UGA who had some rough times af-
ter September 11, a difference that, interesting enough, parallels the differences in atti-
dude between Tech and UGA during the integ-
ration crisis. And as a woman, Farah faces difficulties similar to many other women at Tech. “I’ve met a lot of guys who are under the impression that ‘girls just aren’t good at math’ and other things that can be discouraging,” she said. Though, “for the most part, I think people at this school are pretty open-
minded. I haven’t had any gender issues as of yet.”

Stacy Farah
Second-year ChE

“I think people at this school are pretty open-minded. I haven’t had any gender issues as of yet.”

FOCUS

cause of its sensitivity.

Therefore, the goal of Take Back the Night is to raise awareness for women and men alike.

Heather Thompson, second-year Management major, said that rape and sexual assault are “the kind of thing that people hide and don’t talk about.”

She added that “if you can get people to participate, it’s a good way to get folks aware of negative events in society.”

Although many students are un-
aware that the event exists, when they are informed, they believe that it is a positive thing for Georgia Tech to host. Most students agreed that the event will be informative and perhaps get people who may be affected by assault to come forward and seek help.

More information can be found at www.cyberbuzz.gatech.edu/wom.

TB

from page 17

sliver box
www.nique.net/silver

6 parts for the cardboard tube samurai. What will happen next????

all I ask is that one test is rea-
sionally similar to the prac-
tice test instead of jacking the difficulty to insane

You know what we need here at this school! Strippers. And prostitutes, you know, school sponsored strippers and pros-

titutes. I would love coming here then lol Or is Solid Gold that for the pampa-
dered beyond belief ath-
letes?

That’s it they need a solid gold for every guy that comes here New dragon ball z episodes start next week bitches. They waited two years to show the last 9 episodes so you better enjoy it

Brian needs a girlfriend :) Laid-back, full-sized SWM seeks:SF for anime, video games and online chats. Linux, C-

programming, perl experience a definite plus.

Dragaon Ball Gt starts in the fall on Toonami:D Check the scheduling of Bike Weck and Biketoberfest. Co-

occurrence that the fall and spring break for Tech occur at the same time?

The reason ticket prices have risen is to offset the cost of building too many theatres too fast. Maybe both Kleumper and Matthias should’ve done their homework. Whew. did good on that phys-

ics 2 test. I can breathe easy…for now

I really hate tests. I really hate studying. The smoking ban is going pre-

vent us from covering up mari-
juana smoke with cigarette smoke in the comfort and con-

venience of our own rooms. Worst pick up line I’ve EVER heard. “Oh baby, oh baby, I want to be your derivative, so I can be tangent to your curves.” The Faca wolf tried fugle

Wanna bet that Hooter’s air-

line goes “bust”?