

**ASSOCIATION OF RICE ALUMNI
MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD NOMINATION FORM**

Nominee Melissa F. Kean Phone _____ Fax _____
Address 3631 Meadowlake also Rice U., MS-44 (Woodson Research Center)
City/State/Zip Houston, TX 77027 Rice Class Year(s) 2000
Degrees/Majors/Years/Institutions B.A., Iowa State Univ., M.A., Creighton Univ.; Ph.D., Rice, 2000
Occupation/Professional Field University Hi
Current Title/Position University Historian, Rice University

The Meritorious Service Award is designed to recognize Rice alumni, faculty, staff, or friends who rendered significant, sustained voluntary contributions of energy, time, and creativity towards the advancement of the university. The following criteria will be considered:

- a) enrichment of some aspect of the Rice community through ongoing dedication and support
- b) commitment to the lifelong vitality of the University

Please attach a letter of recommendation describing the merits of the nominee. Consider the following question in support of the above criteria: **Does this candidate exemplify someone who would be described as a tireless ambassador or emissary on Rice's behalf.**

Please note that incomplete nomination forms cannot be considered.

Nominated by John B. Boles Phone 713-348-5546 Fax 713-348-4383
Address History Dept. MS 42
City/State/Zip Rice Univ

Please list two other people (i.e., colleague, classmate) whom you have asked to write a letter of support to further validate your nomination.

Name Kathy Matthews Relationship colleague
Address Biochemistry & Cell Biology, MS-140 Rice U. Phone x 4871
former Dean of Natural Sciences
Name Stacey Barnes Relationship colleague
Address former Dean of Engineering Phone x 5484

Please return nomination material to:

Lauren Linn
Assistant Director
Office of Alumni Affairs – MS 520
Rice University
P.O. Box 1892
Houston TX 77251-1892

or fax to: 713-348-5210

THE JOURNAL OF SOUTHERN HISTORY

John B. Boles, Editor
Rice University
Journal of Southern History - MS 45
P.O. Box 1892
Houston, Texas 77251-1892
Tel.: (713) 348-6039
Fax: (713) 348-4383
E-mail: jsh@rice.edu
boles@rice.edu

October 2, 2012

Laureates Nominations
Office of Alumni Affairs
Rice University, MS-520
P. O. Box 1892
Houston, TX 77251-1892

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to enthusiastically nominate Melissa F. Kean for the ARA's Meritorious Service Award, which she richly deserves. I have known Melissa from her very first days at Rice. She appeared in my class just more than twenty years ago, in the spring of 1992, telling me that she and her husband had just moved to Houston and she needed to take one course at Rice to transfer back to Creighton to complete her MA degree there. Later I learned that she enrolled in my course in the history of the American South because when she saw the title, she laughed out loud at just the idea of such an exotic class. After all, she was from Chicago by way of Iowa, and the South seemed a strange and faraway place. Well, she was hooked. She loved the course, the readings, and the idea of southern history, and she ended up staying to earn a PhD in history and wrote a wonderful dissertation on the desegregation of the South's flagship universities. In fact, even before she graduated, she had served on Rice's strategic planning committee that was established by President Gillis. With her PhD in hand, she never left Rice, being hired first to write a history of the School of Continuing Studies (published as a booklet) and then a history of the Jones School (not published but used as an internal planning document). Then she began work on what was intended to be a history of the Schools of Engineering and Natural Sciences at Rice. In these various capacities Melissa came to know a number of faculty across the campus (and they came to know and trust her); she learned how the university worked; she came to understand the culture, the ethos of Rice; and she was sufficiently informed about the history of higher education in the United States to be able to place Rice events in a broad, sophisticated perspective. As a result, she was constantly called on by deans and the president, for example, serving as the administrative assistant on campus for the McKensy report on athletics at the end of the Gillis era. Everyone understood that she was highly competent, judicious, and cooperative, with the good of the university always foremost in her mind.

Perhaps her most visible role was played in 2003 when she served as the administrative director of the presidential search that produced our current president. I know from others who worked with her on that search how devotedly she served the university, how diligently she researched possible candidates, how deftly and delicately she handled the secrecy and close negotiation that followed. Then once President

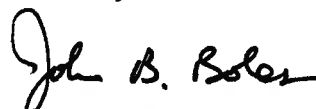
Leebron was announced, Melissa worked to make the transition as smooth as possible, helping President Leebron arrange the large number on interviews and meetings he held in the spring of 2004 before officially taking office on July 1 of that year. Simply put, Melissa helped him come to know Rice University.

Shortly after President Leebron took office, he appointed Melissa the University Historian. In the ultimate sense the expectation is that Melissa will write a comprehensive history of the university, but in the meantime, she is doing all the background work that lies behind such a history. She began systematically assisting Lee Pecht and his colleagues in the Woodson Research Collection collect and build up the Rice archives. Here is another place that Melissa's winning personality and her familiarity with professors and administrators across the campus served her well. Again and again people would contact her—retiring faculty or administrators, those who discovered they knew where valuable papers were stored, those who became aware of the value of some of their records because of Melissa's efforts—and ask her to come gather up, sort out, and otherwise recover and archive invaluable documents relating the history of the university. Quickly everyone on campus who had a question about the history of some person or practice or program at Rice learned to call her, and Melissa's time was literally gobbled up providing answers. This unfortunately got in the way of completing the comprehensive history, but it was incredibly valuable to those posing the questions—development personnel, the president's office, members of the public affairs office. An unanticipated result of fielding such a variety of questions is that Melissa's knowledge of Rice, and—just as important—where to look to find the answers, expanded exponentially.

As preparations for the Centennial celebration began, Melissa found her expertise called upon again and again, to help complete the timeline, for details on the Centennial banners, for interviews on the documentary film. And then she began her history blog, which quickly became the most popular aspect of the Centennial preparations. Tens of thousands of hits attest to the success of her skill at putting things in historical context, in interpreting the meaning of a fugitive photograph, in turning a seemingly small story into an insightful window into Rice's past. She has literally brought history to life for many readers. The talks she gives around campus, always enlivened by her wit and humor and illustrated with apt photographs, have made a significant contribution to awareness of the key turning points in Rice's history as well as warm, human-interest aspects of that story.

In a variety of ways Melissa has gone far beyond her various job descriptions; she has become an ambassador for Rice to the larger community and to its internal community, and she has immeasurably built up the archives at Rice. She has raised historical awareness, boosted morale, inspired many to pay more attention to the records and artifacts of the past. She is friends to countless Rice faculty, staff, and community members. In short, Melissa Kean has made and continues to make a remarkable, dare I say unique, contribution to Rice. Having known her from the beginning of her association at Rice, having worked with her on a number of projects, having witnessed firsthand so many of her positive contributions to the university, I am privileged to nominate her for the Association of Rice Alumni's Meritorious Service Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "John B. Boles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

John B. Boles

William Pettus Hobby Professor of History



RICE

KATHLEEN S. MATTHEWS
STEWART MEMORIAL PROFESSOR

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October 1, 2012

Laureates Nominations
Office of Alumni Affairs
Rice University, MS-520
P. O. Box 1892
Houston, TX 77251-1892

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing with unbounded enthusiasm to support the nomination of Dr. Melissa Kean for the Meritorious Service Award of the Association of Rice Alumni. I have known Melissa since serving with her on a university-wide strategic planning committee under President Malcolm Gillis — when she was still a graduate student. Melissa's clear thinking and deep understanding of the academic world were impressive at that stage in her career, and those qualities are all-the-more evident in her work as University Historian.

Melissa's understanding of universities, particularly private universities, began with her thesis that examined the process of desegregating the leading private institutions in the South. But her interest in the more personal features of Rice — that ultimately impact who we are as a university community— was fueled as she worked to understand the history of engineering and science at Rice at the request of the then-deans. She has an exceptional ability to talk with the faculty who were leaders in past decades and to elicit from them insight and understanding of what happened and, more importantly, why it happened. She then can trace the impact and imprint of those events and decisions on the subsequent directions of the university.

Melissa, after working to coordinate the search for Rice's seventh President, David Leebron, was appointed as University Historian (and for this Centennial period, the Centennial Historian), a position for which she was uniquely qualified. As founding occupant, she has set a standard that will be difficult for those that follow in this role. She has explored all the features of the University — from the documents in the archives to the people that have populated its faculty, staff, and student body. No question is too small to explore, and she has exceptional determination to find those details that define who we are and what events brought us to this point in time.

As we look back 10-20 years from now, Melissa's Centennial blog, *Rice History Corner*, will provide insights about the institution and its people that will transcend even this exceptional celebration. She has an amazing capacity to capture the detail that is hinted in some document or photograph in the Rice University Archives or a small piece of

architecture that rouses her curiosity and to call our attention to a feature of our environment or our history that escaped notice. These “calls to attend” are an important reminder that we miss many elements in our surroundings, and Melissa’s ability to place these remembrances in a clear historical context reminds us that someday perhaps someone will be looking at something we left behind and trying to understand what was in the mind of those at that time.

Melissa is not only able to write with a voice that delights the reader, her talks on a variety of topics — from President Pitzer’s impact on Rice to the “Masterson Affair” — are spell-binding. She speaks from her mind and her heart, and she is able to capture an audience and take them into a different era of our shared history. This capacity to bring history to life and give it an urgency and excitement creates a sense of enthusiasm about who we are and where we have been as an institution.

Beyond these features that are so important to understanding Rice and ourselves, Melissa is funny, warm, engaging, and able to draw information out of someone who does not even know they are sharing crucial data! She is unique and has provided significant service to Rice in her efforts to understand our history and, most importantly, share it broadly with us as a community.

I am delighted to support the nomination of Melissa Kean for the Meritorious Service Award of the Association of Rice Alumni with high enthusiasm. Her work will be important to this institution for decades to come, and this award in the Centennial year seems especially fitting for our Centennial Historian! If I can provide any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathleen Matthews". The script is cursive and fluid.

Kathleen S. Matthews, Ph.D.
Stewart Memorial Professor



Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

October 4, 2012

To: Awards Committee, Association of Rice Alumni

From: C. Sidney Burrus, Professor Emeritus and Rice Class of 1957

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "C. Burrus", is placed to the right of the "From:" line.

Subj.: Support of Melissa Kean for the Meritorious Service Award

I want to express my very strong support for Dr. Melissa Kean to receive the ARA Meritorious Service Award this year. When I was dean of engineering, I asked Prof. John Boles who could write a history of the Rice School of Engineering. Without hesitation, he suggested Melissa Kean who was finishing up her Ph.D. in history at the time. After meeting her, I was absolutely convinced that she had the skills, the passion, and the personality to create a legitimate scholarly history of the school of engineering that would be accessible to the educated public and would be of real value to the larger community of American higher education.

In less than a year, she learned what a complex and fascinating job she had started. She also learned that the history of the school of engineering could not be written without a history of the school of natural science and that could not be written without a history of Rice itself. So, I lost my writer and Rice gained a superb university historian.

First, Melissa Kean is a scholar. She knows what the practice of historical scholarship is about and is extraordinarily talented in that practice. Second, she loves higher education. That was developed in her research for her Ph.D. dissertation on the desegregation of four southern private universities. Third, she loves Rice. That started while she was a graduate student and has matured in her present position where she has access to all sorts of people and information, present and past. And, finally, she is a sensitive, caring person who can draw the line between "telling the whole truth" and protecting people's privacy and their feelings.

As an alumnus, a long-time faculty member, and a dean, I have seen the wide variety of ways in which people make their contributions and have their impact on Rice University. Melissa Kean has made one of the most important and long-lasting contributions to Rice of anyone I have known or known about. I recommend her for the ARA Meritorious Service Award in the highest possible terms.