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**After suffering a life changing event, one woman's journey to put the pieces back together ends up at UT, with thousands of students in tow**

Walk around the University of Texas at Austin campus and mention these three things to anybody you can find: "Cleveland, MIS, or business fair." Just try it; you may be surprised at the responses.

"Whoa, Cleveland!?" Johnny Lopez, a government major, anxiously shouts. "Her class was absolutely killer; it was too hard to accomplish anything in that class!"

"Oh no, don't ever take that class," Sarah Johnson, another student hurriedly says on her way to class. "It's unbelievably ridiculous! It really borders on unfair."

But Lynda Cleveland, professor of the management information systems class in Red McCombs School of Business, knows a thing or two about fairness and hardship. As an internationally known public speaker in 1984, she experienced one event that changed her life forever: a horrific automobile accident with a semi-trailer that claimed 70 to 80 percent of her memory.

"I went from a six figure income to nothing in 60 seconds," Cleveland said. "I wore a body brace for six and a half years."

Cleveland suffered several incidents following the accident, from financial troubles to thoughts of how to live the rest of her life, all as her fiance watched on.

"I just got engaged the month before, we both enjoyed the outdoors," Cleveland said. "I broke it off though; it just wasn't fair to him."

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Cleveland, who had not had an income for the 10 years following the accident, decided to start her life anew: she went to graduate school at UT and received a doctorate in philosophy in 1998.

With her degree in hand, Cleveland set out to follow in her grandfather's footsteps: the field of education.

"Erin Porter in the management department actually helped me get my job here," Cleveland said. "I practiced how I was going to run the class and she sat there and critiqued it."

The anxiousness that built quickly subsided as her years as a public speaker naturally came back to her.

"You're always anxious before each semester, but I've found that I'm much more comfortable in front of hundreds of people than a room of 30," Cleveland said.

And yet, "hundreds of people" is an understatement when it comes to the amount of students Cleveland has taught - 1,125 students in her first semester and over 18,000 since she began.

Her class populations resembled many small towns that she had known, and the "city of Cleveland at Texas" was established, an idea that, ironically enough, came to her while sitting at a beauty shop.

"As I'm sitting under the dryer with this cocktail of chemicals baking into my head, I'm thinking, I can build a class around a city idea," Cleveland said. "We can break the class down into several small groups, and each group can represent a business in the

town and, as we learn all of these business concepts, like statistics and information management, the students can actually apply those things to their work in our magical, imaginary city.”

From there, the infamous “business fair” in the city of Cleveland received its start, achieving a reputation amongst UT students and Austin businesses alike. At the end of each semester, about 5,000 students will be visitors and participants, including 300 students from local elementary schools, 400 businesses, administrators and faculty from UT as well as other universities. Parents and former students even volunteer their time to get the fair up and running.

“I like to do things a little bit differently,” Cleveland said. “I know that I don’t have to have a huge business fair to teach the students, but you know what, I think they absorb more this way, and most important, they feel special, like a unique individual rather than a number.”

“It definitely is a very interesting class,” Robert Valdez, a student social work major, said. “Even though there were hundreds of students, there was never a day when she wasn’t looking and speaking directly at you; it’s very personal.”

The business fair is notorious amongst students who have taken her class, and strangely enough from those who haven’t, because of the workload and dedication that comes with it.

“The reason the business fair is talked about the most is because the work on it is the type you love to hate,” Cleveland said, here eyebrows shooting up with an all-

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knowing answer for an often-asked question. “For those five hours at the fair it is the most realistic experience of the real world.”

But after years of teaching thousands of students with here unique curriculum, it is hard not to walk away with some memory or opinion about “the city of Cleveland” class.

“People are either going to love me or hate me...but I hope many more people love me,” Cleveland said, a sly grin stretching across her face. “My aim is to at least be the dinner table conversation. To have students talk about you – that’s the ultimate compliment.”

A professor with a unique reputation unlike others who have set foot on the UT campus, a registered professional clown (that’s a story for another day), and the mayor of a town all to herself - from an internationally known public speaker to a patient struggling for her life, Cleveland has experienced it all.

“The accident robbed me of marriage and children...but I’ve now had over 18,000 of them,” Cleveland said. “If anyone ever asks you, yes, there is a light at the end of the tunnel.”

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