

LIFE & ARTS, D1

**FI's return:
Meet the man
behind glitzy
My Yacht parties**



BUSINESS, B5

**New in tech:
IBM unveils
design studio
in Austin**

SPORTS, C1

**Cedric Golden:
Why Horns
need a blitz to
the finish**

YOUR WEATHER, B8



Today
Cool morning; sunny and
cool afternoon. 67/48
Friday: Cool, partly cloudy. 70/50
Saturday: 10% chance of rain. 73/55
Sunday: 10% chance of rain. 75/57
Monday: 20% chance of rain. 75/58

\$1.00

Austin American-Statesman

Thursday, November 7, 2013

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D Life & Arts

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What's happening
this weekend?
Find out in the
planner. D2

Everything you
need to know about
Fun Fun Fun Fest.
Friday in Austin360



Michael Barnes

UT gives 6 alums special awards

First came the videos, then the speeches. Last week, the Texas Exes conferred Distinguished Alumnus Awards on six graduates from the areas of law, medicine, business and technology. In several cases, the speeches created in firm calls of support for University of Texas President William Powers Jr., also on stage at the LBJ Auditorium. Lawyer Linda Addison said, "Our lives are richer, fuller and more interesting because of the educations we gained here." Pediatric heart surgeon Dr. Charles Fraser remarked on medical advances in the state, including the planned UT medical school. Through stirring oratory, former Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Wallace Jefferson measured how far society had come on racial matters. Lawyer and Port of Houston chairwoman Janiece Longoria came to the defense of the university's research that complements its teaching. Investor and philanthropist Robert Rowling spoke out against "personal attacks and vendettas" from those who would undermine UT's greatness. On a lighter note, National Instruments co-founder James Truchard proved the funniest, most modest of the honorees.

Perhaps it's time to review all the award winners since 1958. The first inductees? Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Sam Rayburn, historian Walter Prescott Webb, newspaper director-general Ramon Beteta and U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Robert Anderson.

Barnes continued on D3

FORMULA ONE

Nicholas Frankl: Off to the races

Promoter of high-end F1 party is back in Austin with more My Yacht Club

By Michael Barnes
mbarnes@statesman.com

Nicholas Frankl attended his first Formula One race before he was born. In 1971, the mother of the British event promoter showed up at the bone-rattling race in Monaco. "She was hugely pregnant," Frankl says. "Jacky Ickx, the great Belgian racer, said, 'June, I think you will have twins.' My dad said: 'What the heck do you know about twins? Leave my wife alone!'"

Three weeks later, June Well Frankl, a champion dog breeder, delivered twins, Nicholas and Annabelle. "Two months after that, we attended a race in a pram," Frankl, now 42, says. "We wore little baby earplugs. Jacky said: 'You see, June, I told you you'd have twins. And I did it without touching!'"

Formula One racing — along with other high-end sports and even higher-end socializing — have been a part of Frankl's life ever since. Last year, during the first United States Grand Prix in Austin, this dapper man, who mingles as easily with royalty as with everyday folks, staged perhaps the most talked-about theme party, promoted under the initially perplexing name of My Yacht Club.

No big, fancy boat, after all, docked at the Ballet Austin studios for each of three nights. And there was no club. At least not in the usual sense.

Yet a two-tiered party, one for charity, the other for high-rolling merrymakers — which returns Nov. 15-17 — attracted F1 racers, celebrities and those who like to mix with both.

"Nicholas is the spirit of F1," says Ballet Austin managing director Cookie Ruiz, a long-time Formula One fan, not usually given to overstatement. "He is a brilliant, elegant, strategic, high-energy, fun-loving guy with an uncanny knack for creating magical events that represent the best of F1 — fast cars, interesting people. Simply put, Nicholas is in the business of high-performance extravagant fun."

To the race born
Andrew "Frankly" Frankl es-

Frankl continued on D10

MY YACHT CLUB

When: 10 p.m.-4 a.m., Nov. 15-17
Where: Ballet Austin Studios, 501 W. Third St.
Information: myyachtclub.com
Coming up: Look for more Formula One-related events in Friday's Austin360.



ABOVE: My Yacht Club's Nicholas Frankl in London
LEFT: Prince Albert II, Petra Nemcova, Nicholas Frankl and Princess Charlene
CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Nicholas Frankl: Olympic bobsledder, friend to princes and 'The spirit of F1'

Promoter of high-end F1 party is back with more My Yacht Club

By [Michael Barnes](#) - American-Statesman Staff

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Olympic gold medalist Michael Johnson with Nicholas Frankl

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To the race born

Andrew “Frankly” Frankl escaped Budapest, Hungary, in 1946. Nicholas’s dad eventually joined Ford Motors and expanded his creative reach into other aspects — sales, marketing, promotion, journalism, publishing, broadcasting — of cars and racing.

He competed in the illegal, cross-country Cannonball Rally, made famous by the Burt Reynolds movie, “The Cannonball Run,” in a Ford truck in 1979.

“He finished last, but not lost,” his son says proudly. “At that time it took 36 hours. Now it’s 29.”



My Yacht Club’s Nicholas Frankl

His mother bred, showed and judged Ihasa apsos. The family settled south of London near Sevenoaks in Kent. Since his parents knew all the racing principals, Nicholas Frankl was allowed to play around Formula One cars, even sitting in the drivers seats.

“I thought it was the coolest thing in the world,” he says with a smile that seems permanently pressed on his fair features.

Frankl swears boarding school was a blast. There, the sporty youth played on the rugby, clay pigeon, volleyball and squash teams. “My parents were actually around a lot,” he says. “Dad would pick me up and Mom cooked Sunday lunch.”

Unlike Eton College, his boarding school did not produce a lifetime social network. “It’s not like: This guy’s running the World Bank; that guy’s running something else,” he says. “Anyway, Facebook broke down social barriers of the old boy’s network.”

Frankl studied business and finance at Kingston University but dropped out, chasing a life in broadcasting.

“I want to commentate on Formula One,” he told broadcasters. “I’m an expert. ‘OK, we’ll pay 10 pounds,’ they said. I had to pay my way there and expenses. But it got me on the air. Soon, I was reporting from center court at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships and all my ex-university chums were selling programs. It worked.”

Dipping into this and that

Frankl's on-air charm and audacity landed him jobs with Sky TV and Asprey jewelry. He managed Asprey's sponsorship of a Ferrari Formula One team from 1996 to 1999. He jetted around the globe, lubricating a network of high-rollers who spend millions on watches and jewelry.

"It sounds glamorous," he says. "But I was just taking a different laptop to a different city working at a different desk."

He stayed close to his close-knit family and recently toasted his father's 46th Monaco Grand Prix. He insists that it's not all bubbly and fast cars. Yet, typically, he uses an aristocratic friend to make his case.

"What does Prince Albert like to do?" Frankl says of Monaco's monarch. "He likes to have beers in an Irish pub with bobsled mates."

How did the prince meet the promoter? Frankl had put together Hungary's Olympic four-man bobsledding team, which competed with Albert's.

"Everybody says bobsledding is Formula One on ice," he says. "It became obvious to me very quickly there was no Hungarian team."

So he reclaimed his father's heritage and enrolled in bobsledding school in Innsbruck, Austria.

"They put you in a rusty old bucket sled and off you go!" he says. "We didn't crash. In this sport, there's a very short learning curve. Either you understand the principles of speed, pressure and steering, or you end up crashing very quickly. And that's very unpleasant."

Their first race was scheduled for a famous, old and very difficult Italian track. The organizers begged the Hungarian team not to compete.

"I promise we won't embarrass you," Frankl told them. "We finished 16th. We went from zero to the Olympics in one year."

The team competed in Lillehammer, Norway in 1994, Nagano, Japan, in 1998 and Salt Lake City in 2002, joining a coterie of sportsmen who followed Formula One in the summer, bobsledding in the winter.

That would include Prince Albert II of Monaco.

“We’ve become great friends,” Frankl says. “You are an Olympian for life. You hold to ideals, qualities, behavior that you should always honor.”

With or without a boat

While handling high-flying guests of Asprey jewelry on the Formula One circuit, Frankl turned into something like an unpaid concierge; for instance, helping people get into the most exclusive events during the Monaco Grand Prix. There had to be a way, he thought, to monetize this service.

Why not stage the ultimate party on a yacht? Frankl took a chance in 2005 on inviting just the right friends.



Prince Albert II, Petra Nemcova,
Nicholas Frankl and Princess Charlene

“The prince showed up,” he says. “His friends all came aboard. (Movie producer) Steve Soderbergh texted his friends: ‘This is where it’s happening.’”

Parked just off the Monaco coast, My Yacht Monaco entertained some 100 guests by day. More than 200 showed up for the My Yacht Monaco Party night parties.

“When you’ve got game in Monaco,” Frankl says. “Everything is taken care of.”

So he expanded to the Cannes Film Festival with the Hollywood Party, as well as thematic events in Miami and Pebble Beach, Calif.

“We try to take the yacht concept to environments that are high-value magnets for high-net-worth global elite,” he says. “You can cut through the clutter and attract the best clients.”

But how would that strategy work in famously egalitarian Austin, allergic to anything that sounds too exclusionary? And what about a yacht? Where would it go?

“We looked at Lady Bird Lake,” he laughs. “If we wanted to get it there, it would be a very small boat.”

Enter Ruiz and Ballet Austin, who also gave My Yacht Club the customary charitable fig leaf.

“Last year was a big gamble,” Frankl admits. “I had no idea if it would work, building a club in a city that never held a Grand Prix, selling tables that went for tens of thousands of dollars, all this against a firestorm of news that the race would not be happening, that the traffic was going to be terrible, that the place would just shut down.”

Instead, more than 1,500 people tramped through the Patron Grand Prix Lounge, the Monaco Room and other theme nooks that attracted both Formula One fans in the know and newcomers who had just heard about it.

“He is willing to take risks to make the event a success, not only for the guests, but also the sponsors involved,” says Pam Dzierzanowski, director of events for Patron Spirits Company, no stranger to lifestyle marketing. “I think when an event is done right, it allows the whole experience for the weekend to be elevated, so the guests can’t wait to come back and take part in it year after year.”

By all accounts, Frankl’s guests like to cut loose.

“It might be an ‘affluent’ crowd but never a ‘stuffy’ crowd,” says Tiffany Hanson, director of sales and marketing for Comte de Mazeray wine company. “Nicholas makes a point to introduce himself and make appropriate introductions. He is very present at all of his events.”

As hard as it is for longtime Austinites to imagine it, the city is now deeply invested in a global sport that not only attracts blue-collar fanatics and weekend racers but also a type of socializer accustomed to the proximity of seemingly incomprehensible amounts of money.

“Each team puts up \$400 million,” Frankl says. “The objective of that is to take two Grand Prix cars to 18 races and win a world championship. And they have been doing this for 60 years.”

Michael Barnes writes about Austin’s people, places, culture and history.

My Yacht Club

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Information: myyachtclub.com