

# CAREN CROSS

## *filming the crossroads*

**W**hen Caren Cross, SSA '77, enrolled as a graduate student in the inaugural class of Temple's School of Social Administration in 1969, she was not sure how she would use the degree.

At the time, Cross was an art therapist with Pennsylvania Hospital's community mental health center before such a profession was common. Her supervisor told her she would make an excellent social worker. Cross decided to attend Temple.

"I got in on the ground floor with about 30 others, and it was great," she enthuses. "It turned out to be a perfect fit because of the high energy level of the faculty and students."

Cross remembers that the program's faculty consisted of fewer than a dozen members who were using their diverse experiences to create a unique curriculum at Temple. "You could feel its newness and individuality, and the attention we got was invaluable," she says.

Joining that small group of groundbreaking students and professors was one of the many ways Cross has engaged in creative thinking whenever she can. For the past 10 years, it has been from her home in San Miguel de Allende, a city in central Mexico.

Born and raised in Delaware County, Pa., Cross and her husband David, EDU '72, moved to Virginia Beach, Va., shortly after she earned her Master of Social Work degree. There, the couple raised two children while she ran a thriving private therapy practice for

27 years. About 10 years ago, they decided to travel to San Miguel de Allende for a vacation.

Spending a week in the historic city—which brims with culture, art, music and, at the time, 4,000 U.S. expatriates—changed their lives. Once she returned home, Cross could not shake the city's dust from her sandals.

She was especially inspired by the Americans she met there who had left behind typical Western living. "I could see there might be another way to live," she explains.

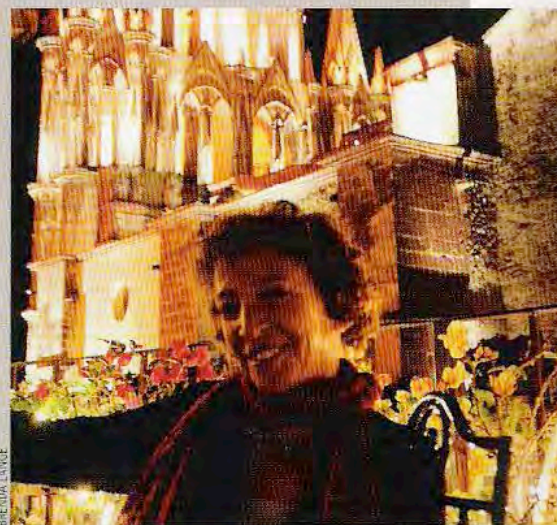
Approximately one year later, Cross closed her practice and the pair sold most of their belongings and headed for the border.

As the Crosses learned the language, bought a house, renovated it and adjusted to the city, Cross dreamed of what she wanted to do next. And the city's expatriate population inspired her.

San Miguel de Allende's expatriate community has more than doubled in the past 10 years, and many expats have integrated themselves into the city's life. According to Cross, the community has started 30 charitable organizations, including kitchens that feed 2,000 children each day.

Cross soon gave in to her desire to document the community's experiences.

"One day, I woke up and told Dave, 'I'm going to make a movie!'" she recalls. That day, she bought five books on filmmaking. Several months later, she selected expat friends as the film's interview subjects, hired



BRENDA LANGE

a videographer and editor and began to work. Finally, in March 2007, *Lost and Found in Mexico* debuted at the San Luis Obispo Film Festival in California. It packed the house.

Not only is the documentary winning awards—including Best Documentary at last year's Boston Film Festival—it also seems to touch a nerve with viewers. The film has sold more than 3,000 copies online.

When people ask Cross how she remained truthful onscreen, she credits her Temple days. "The faculty wanted us to be honest and genuine in our work," she says. "It probably was a precursor to my ability to make this documentary."—Brenda Lange

**J. Lawson Johnston, CLA '68**, a shareholder of the Pittsburgh-based law firm Dickie, McCamey & Chilcote has been named in the 2009 edition of *The Best Lawyers in America*. Johnston concentrates his practice in the areas of civil liability, railroad litigation, occupational disease, worker's compensation and administrative law.

**Philip Alburger, MED '69**, a professor of orthopedic surgery at Temple's

School of Medicine, was appointed staff physician and orthopedic surgeon at Shriner's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia. Most recently, he was chief of pediatrics at Temple University Children's Medical Center.

### 1970S

**Joseph Kissel, SBM '70, '74**, is the women's tennis coach at Goldey-Beacom College in Wilmington, Del. He has been named Central Atlantic

Collegiate Conference (CACC) Tennis Coach of the Year. Kissel earned the honor by the vote of the women's tennis coaches in the CACC. Kissel is a member of the United States Professional Tennis Association, the Professional Tennis Registry and the United States Tennis Association (USTA). He also is a USTA/ITA tennis official.