Lamar Loses a Legend

by Mark Mengerink

The death of Dr. Howell Holmes Gwin, Jr., on September 3, 2015, dealt a blow to the History Department, Lamar University, and the Beaumont community.

Born on July 10, 1937, in New York, he moved with his family in 1951 to Starkville, MS. After graduating from Starkville High School, Howell earned a BA in English and MA and PhD degrees in history.

He accepted an appointment to teach history at Lamar in 1962, where he taught for 53 years, serving the university and department in various capacities, including Director of Graduate Studies.

Beyond the classroom, Howell was active in St. Mark’s Episcopal Church and enjoyed building model airplanes and model trains.

Dr. Gwin is survived by his wife of 51 years, Elizabeth Logan Gwin; daughter, Anne Elizabeth Gwin; son, Howell Holmes Gwin III; grandsons Howell Holmes Gwin IV and Logan Emory Gwin; and sister, Mary Gwin Waggoner.

(Source: Program for "A Celebration of the Life of Dr. Howell Holmes Gwin, Jr."); Photo courtesy of Dr. Jeff Forret)
The Walter P. Webb Society participated in the National Day of Listening on Friday, November 27, 2015. This effort is part of a National Public Radio initiative known as StoryCorps, which collects and preserves the voices and stories of all Americans. The club hopes to develop an exhibit afterwards of their compilation of unique oral histories.

Mr. Poston's 1302 class recently studied the "Roaring 20s". Katie Harmon really got into the spirit of the discussion about this crucial decade of the 20th century by showing up for class dressed as a "flapper"; the symbol in the 20s of the modern, liberated American woman. Not only does Katie understand how the 20s led to the Great Depression and World War II, she now can use words and phrases like "vee oh dee oh do", "you're the cat's meow", and "zounds" as well as learning how to dance the Charleston and bob her hair.

by Ken Poston

(Photo courtesy of Mark A. Mengerink)

Homecoming Festivities

Saturday, November 7, 2015, dawned a rainy day, but the weather could not dampen the Cardinal spirit as students, faculty, staff, and the Beaumont community celebrated the Lamar University Homecoming. Members of the Walter P. Webb Society and Phi Alpha Theta represented the History Department in the Homecoming Parade. The Homecoming theme was Cardinal Strong: Past, Present, Future.

Homecoming participants (l-r): Emma Nelson, Alex Johnson, Judith Nelams, Courtney Rhodus, Krystal Watson, Dr. Mary Scheer, & Dr. Mark Mengerink. Photo courtesy of Mark Mengerink
History Students of the Month

Bryce Barrett was selected as November’s History Student of the Month. He was Hardin High School’s valedictorian in 2014. Now in his junior year, Bryce is pursuing dual degrees in history and math. After graduation, he plans on teaching.

Photo courtesy of Bryce Barrett

Our October Student of the Month was Tammy Byerly. Tammy is a 1992 graduate of Lumberton High School and just returned to Lamar for the fall 2015 semester after an eleven year hiatus. She received the Daughters of the American Revolution/Virginia D. Weir Memorial Scholarship. Her plan is to teach upon completion of her degree.

Photo Courtesy of Tammy Byerly

Kendrick D. Williams was selected as September’s Student of the Month. He is pursuing a history major en route to a career in the ministry. He graduated in 1997 from Central High School and is a member of the "I Have a Dream" program, founded by the Rogers family. Kendrick loves spending time with his wife and children and studying history and the Bible.

Photo courtesy of Kendrick D. Williams
A 2013 graduate from West Brook Senior High School in Beaumont, Texas, LaKeisha Fontenot is a junior History major with a Spanish minor. LaKeisha was selected as December’s History Student of the Month.

She hopes to earn a master’s degree in History and educational administration followed by her doctorate in History. She eventually wants to open a Christian Charter school focusing on the arts and academics all while teaching the students about the love of Jesus Christ. Besides exploring History, LaKeisha enjoys learning the Spanish language and culture. She plans on traveling to Salamanca, Spain in the summer of 2016 on a study abroad trip.

Photo courtesy of LaKeisha Fontenot.

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Defrancis Receives Award

I am pleased to announce that the Texas Gulf Historical Society has awarded Zachary Defrancis the inaugural Dr. Andrew J. and Betty H. Johnson Editor’s Prize for best essay on Southeast Texas by a Lamar University history major. In his essay, “Faded Beacon: A History of the Sabine Pass Lighthouse,” Mr. Defrancis examines the heretofore unsuccessful efforts to preserve the 1856 landmark. His article will appear in an upcoming volume of the Texas Gulf Historical and Biographical Record. Congratulations to Zachary!

by Jimmy Bryan Jr., editor, Texas Gulf Historical and Biographical Record

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Generous Donation to Benefit Student of the Year

The Student of the Month program honors a most enthusiastic and dedicated history student every month, and the Student of the Year is selected from among the Students of the Month at the end of each year. Starting in the 2015-2016 academic year, the Student of the Year will be accompanied by the Dr. Paul E. Isaac History Award, thanks to the generosity of its donor, Mrs. Nancy C. Isaac. Dr. Isaac spent most of his career as a history professor at Lamar University and passed away on October 14, 2014. It will be annually awarded at the Phi Alpha Theta banquet and continue during the lifetime of Mrs. Isaac. She lives in Brandon, Florida.

by Yasuko Sato
Faculty Happenings...

Our award-winning faculty continued productive research, teaching, and service agendas during 2015. Here are the highlights.

Jeff Forret published two books in November. The monograph *Slave against Slave: Plantation Violence in the Old South* and the co-edited anthology *New Directions in Slavery Studies: Commodification, Community, and Comparison* are both published with LSU Press. The latter book includes his essay, "'A Slave That Will Steal from a Slave, Is Called Mean as Master': Thefts and Violence inside Southern Slave Quarters."

In April, Dr. Forret commented on a panel titled "Corporal Punishment, Capital Punishment, and Performance in the 19th-Century South" at the 108th Annual Meeting of the Organization of American Historians (OAH) in St. Louis, Missouri. In May, he received a Liberty Bell Award from the Paul Revere Chapter of the Texas Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. Dr. Forret spoke at the Sons’ March meeting, giving a talk titled "From the Bottom Up: Meanings of the American Revolution for Poor Whites, Women, and Blacks."

Dr. Forret was also appointed to the advisory board of H-Slavery, the online discussion board for all things slavery related. He continues extensive archival research on antebellum slavery with the help of a William Nelson Cromwell Foundation Grant in the amount of $5,000, which he will use for his latest project: *Williams’ Gang: A Slave Trader, His Cargo, and Justice in the Old South*.

Dr. Mary Scheer, chair of the department, completed her one-year presidential term with the East Texas Historical Association in October 2015. As part of her duties she delivered a presidential speech in Nacogdoches at the banquet titled "Eleanor Roosevelt's 1939 Train Trip to Beaumont and Beyond." This paper is part of a larger research project focused on Eleanor Roosevelt and her impact on the postwar presidents, 1945-1962.

Instructor Robert Robertson gave the Constitution Week presentation on September 17 on the University campus. He presented "The Summer-Fall of 1956," the story about US District Judge Lamar Cecil who ordered the desegregation of Lamar State College of Technology and the admission of two black students, Versie Jackson and James Anthony Cormier. Judge Cecil’s order included these words, "Negroes are eligible to be enrolled at Lamar Tech, providing they meet college requirements. They are to receive no special favors, but are to be treated like all other United States citizens."


Congratulations to all of our faculty for their hard work!
Pet Corner

by Ken Poston

Say hello to “th’ lil’ Devil” on the left and “Derby” on the right. Seven weeks old, they are the newest residents at the Poston estate in Vidor (commonly known as the Postonrosa).

These two ladies were unceremoniously dumped in a ditch in College Station, Texas, where apparently there are not enough veterinary graduates to take care of abandoned kittens. Thanks to Grandson Haydn (accompanied by his girlfriend) they were rescued and subsequently "dropped", no, "deposited", ah yes "lovingly given to the only people they could think of that would give them a good home" (that's Brenda's way of saying it).

Needless to say, Maw Maw now has infants to cherish and Paw Paw has yet one more thing to gripe about! This is their debut in the famous Pet Corner with updates to follow as they transition from the "cute" stage to the arrogant and self-possessed adult animals that they will become.

Photo courtesy of Ken Poston