

Journalism Department Rededicates Farley Hall, Names Classrooms in Honor of Former Faculty

Contributed by Lee Eric Smith
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OXFORD, Miss. - Some 50 years ago at the University of Mississippi, journalism was taught in a small building that no longer exists and among the faculty were three professors who would distinguish themselves as they helped mold the minds of a generation of reporters and editors. In the process, those men - Jere Hoar, S. Gale Denley and Samuel S. Talbert - helped establish a legacy of excellence in journalism education that lives on in the newly renovated Farley Hall, home of the Department of Journalism.

On Friday, the journalism department and the university rededicated Farley Hall, as well as three classrooms named to honor those professors: the J.R. Hoar Center for Excellence in Writing, the S. Gale Denley Digital Photo Lab and the Samuel S. Talbert Reading Room.

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Video from Farley Hall dedication.

"Without question, they are the foundation of journalism at Ole Miss," said Samir Husni, journalism chair and Hederman Lecturer. "They've touched countless lives and helped literally hundreds of journalists in their careers."

Journalism at UM has come a long way since its inception. Hoar remembers when the department was housed in an old army barracks without air conditioning, and the faculty consisted of himself and Dr. Talbert, the department chair. But despite the meager beginnings, there was always a commitment to teach students how to believe in themselves, Hoar said.

"Back then, so many Mississippi students really didn't know how good they were," Hoar said Friday. "That's what we tried to let them know."

Among those young journalists was Ronnie Agnew, who received the 50th anniversary Samuel S. Talbert Silver Em Award on Thursday night during Journalism Week. Agnew, executive editor of The Clarion-Ledger in Jackson, beamed with pride about the award.

"I'm out of words to say what a wonderful opportunity the university gave me," Agnew said. "To be nurtured the way I was at Ole Miss, I'm just so proud of my university."

Talbert chaired the journalism department from 1957 until his death in 1972. In 1958, Talbert established UM's Silver Em Award, which

recognizes a Mississippian or Mississippi-based journalist who has made outstanding contributions in the profession. The award was recently renamed in his honor. Talbert himself was one of a handful of recipients of UM's prestigious Golden Em Award, which recognizes individuals who've made significant contributions to journalism education at Ole Miss.

Denley, who died in August after a long illness, was a longtime Mississippi journalist and spent many years as director of the Student Media Center, which oversees The Daily Mississippian, the dmonline, Rebel Radio, Newswatch 12 and campus yearbook. In April 2003, the university named its Student Media Center for him.

Hoar joined the UM faculty in 1956 and taught for 36 years. He received the campuswide Outstanding Teacher Award in 1974 and the Silver Em in 1994. Since then, with more and more people turning to the Internet for news, Hoar says that while aspects of journalism are changing, the Department of Journalism's core mission remains the same.

"We have to educate people in new media, because that's where the jobs are," Hoar said. "Traditional journalism offers training in writing structure, which is absolutely important. Courses in ethics, journalism law, theory and public opinion are still critical. But the medium is constantly evolving, and our department will also evolve to meet those needs."

Friday's rededication ceremony capped off Journalism Week 2008. As part of the week's activities, author and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nick Kotz delivered Thursday's keynote lecture, addressing the role of media in the 2008 Presidential Campaign.

Besides dedicating classrooms to Hoar, Talbert and Denley, the department also recognized the establishment of two new endowed scholarships - the Bill and Jean May Mississippi Sun Scholarship and the Clay and Krista McFerrin Sun-Sentinel Scholarship.

For more information on journalism education at Ole Miss, call the Department of Journalism at 662-915-7146 or visit <http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/journalism/> .