

Gerald Walton's New Pictorial Book Showcases University's Rich History

Contributed by Rebecca Lauck Cleary
11/06/2008

Reception and presentation set Nov. 13 at Overby Center Auditorium

OXFORD, Miss. - The past comes alive in the hearts and minds of viewers as they turn the pages of "The University of Mississippi: A Pictorial History," a new coffee-table book by UM Provost Emeritus Gerald W. Walton.

With more than 400 pages of imagery and nostalgia, the book (Booksmith Group, 2008) captures the campus taking shape from its birth to today. Whether it's a math class, an afternoon at Sardis Lake, a pajama party on the Oxford Square or football weekend festivities in the Grove, smiles and laughter are effortlessly evoked.

"No person knows Ole Miss better than Gerald Walton," Chancellor Robert Khayat said. "His book is inspired by his love of the university and will warm the hearts of the readers. With this publication, Dr. Walton adds to his remarkable legacy."

Walton is to discuss the book project and present a slide show of the photos during a reception at 5:15 p.m. Thursday (Nov. 13) in Overby Center Auditorium. The event is free and open to the public.

Walton hopes that former students and campus visitors will enjoy pleasant memories as they see familiar faces and places in the book.

"I hope it will give them a pretty good picture of the university from its beginning days of four faculty and less than 100 students to the stage it's in now with all the personnel," Walton said. "I would hope anyone would say they can read a history of a place and see something of the flavor there, but photographs make it stand out."

The photographs are a backdrop of past decades, showcasing how the school and the nation have changed, from ways people spent their free time to what they wore to class. Walton provides most of the book's historical information, while several guest writers penned personal essays printed between chapters.

"These photos capture the spirit of the university, its structures, its people and its triumphs and tragedies," said Gov. Haley Barbour. "This is a book to savor and to treasure. Ole Miss is a special place, and being able to keep just a little reminder of that in this book is a real privilege."

[Click the image to view a slideshow](#)

Walton's three main sources for the photographs were the Department of Archives and Special Collections in the J.D. Williams Library, yearbooks from 1897 to 2006 and recent photos from UM's Imaging Services. The book's publisher also sent its photographer during the 2007 Homecoming celebration for photos of nightlife and the Grove.

Explaining his decision to tackle the book project, Walton said there was discussion of a pictorial book at the university's sesquicentennial celebration in 1994, but at the time, he was busy with his duties as vice chancellor for academic affairs.

"After I retired, I did other things but the idea for the book kept sticking in the back of my mind," he said. He began working seriously on the project in 2003.

Best-selling author and UM alumnus John Grisham said the book is "a remarkable collection of photographs, essays, anecdotes and memories that vividly brings to life the history of this unique university."

Despite the vast number of photos in the book, Walton still wishes for a photo of the Lyceum before 1858.

"As far as we know, the earliest picture was from 1860, and the original Lyceum had been extended at the back already," he said. "The 1848 Lyceum was shorter, and I would love to see a photo of that, but I've been searching for it for 40 years."

The book is available in two editions, standard and deluxe. The standard edition, bound in custom bonded leather, is available for \$79.95. The deluxe edition, available for \$199.95, is bound in custom bonded leather with a vellum insert, gilded edges, ribbon marker and optional personalized name engraving. It is presented in an elegant red linen clamshell case with an ornamental cloth bag and a bookplate signed by Walton. A specially commissioned lithograph featuring the Lyceum and Walk of Champions, as well as a wraparound panoramic of the Lyceum and additional images are also included.

The book is published in partnership with the Booksmith Group and is available online at <http://www.olemissbook.com> and <http://www.amazon.com> , as well as at the University Bookstore on campus and Square Books in downtown Oxford.