

# Faculty & Staff

## For Joe Lee Gibson, A Millsaps Thank You For a Job Well Done

Joe Lee Gibson, 84, has been known as a legend on the Millsaps College campus, providing consistent, positive words of encouragement and an example of a tireless spirit and work ethic. According to Todd Rose, vice president for campus services: “Joe Lee represents what Millsaps is all about.”

And so it was with a spirit of thankfulness for a job well done that Gibson’s retirement party was held in November in the Lindsey Suite of the Campbell College Center. Friends and members of the Millsaps community packed the room, shaking hands with Gibson, who was profiled in the summer 2004 edition of *Millsaps Magazine*, and reminiscing about the past. All came out to pay homage to a man who leaves with 69 years of service—and a gold Millsaps watch.

Danny Neely, grounds supervisor for the College, said: “It’s amazing. I run into alumni all the time, and the first thing they ask

is, ‘How’s Mr. Joe? Is he still at Millsaps?’ Joe Lee Gibson loves Millsaps. He has seen more changes on this campus than any other person ever will.”

The refreshments, anchored by a strawberry-filled butter crème cake, offered a spread fit for the man who had served the Millsaps community since June 1, 1936, the day he began working in the physical plant.

Gibson, fondly known as “Mr. Joe,” was born in Jackson on June 20, 1922. He retired from the College effective October 2006 for health reasons. “It had just gotten to be a struggle for him to do what he loved to do,” Neely said. “He will be greatly missed by those who had the opportunity to get to know him.”

—Lisa Purdie

## Online Latin Course A Virtual Excursion To Ancient Rome

Ovid surfed the web. Virgil made a bundle in dot-com stock before the crash. Plutarch was the first blogger.

Just kidding. But, thanks to a new interinstitutional Latin course offered by the Millsaps Department of Classical Studies, ancient Rome and modern digital technology aren’t as far apart as you might think.

The course, *Neronian Literature*, is taught as part of a collaborative technology initiative in partnership with classics departments from 12 other Southern liberal arts colleges, including Rhodes College, Trinity College, the University of the South, and other members of the Associated Colleges of the South. The program, called *Sunoikisis*, is funded by a grant from the Mellon Foundation. Its stated goal is “to build a digital infrastructure that would support a wide range of collaborative efforts,” thereby creating a “virtual department of classics.”

The *Sunoikisis* program combines distance learning with the aggregate expertise of a dozen institutions. Students “attend” lectures in the computer lab, with streaming audio and a scrolling onscreen



Joe Lee Gibson with his wife, “Miss Grace,” at his retirement party in the Lindsey Suite.

“chat” window bringing together students and teachers from far-flung locations. The chat window enables students to interact with the lecturer and one another.

“The Internet allows us and other small classics departments to pool and leverage our resources,” says Dr. Holly Sypniewski, assistant professor of classical studies and the course’s instructor. “It’s more than ‘distance learning’ in that the technology actually enables us and our partner institutions to offer our students an experience that none of us could provide on our own.”

During one lecture, Professor David Sick from Rhodes College discusses the way death was treated by writers during the Neronian period. During the lecture a bell is heard declaring the top of the hour on the Rhodes campus; students from other schools hastily type silly jokes about the bell’s tolling, and for whom, in the chat window.

Later, images of an ancient Roman tombstone are posted on the class web page; students are given a few minutes to translate the marker’s inscription, while the 1970s chestnut “Seasons in the Sun” plays in the background. The correct response: “Don’t commit sacrilege on my tomb.”

Students can later access the lecture recording and chat log (a text file with



Senior Matthew Vieron and freshman Emily Gilbert linking to antiquity—as well as classics departments at other colleges.

all the comments made by students), as well as other supporting materials, via the course website. Students are also expected to critique one another’s work. Professors from the partner institutions lecture in rotation.

“All the instructors get together twice a year to determine the syllabus and other details of the class,” says Sypniewski. “It’s a much broader experience than our students could otherwise get on their own. They get to hear from leading experts in their respective fields of study. Our students have

really grown as thinkers and readers of Latin literature.”

Sypniewski says that the course also has benefits beyond the world of Nero and Caesar. “Students get great technological experience that is very useful for future careers,” she says. “The use of technology to communicate at a distance is very important, whether on Wall Street or in the academic sphere.”

For more about the Sunoikisis program, visit [www.sunoikisis.org](http://www.sunoikisis.org).

—Scott Albert Johnson



## Quality Service (With a Smile)

Millsaps College announced the winners of the Harrylyn G. Sallis Award for Quality Service for 2005 at the President’s Christmas Party. Pictured at left with President Frances Lucas is this year’s winner for individual excellence, Kathie Adams, assistant coordinator of records. The award for excellence by a department went to the staff of the Department of Food Services, headed by Olivia White-Lowe, director (right). The Sallis Awards, named in honor of Dr. Harrylyn G. Sallis, dean emerita of adult learning and a strong proponent of the Millsaps College quality-service initiative, are given to staff members and departments in recognition of their outstanding service in and outside the Millsaps College community.

—Jesse Yancy

