

Major Notes

T. W. Lewis III is named the 2007 Alumnus of the Year

Millsaps College has presented the 2007 Alumnus of the Year award to **Dr. T. W.**

Lewis III, B.A. 1953, in recognition of his



devotion and leadership as a professor and inspiration to generations of students, his moral and spiritual leadership, and his overall dedication to the betterment of the College.

The Livesay Awards, which were also announced on campus on March 10 at the annual College Awards

and Recognition Dinner, went to Demethous (Dee) Morris Chambliss, B.S. 1986; Steve and Melinda Hendrix, the parents of a Millsaps alumnus and a current student; and Dr. Virginia Anne (V. A.) Jones Whitley, B.A. 1968. The award honors the spirit of commitment in which Jim Livesay (1920-2001) served the College as an alumnus, a member of the administration, and a volunteer.

Lewis accepted the call to leadership and service when he was a Millsaps student, and he continues to serve Millsaps as well as the United Methodist Church and the larger community of Jackson. Professor emeritus of religious studies and a longtime beloved faculty member, Lewis has been a powerful mentor to

generations of students and a devoted graduate of the College. Lewis taught steadily at Millsaps from 1964 until his retirement in 1996.

Some of his most outstanding contributions as a professor were to curriculum innovation and renewal. In the mid-1960s, he was a member of the committee that proposed and designed the Heritage program. He was an advocate for retaining classical studies, a leading proponent of writing across the curriculum, and a pioneer in the development of an interdisciplinary Core Curriculum.

In his acceptance speech, Lewis emphasized the lifelong friendships he has forged during his association with the College, and said he sensed among Millsaps professors “a legacy of the spirit that nourished and challenged students to do their very best. Friendships, professors—through these it was here that the life of the mind and the spirit was awakened, and it was here that I finally discovered my true vocation.”

Lewis recalled the names of a few students from his first term on the Millsaps faculty in the fall of 1959, and he said they had helped bring about a “sea change” in his life. “I am among those blessed people who have loved their life’s work and would not exchange it for anything in the world,” he said.

“T. W. both leads and supports and speaks for justice for all people, no matter the artificial boundaries that often split us up—like race and class and gender,” said Dr. Frances Lucas, president of the College. “He is considered a ‘gentle authority’ on theology, humanities, and social justice, and no account of his career would be complete without acknowledging his moral and spiritual leadership. He marched with students in the cause for civil rights, counseled students and faculty at times of personal distress, and stood for honor

“He marched with students in the cause for civil rights, counseled students and faculty at times of personal distress, and stood for honor and integrity in many situations of institutional crisis.”

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Lucas said Brad Chism, B.A. 1982, who went on to become a Rhodes Scholar, had fond memories of Lewis.

“T. W. Lewis taught me the course The Teachings of Jesus in 1981. I’ve watched him live the teachings of Jesus ever since—in his lifelong study on the meaning of God’s message to us

science departments to develop the Summer Research Institutes to give Mississippi teachers and students a taste of the Millsaps experience. More recently, she has served with the Millsaps Arts & Lecture Series as the vice president for membership and a team captain for programs. Chambliss is also a supporter of the Faith & Work Initiative, having served as both a Lilly

They are currently serving their second term on the Parents Council and were recently named to the Council’s Executive Committee. For the past several years, they have given of their organizational skills to ensure that Move-In Day runs smoothly.

The Hendrixes have also been especially supportive of athletics at Millsaps, annually serving dinner to the Millsaps baseball team during spring break. Steve, an attorney with Forman, Perry, Watkins, Krutz, & Tardy in Jackson, currently serves on the M-Club Council. The couple recently organized the first M-Club Dinner for Champions fundraiser, held in February 2007, raising more than \$100,000 for Millsaps athletics (*see related story, page 34*).

“The academics here are something that you can’t get anywhere else,” Steve Hendrix said. “The relationships both of our boys have had with their professors—Tal’s gone through the biology department and is going to go to medical school, Tait’s in the business school—we’ve seen it from a couple of different angles, and we couldn’t have asked for any more. And, heck, they even got to play on the same baseball team for a year.”

Virginia Anne (V.A.) Jones Whitley has demonstrated outstanding leadership of and support for Millsaps College. A French major, Whitley spent a summer doing coursework in Clermont-sur-Sauldre, France, before graduating cum laude in 1968.

She earned a master of library science degree from Emory University and had a career as a librarian and teacher before turning to medicine in the mid-1970s. She received her M.D. in 1981 from the University of Tennessee’s College of Medicine, specializing in obstetrics and gynecology.

She practices at The Woman’s Clinic in Jackson and is on staff at Mississippi Baptist Medical Center, where she has served as chief of gynecology and on the executive



Melinda and Steve Hendrix, Dr. T.W. Lewis, President Frances Lucas, Dee Chambliss, and Dr. V.A. Whitley at the College Awards and Recognition Dinner in March.

all, in his soft-spoken wisdom on how to deal with life’s daily challenges, and in his commitment to reconciliation and in his belief in redemption for everyone,’ Brad said. ‘I want to be like T. W. Lewis when I grow up.’

“And T. W.,” Lucas said, “so do I.”

Livesay Award recipient **Dee Chambliss**, B.S. 1986, is an example of the ideals of service that distinguish the College’s most outstanding alumni. Currently serving as assistant secretary of state for education and publications for the state of Mississippi, she is also completing a Ph.D. in education from Delta State University. She started her career teaching in the Jackson Public School System and at St. Andrew’s Episcopal School in Madison.

In the summers of 1989–96, Chambliss worked with the Millsaps

Mentor and the featured speaker on a “Professing the Professions” panel about careers in education.

At the awards ceremony, Chambliss gratefully acknowledged her mentors in the biology department, Dr. Dick Highfill and Dr. Jim McKeown. She said Highfill had supported her decision to enter the field of education rather than medical school. “He made me feel so good about my decision to teach, which has always been in my heart,” Chambliss said. “He embraced that and encouraged me and gave me many opportunities to come back and do wonderful research.”

The parents of Tal Hendrix, B.S. 2006, and sophomore Tait Hendrix, **Steve and Melinda Hendrix** are steadfast supporters of Millsaps College, their church, and the greater community.

medical council. Whitley is also on staff at St. Dominic and River Oaks hospitals. In addition to her career and civic duties, she has given of her time and expertise to Millsaps College, its students and alumni, for almost 20 years. As part of the Millsaps Pre-Med Initiative, Whitley was instrumental in organizing the Medical Connections Weekend in 2001, which brought medical and dental alumni back to campus. She continues to be active in this initiative, inviting one Millsaps student each semester to shadow her at her medical practice.

In her acceptance speech, Whitley emphasized professional mentoring. “Many alumni are giving their time and experiences to have the students shadow them in their respective professions,” she said. “It is one of the most rewarding activities you’ll ever do. The students you meet are so wonderful and appreciative of your time. Many of the mentoring ideas came from Dr. Raymond Martin, who gave over \$1 million for the pre-med endowment and started the pre-health professions program at Millsaps, allowing Millsaps students great preparation. He and others who mentored students at UMC pushed me, without probably realizing it, toward helping the students.

“That’s what’s so special about Millsaps. It’s that bond between classmates, alumni young and old, faculty, and administration. Jim Livesay would certainly agree that Millsaps is truly Mississippi’s first and only honors college.”

To kick off the program, Colleen Fagan, assistant director of annual giving, presented the Class Participation Award for 2005–06 to the Class of 1958 for its 57 percent participation in the Millsaps Annual Fund.

—*B. D. and John Webb*



Baker Harrell founded Youth InterACTIVE, the only state-sponsored and fitness-based after-school program in Texas.

Harrell establishes initiative encouraging fitness among youth

Like many who opt to dedicate their working lives to service, **Baker Harrell**, B.A. 1999, did not follow a preordained career path. Harrell enrolled at Millsaps College and spent three years as a biology major with the intention of entering medical school upon graduation. Then, during his junior year, he encountered what so many Millsaps students have experienced in the College’s classrooms: inspiration, unadulterated and unbridled.

In 2004 Harrell founded Youth InterACTIVE (YI), an Austin, Texas-based nonprofit organization committed to promoting and instilling habits of health and fitness among young people. In less than three years, YI has become Texas’s leading nonprofit social marketing organization for youth, and is the only provider of state-sponsored, health- and fitness-based after-school programs in the

state. YI also provides young people with opportunities for hands-on experience using cutting-edge media technologies, such as web graphics and video production, the success of which has led YI to become the producer of the Texas High School Project’s Student Outreach Media Campaign.

Harrell abandoned a career virtually guaranteed to be both profitable and glamorous to follow his passions into nonprofit community service. “I was dispassionate about medicine,” Harrell said, “but like so many of my peers I had fallen into the perception of college as a type of career-training mechanism rather than a means to developing skills and values that would allow me to uncover my true calling and be successful along that path.”

So what was the impetus for Harrell’s change in attitude toward college?

“Very simple: Dr. Darby Ray,” Harrell said. “I had taken a class with Dr. Ray while a junior, and the experience was really profound. The class with Dr. Ray was the first time while at Millsaps that I truly felt ‘at home.’ Prior to this class, I had many

wonderful professors and experiences, but the class with Dr. Ray was extraordinary. As anyone who knows Dr. Ray will tell you, she is an incredible human being and teacher.”

That class ultimately inspired Harrell to reconsider his hitherto assumed academic path. “I went to Dr. Ray,” he said, “and then to Dr. Steve Smith, the religious studies chair, at the beginning of my senior year. With only one religious studies course to speak of, I told them that although I might have to explain to a lot of people what I was ‘going to do’ with a religious studies degree, I knew without hesitation that I wanted to be a religious studies major. My experience with the amazing students and professors of the department is impossible to describe. I am a better, more capable human being because of what I learned with and from these people, and I am forever in their debt for it.”

Harrell said earning a religious studies degree at Millsaps influenced and shaped his career. “I have always been fascinated by systems which can convince large groups of people to live and think a certain way, despite competing methods, and do so over an extensive period of time,” he said. “I approached religious studies as the best advertising and marketing—particularly social marketing—education that I could get at Millsaps. Though my work with Youth InterACTIVE is not motivated by any one religion, I am in the business of empowering people by positively changing the way they live and think according to a set value system. So, in that sense, I would say that my religious studies degree factors heavily into my day-to-day work with YI. More importantly, however, my experience as a religious studies student prepared me to forever strive to live a life of meaning and integrity.”

After graduating from Millsaps, Harrell earned a master’s degree in children’s health from the University of Texas-Austin, where he is pursuing a Ph.D. in the fields of youth media, youth marketing, and youth culture. “As a student of youth marketing and social marketing,” Harrell

explained, “I was aware of numerous examples of significant social change that occurred largely due to the efforts of young people. It is also far more cost-efficient and cost-effective to empower youth to adopt a certain lifestyle than it is to target adults. Adults who begin a regular exercise regimen and diet in order to lose weight have a less than 10 percent likelihood of continuing that regimen and maintaining that reduced weight.”

Harrell explained that there are “three central initiatives of Youth InterACTIVE: health, education, and community.” These initiatives help to engender in young people what Harrell believes are the three “hallmarks of successful people,” where success is defined by a high quality of life, a sense of purpose, and a passion for living: “They are regularly active and health conscious; they are committed to lifelong learning and have an appreciation for creativity, exploration, and curiosity; and, finally, they are committed to giving back to and working with those around them and beyond. My heroes, both historical and those with and from whom I was fortunate to interact and learn, all embody these values.”

—Jason Bronson

Townsend makes helping those in need his top priority

Shane Townsend, B.A. 2000, has devoted his professional life to helping those in crisis or need. Townsend has contributed to the improvement of the lives of people all over the world. He played a role in recovery efforts at the two biggest disasters in recent American history, the September 11 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina. He’s also a Peace Corps veteran and a social justice entrepreneur.

Townsend grew up in Pascagoula, where he was reared by his father and grandmother in the family boarding house.

He spent most of his time as a child doing things outdoors, from fly fishing and hunting to playing sports like golf, soccer, and football for Pascagoula High School. Townsend’s father also instilled in young Shane a love for nature, teaching him about animal rescue and rehabilitation.

“We had snakes, bats, flying squirrels, alligators, and all kinds of animals,” recalls Townsend.

Townsend’s father fell ill from cancer during Shane’s senior year of high school. Near the end, he was being treated at Baptist Hospital in Jackson, and Shane went for a run through the nearby Millsaps campus.

“Being from a single-parent, working class family, I imagined that was the only way I would ever see Millsaps,” says Townsend. “I had quit university [at Mississippi State] for various reasons and had resigned myself to work at Ingalls Shipbuilding like so many of my friends and family in Pascagoula. I had never been challenged or inspired in college, so I saw no loss in giving it up.”

While running through campus, Townsend stopped by the anthropology department to see what it looked like and met Dr. George Bey, professor of sociology and anthropology. “He invited me into his office, and he talked with me for more than an hour,” remembers Townsend. “We talked some about my father, about school and life in general. By the time I left, he’d convinced me to apply. He persuaded me that I could be successful there.”

“Shane says he was just taking a run, but I think it was more than serendipity that brought him into our department,” Bey says now. “I think it was fate. I think Shane took that run looking for someone to talk to him about learning, and I just happened to be there.”

Townsend’s father died the summer before Shane enrolled at Millsaps. Not surprisingly, he decided to study anthropology.

“For the first time in my life, I was given complete access to the world of academia, and Professor Bey pushed me not

only to embrace the opportunity, but to excel,” he says.

“Shane went from 0–90 in six seconds as regards intellectual abilities,” says Bey. “His desire to study and think was enormous, and he really took to the style of learning we offer at the College. Unlike some students, he never took being at Millsaps for granted, and he took advantage of his opportunities.”

“At Millsaps, they really teach students to pay attention to the big questions and not to take things at face value,” Townsend says. “They taught me to challenge everything. Studying anthropology gives an interesting perspective on society. It’s a unique lens that allowed me to question the things that I was seeing and whether things could be different.”

After graduation, Townsend pursued a master’s degree in urban and regional planning at Virginia Commonwealth University. In his first semester, he interviewed for a position with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. Soon afterward, a flood occurred in southwest Virginia, and Townsend volunteered to help.

“They said all they needed was a secretary, so I went and learned a great deal,” he says. “The next disaster was the [September 11, 2001] attack on the Pentagon, and they sent me to work with FEMA. That solidified things for me, and I turned my academic focus to emergency-preparedness planning.”

Townsend once again drew on his childhood experience for his new career:



Shane Townsend, B.A. 2000, has worked for the Peace Corps and helped manage Save the Children’s response to the hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

“Hurricane Frederick hit on my fourth birthday. In Pascagoula, there has always been a strong disaster lore. With a family boarding house always full of sailors, there was never a shortage of stories about storms. I’ve been in awe of disasters since I could walk.”

Townsend worked for relief efforts after several more disasters in rural Virginia, and then he applied to work in the Peace Corps. He went to New York for a postgraduate degree in international humanitarian assistance from Fordham University and the University of Geneva. Shortly after graduation, he was accepted into the Peace Corps and worked from 2003–05 on community-development planning in a small indigenous Chiquitano enclave of 40 families in Bolivia’s Amazon River Basin. Townsend also helped with emergency management and strategic security planning for the Peace Corps organization.

It was near the end of his time in Bolivia that a disaster had struck closer to Townsend’s heart than ever before.

“There was a day when people kept asking me how my family in Mississippi

was doing,” he recalls. “I kept saying, ‘They are fine,’ and I would get these funny looks. Finally someone told me that a major hurricane had struck the Gulf Coast of Mississippi. I didn’t know anything about it, so I rode horses and then a bus and finally got to a hotel room where [Mayor Ray] Nagin was screaming on CNN about the lack of emergency aid” in New Orleans.

Townsend left Bolivia and eventually got a job with Save the Children, helping to manage the organization’s response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita. “The human side of disasters always affects me, but the sight of destruction on the Coast was something new,” he says. “I had to deal with it as a person who was from there. I don’t have the words to describe it. . . . It was like Hiroshima. After that, I really had to try to separate myself emotionally so I could get the work done without being overwhelmed.”

Townsend left the Coast in May 2006, but he continues to address disaster-related needs of children through his work with the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood, which has developed soon-

to-be-released guidelines for addressing the needs of women and infants in disasters. Townsend also works with Campaign Consultation, Inc., which focuses on the advancement of community-building and organizational development campaigns, with an emphasis on rural and Gulf communities. He also serves as a group facilitator for Si Puedo (a domestic-abuse intervention program for Latino males) and as a member of the board of directors for the Maryland Returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

For Townsend, there's a fundamental motivation that drives him, and it goes back to his upbringing on the Gulf Coast.

"It's empowering to discover that if you see something that is systemically not *right*, that you can help change it," he says. "But no matter how many people you can awaken to that reality, there are some who will never be allowed a voice of their own. So our *responsibility* is to *be* their voices.

"We owe more than we deserve. ... I really believe that. And I feel really fortunate to be able to do something I love. Not everyone gets that opportunity."

—Scott Albert Johnson

McHorse honored for work at Volunteer Healthcare Clinic



Of the many Millsaps alumni who personify the College's ideal of service, **Dr. Tom McHorse**, B.S. 1963, has to be among the most involved. After the Jackson native's time at Millsaps, he attended the Baylor College of Medicine and completed his residency at Vanderbilt University Hospital.

In 1974, he moved with his wife, Kay, to Austin, Texas, where he not only has his own gastroenterology practice, but also regularly treats patients at Volunteer Healthcare Clinic. In his 30-plus years as a volunteer there, he has seen more than 4,000 patients, has spent more years of service there than any other physician, and has served as medical director since 1992.

"I believe we have a responsibility to help those who are less fortunate," McHorse has said. "Somewhere deep in my soul, I love to do those type [of] things. They give me the idea that I am doing some good."

In 2000, he was chosen for the Jordan Award, which honors a community volunteer who has made a significant impact on the quality of life in central Texas through one organization. McHorse's nomination letter from Volunteer Healthcare Clinic said the clinic was thankful that he chose to give his "time, expertise, and especially his caring for those in need."

McHorse has also been named Physician of the Year by the Travis County Medical Society and been given the Sister Mary Rose McPhee Spirituality Award, the recipient of which is honored for demonstrating vision, hope, hospitality, dignity, wisdom, faith, and love. He has served on the boards of innumerable charitable organizations, including The United Way, Children and Family Services, and Project Access, an initiative for the medically indigent.

Despite his awards and unending service, McHorse is frequently noted for his humble demeanor. He is an active member of Tarrytown United Methodist Church, and he and Kay have three sons—Edward, Paul, and Kevin. "I'm proud that everybody in our family has a social conscience," McHorse said. "We are aware of the need to share with others."

—Margaret Cahoon

Coker recognized for conservation efforts in Mexico



Mich Coker, B.S. 1997, a Tucson, Arizona, attorney, has garnered accolades for his recent work "exploring the feasibility of conservation options in Mexico," according

to Valarie Potell of *Inside Tucson Business* magazine.

Coker wrote a paper entitled "Saving the Sierra: Alternative Mechanisms for Conserving Northern Mexico's Last Wild Places," which was selected to be published by the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy at the University of Arizona. He is now revising the essay to be published as a book.

Efforts like "Saving the Sierra" have landed Coker billing as one of *Inside Tucson Business's* nine "Up & Comers" for 2006, as well as one of *Tucson Business Edge's* "40 Under 40" local businessmen. Coker traveled from Jackson to Tucson by way of additional studies in Brisbane, Australia, and Nairobi, Kenya, before pursuing his juris doctorate at the University of Arizona.

He is involved in local organizations promoting the Spanish language and environmental concerns, including the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Tucson Audubon Society.

"Millsaps provided me with a foundation of excellent education and diverse experience that catalyzed my personal interests and professional success," Coker said. "During my time at Millsaps, I traveled abroad for the first time, learned a second language, experienced the camaraderie of playing on two sports teams, and made friends and connections that I will carry with me for the rest of my life."

—Chris Spear