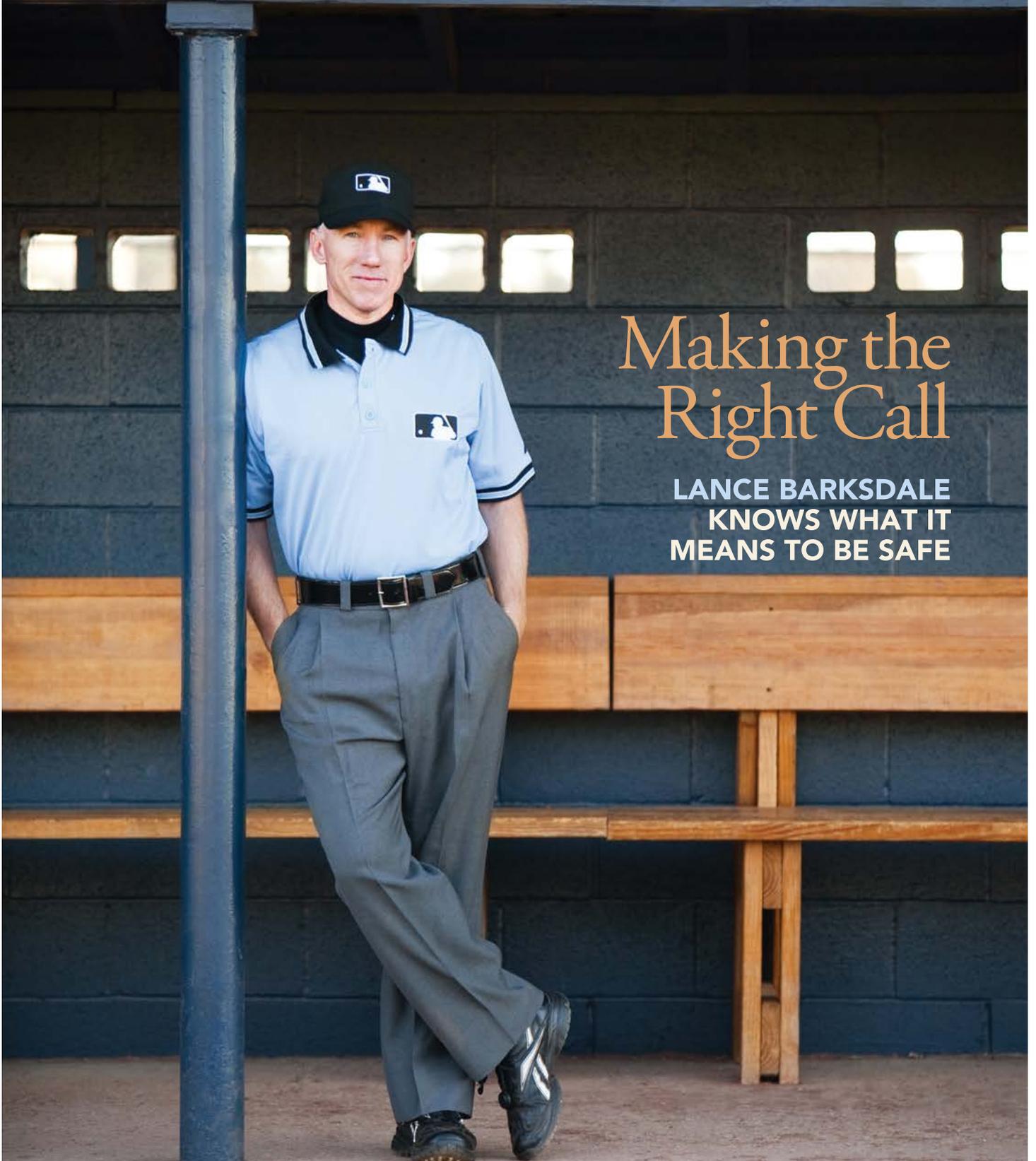


MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE | SPRING 2009

# beacon

## Making the Right Call

LANCE BARKSDALE  
KNOWS WHAT IT  
MEANS TO BE SAFE



# beacon



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

LEE GARDNER ROYCE

**A**cts 20 paints a vivid picture of the Christian life as a race. "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace" (v. 24).

In this issue of the *Beacon*, you'll meet alumni, faculty, and students who have taken that message to heart. From Lance Barksdale's reliance on his faith to get him through tough times in a competitive baseball career to Dr. Tom Williams' desire to serve as a Christian role model for young athletes to the Frascogna family's search for deeper meaning in high school football, the following pages are filled with examples of those seeking to finish the race – or the game, the task, or the book project – not only literally, but spiritually.

The lessons they've learned and the wisdom they've gained are sure to serve as inspiration for others – even those who might never set foot in a stadium and don't care to know the difference between a home run and a touchdown.

It's my hope that the members of our Mississippi College family will see in these pages a testimony to the gospel of God's grace, and it's my prayer that you will be inspired to run with perseverance the race that is set before us.

*Lee Royce*

## BY THE BEACON'S LIGHT

*"...let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith..." — Hebrews 12:1-2*

Judging from his writings, the apostle Paul might have been a sports fan. Paul uses references to running a race as metaphors for spiritual issues, encouraging believers to stay the course until they reach the finish line – eternity with Jesus Christ.

In the following pages you'll meet people whose lives have been shaped in part by their participation in sports. Some have built successful athletic careers of their own, others have channeled their passion for sports into projects that touch other people. All of their stories share a common theme that echoes the message written by Paul more than two thousand years ago. Sports by and of themselves bring a temporary thrill, but the lessons learned through sports – endurance, perseverance, grace under pressure, and encouraging others – are lasting.

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."*  
— II Timothy 4:7-8



*On the Cover:*  
His ability to make the right calls on and off the field led Lance Barksdale '89 to a career as a Major League Baseball umpire. Read more on how Barksdale's faith keeps him safe on page 32.



## THREE MAN FRONT

Marty, Mike Jr., and Mike "The Third" Frascogna score with tributes to Mississippi high school football

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Spring 2009

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*Beacon* magazine is published by the Office of Public Relations, Mississippi College, Box 4003, Clinton, MS 39058. Distributed free of charge to alumni and friends of the University.

Postmaster and others, please send change of address notification to: Office of Alumni Affairs, Box 4027, Clinton, MS 39058

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# Higher Ed Converges *on* College Street

HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERS FROM AROUND THE MAGNOLIA State will gather at Mississippi College this fall for the annual meeting of the Mississippi Association of Colleges (MAC).

Founded in 1921, the group promotes goodwill among the state's private colleges, community colleges, and public universities, and provides an opportunity for all sectors of higher education in Mississippi to share concerns and ideas and discuss common goals.

The association's 76th annual meeting will take place October 4-6, 2009 on the Clinton campus and will address

a variety of topics, including enrollment, fund-raising, academics, staffing, and financial aid. MC President Lee Royce is the 2008-09 president of the MAC board of directors.

"We look forward to welcoming higher education leaders from both the public and private sectors to our campus," Dr. Royce said. "During this challenging economic climate, all of Mississippi's colleges, public and private, face many of the same concerns. This is an excellent opportunity for us to share ideas that will benefit not only our individual institutions, but every student seeking a college education in Mississippi."



# Karl Rove Brings Washington *to* Clinton

and helps raise \$205,000 for scholarships at MC

MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE SUPPORTERS IN ATTENDANCE AT THE spring scholarship banquet were treated to an insider's view of Washington by keynote speaker Karl Rove. The March 30 appearance by the former senior advisor and White House Deputy Chief of Staff helped raise more than \$205,000 to support scholarships at Mississippi College.

A Republican strategist often referred to as "the architect" of President Bush's two successful bids for the White House, Rove is now a Fox News contributor and *Wall Street Journal* columnist. His speech touched on a number of hot topics, from the initial days of the Obama administration to the global war on terror to the record \$787 billion stimulus package signed into law last February. Unlike the vast majority of Americans, Rove actually studied all 1,300 pages of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Rove described the \$787 billion stimulus package as including "every spending hope dreamed up by Congress over the past 20 years," and cautioned the MC audience that, "we are ready to face the most dramatic expansion of government in our lifetime."

Rove's visit attracted more than 500 people to the Mississippi College campus, including Gov. Haley Barbour, Lt. Gov. Phil Bryant, Agriculture Commissioner Lester Spell, and State Treasurer Tate Reeves. Bryant, an MC alumnus who teaches political science classes part-time at his alma mater, introduced Rove. Mississippi College School of Law Dean Jim Rosenblatt moderated the Q&A session.

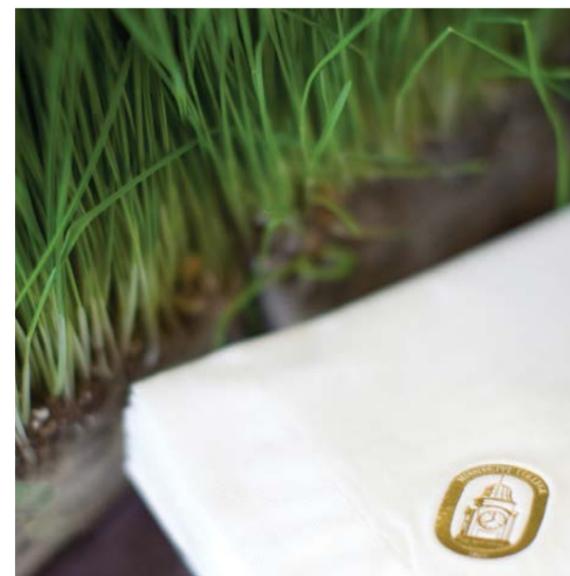
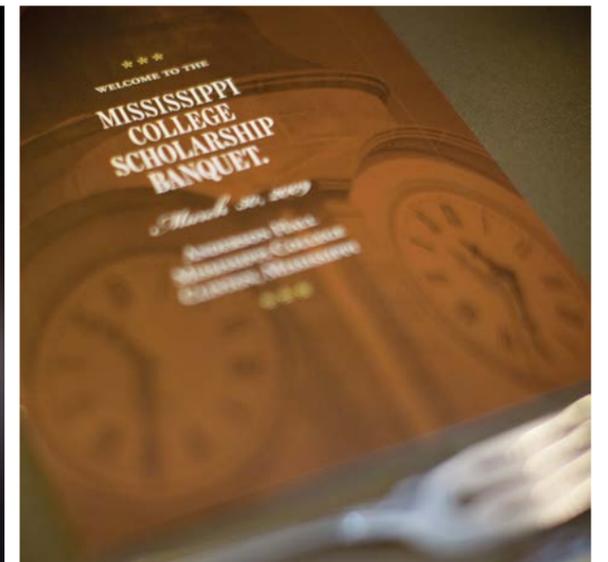
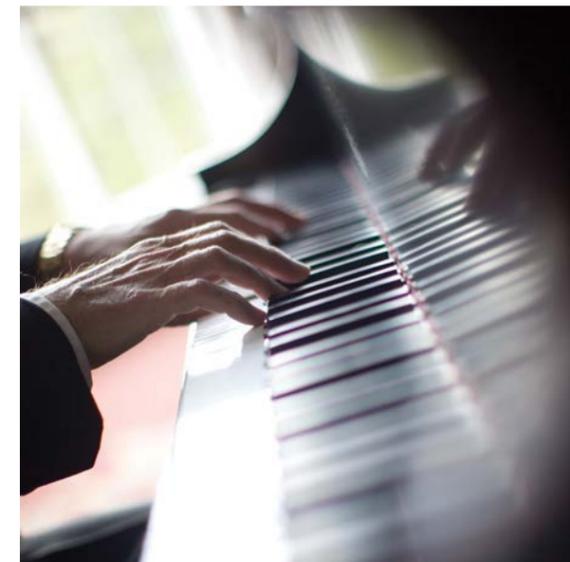
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Rove closed his remarks by *praising* Mississippi College as, "*a wonderful school.* Thank you for what you do here."

\*\*\*

The day of the event, Rove visited some MC classes, then spent the early evening mingling with guests and posing for photos prior to taking the podium. As President Lee Royce, Board of Trustees Chairman Wayne Parker, student leaders, and hundreds of MC supporters looked on, Rove closed his remarks by praising Mississippi College as, "a wonderful school. Thank you for what you do here."

As he exited the B.C. Rogers Student Center, Agriculture Commissioner Lester Spell gave high marks to Rove's address. "It was one of the most interesting talks I've attended. Karl Rove gave a fair and balanced perspective of his topic."



## GROWING THE VISION

Karl Rove's appearance built upon the success of the 2008 scholarship banquet, which featured keynote speaker Senator Bob Dole and also raised more than \$200,000 for scholarships at MC. The annual scholarship banquet is a component of MC's "Growing the Vision" campaign, a drive to raise \$80 million for scholarships, academic programs, endowment support, and capital improvements to the MC campus. \* The Presenting Sponsor for the scholarship banquet was The Lifeshare Foundation led by CEO and Chairman Wayne Parker, an MC trustee. Platinum Sponsors who contributed at least \$25,000 to the event included Bobby Chain and joint sponsors Dr. Bobby Graham and Dr. Sharon Martin.

# And the Award Goes to...

Mississippi College was in the spotlight at recent awards competitions honoring the best in advertising, marketing, and communications. Publications and projects developed through the MC Office of Public Relations garnered top awards in several competitions.



## SPEAKERS IN THE HOUSE

THE MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LANDED A one-two punch with back-to-back April appearances by former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and *New York Times* best-selling author and economist Harry Dent, Jr.

Lott spoke on the political scene in Washington, D.C., where he has worked as a lobbyist since resigning from the Senate in December. The former Republican leader is a keen Washington insider and frequent guest on talk shows like NBC's "Meet the Press" and Fox News programs.

Just one week after Lott's visit, Harry Dent, Jr. spoke at MC's Swor Auditorium during a visit jointly sponsored by the MC School of Business and Mississippi Public Broadcasting (MPB). A program filmed during his visit

will air on MPB later this year. Dent spoke on his latest book, *The Great Depression Ahead*, and shared his belief that America will experience the next Great Depression between late 2009 and 2012. A graduate of the University of South Carolina with an M.B.A. from Harvard, Dent accurately predicted the national housing slowdown years before it occurred.

"We are grateful to Senator Trent Lott and Harry Dent for their willingness to spend time with our students this semester," said School of Business Dean Marcelo Eduardo. "As a school of business, we see it as our responsibility to provide forums through which our students can hear from experts on our government and the economy."

*"As a school of business, we see it as our responsibility to provide forums through which our students can hear from experts on our government and the economy."* — MARCELO EDUARDO, SCHOOL OF BUSINESS DEAN

### PRISM AWARDS

The PRism Awards recognize outstanding work in public relations by professionals throughout Mississippi.

Judges' Choice Award and PRism (First Place Award) – Mississippi College Web Site

PRism (First Place Award) – *Beacon* magazine, spring 2008 and fall 2008 issues

Award of Excellence – "Bob Dole for Speaker" Scholarship Banquet materials

Certificate of Achievement – "Servant Savior" photograph from *Beacon* magazine, spring 2008

### CASE DISTRICT III ALUMNI MAGAZINES

The CASE Awards recognize institutional excellence in marketing and communications.

Special Merit Award – *Beacon* magazine, spring 2008 issue

### THE COLLEGE PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION OF MISSISSIPPI AWARDS

CPRAM promotes excellence in public relations by educational institutions in Mississippi.

First Place – "Mississippi College Equestrian Team Hurdles Over Competition"

First Place – "Bob Dole for Speaker" Scholarship Banquet materials

### ADDY AWARDS

Sponsored by the Jackson Advertising Federation, the annual Addy Awards honor Central Mississippi's best creative work in advertising and marketing.

Gold – *Beacon* magazine, spring 2008 issue

Gold – *Beacon* magazine, fall 2008 issue

Gold – *Beacon* magazine, spring and fall issues as a campaign

Gold – "Anita Renfroe" feature article

Gold – "Bob Dole for Speaker" Scholarship Banquet materials

Silver – "Stan Baldwin's Brain" feature article

Silver – *Beacon* magazine, fall 2008 cover design





# MARKED *by* MOMENTUM

President's Report 2008-09

FROM THE PRESIDENT

This year has been marked by solid achievement by Mississippi College. United by our vision to be known as a university recognized for academic excellence and commitment to the cause of Christ, the MC family worked together to expand our Christian ministries, launch new academic programs, and enhance our campus. We celebrated as our faculty and students were recognized for achievements on state and national levels, and demonstrated our commitment to our shared vision by giving to an ambitious campaign for MC.

Then, in late 2008, America was officially declared to be in a recession. Along with the rest of the country, MC now faces new challenges presented by a difficult economic climate. But thanks in part to the strides made during prior years, MC is in a positive position to deal with the economic downturn. Our prospects for strong enrollment in the fall of 2009 look good. Our debt levels continue to fall. Like all colleges in the country, our endowment has declined, but unlike many colleges, our day-to-day operations are not dependent upon endowment earnings. Though we have seen a decline in major gifts, generous contributions continue to flow from the Mississippi Baptist Convention and our many friends and alumni.

Even as we weather this economic storm, we cannot stop working to advance our mission. So what do we do when we have made so much progress, but the economy threatens to bring some of our momentum to a standstill?

Our job now is not just to promote our vision for Mississippi College, but also to prove that we are living up to that vision. In a recession, people seeking college degrees look for clarity – they want to know exactly what they are getting for their money. They look for programs of distinction and for enduring value. In that vein, Mississippi College has a clear story to tell and we will continue to be aggressive in telling it. Now more than ever, we must be proactive in showing students, parents, faculty, staff, and friends who we are and what we can deliver.

We have recounted a part of the Mississippi College story in the 2008-09 President's Report, which you may read in full at [www.mc.edu/annualreport](http://www.mc.edu/annualreport). The accomplishments highlighted in this report represent the most recent chapters in the positive story of Mississippi College. Based on both the credibility of that story to date and our faith in that story's Author, it is with optimism that we meet tomorrow's challenges.

*Lee Royce*

VIEW THE 2008-09 MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE PRESIDENT'S REPORT AT  
[WWW.MC.EDU/ANNUALREPORT](http://WWW.MC.EDU/ANNUALREPORT)



“Along with the rest of the country, MC now faces new challenges presented by a difficult economic climate. But thanks in part to the strides made during prior years, MC is in a positive position to deal with the economic downturn.”



# MC

## SPORTS CENTER

### BATTER UP

The Choctaw baseball team came within one pitch of victory in the American Southwest Conference Championship game held May 4th at MC's Frierson Field. The Choctaws fell 8-5 to the University of Texas at Tyler Patriots, who advanced to the NCAA Division III tournament. The top of the ninth saw the Choctaws just one out away from the championship, but with their backs against the wall, the batting Patriots were able to pull out the victory.

The Choctaws finished the season with a 30-16 record and claimed a share of the ASC East Division title, and Choctaw head coach Brian Owens was named Coach of the Year for the second year in a row.

According to MC sports information director Chris Brooks, hosting the ASC championship game will have long-term benefits for Choctaw baseball.

"Several potential recruits came to the game to see what MC baseball is all about," Brooks says. "That type of exposure can only elevate the caliber of players we're able to attract to our program. The support from our own students and from the Clinton area was also tremendous. The more we're able to host events like this, the greater involvement we'll see from the community."

While he's happy with the Choctaws' performance on the field and honored to have been named Coach of the Year for the second year running, Coach Brian Owens will remember this season for another reason.

"We had four players won to the Lord this year," Owens says. "That is by far the accomplishment of which I'm most proud."

### ON THE RIGHT TRACK

April 25 saw Al Winsley on fire at the 2009 American Southwest Conference Track and Field Championships held at Parkman Track in Clinton. The senior All-American high jumper claimed the High Points award and was named Field Athlete of the Meet.

In early April, Winsley helped the MC track team capture the men's title in the Twilight Invitational on the Clinton campus. Winsley made the best jump in NCAA Division III with a jump of 7' 1.25".

Next up for Winsley is the USA Track and Field Championships in June. A pulled hamstring ended his 2008 Olympic dreams, but Winsley is determined to represent the United States in the 2012 Olympics in London, England.

"In 2008, I watched the Olympics on TV and kept saying, 'That could've been me,'" Winsley says. "Hopefully in 2012, that *will* be me."

### HERE'S THE KICKER

The National Soccer Coaches Association of America named Lady Choctaw Carrie Kirk to its All-South Region Third Team. The honor was one of many for Kirk, who was also selected for the All-ASC First Team for the third consecutive season, as well as making the Academic All-ASC team. Kirk was also named the team's Defensive Most Valuable Player and won the Choctaw Pride Award, which is presented to the player who best represents the team.

"Carrie is a great player, maybe one of the best we've had in the history of the team, but I'd say she is an even better person," says Lady Choctaw soccer coach Darryl Longabaugh. "She has a big heart for people and for the Lord. She spends her summers on mission trips and as a camp counselor, and when it comes to soccer, she's a leader on and off the field. Carrie Kirk is a great young lady, one of the finest I've ever coached."



### PUTTING THE "STUDENT" IN STUDENT-ATHLETES

Mississippi College led the American Southwest Conference in ASC All-Academic players. All-Academic representatives include student-athletes who are in their second year of play and carry a grade point average of 3.0 or better. Some 102 MC players representing fall, winter, and spring sports made the list. Second place in the ASC was the University of Texas at Tyler with 72 players. This marks the eighth consecutive year that MC has led the American Southwest Conference in All-Academic conference representatives.





## A Real Paddling

Wicked spins, ferocious slams, and cheers shouted in Chinese, Spanish, and English were all part of the game as the Mississippi College table tennis teams battled elite programs from the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico in the National Collegiate Table Tennis Association's 2009 tournament.

The reigning Dixie Division champs, the Choctaws joined 38 other teams and more than 250 dedicated table tennis players in Minnesota's Rochester Sports Facility for the ultimate ping-pong match. The tournament was billed as "three incredible days of table tennis" with teams from California, Princeton, Columbia, the University of Illinois, and other schools far larger than MC competing.

The MC women's team, which featured players from China, Taiwan, and Venezuela, finished fourth, edging out fifth-place Stanford. A strong Rutgers team finished third. The women's team included Maria Montano, a former star player at the University of Southern Mississippi whose transfer to MC gave the Lady Choctaws a powerful lift; the dynamic doubles duo of Jessica Zhou and Jenny Wu; Nancy Tsai, who divided her time in Rochester between playing in the tournament and practicing for an upcoming recital on a borrowed piano; and Sabrena Song, dubbed the "water girl" by her teammates for her constant encouragement to the team.

The MC men's team and coed teams, led by Captain Ken Qiu, combined to finish in 16th place. Qiu, an M.B.A. finance student, pulled double duty, coaching on the sidelines when he was not showcasing his aggressive play style behind the table.

This was MC's second season to field a tennis table team. According to team sponsor and MC news coordinator Andy Kanengiser, next year's team should be even stronger, with Qiu returning for a third season and the men's number two player, Ou Lan, planning to receive professional coaching assistance during a summer break in his native China.

"They played their hearts out in Minnesota," said Kanengiser, a longtime player and current Mississippi Senior Olympics table tennis champion. "I anticipate the entire team will step up their practice sessions at Alumni Gym to get even better."

### THE PING PONG BALL AS A RECRUITMENT TOOL

The bulk of MC's 280 international students are from China, where table tennis is considered the national sport. A strong table tennis team and an appreciation of the sport are helping MC in its international recruiting efforts in China and other countries where ping-pong is the game of choice.

### TABLE TENNIS ANYONE?

Interest in table tennis at the college level is growing nationwide. According to the National Collegiate Table Tennis Association, there are 151 college teams in the United States, up from 127 just one year ago. Table tennis became an Olympic sport in 1988.

Above: Team captain Ken Qiu and players Ou Lan, Jenny Wu, and Maria Montano practice for the big match. / The MC table tennis team includes: (back) Jenny Wu, Jessica Zhou, Ou Lan, Captain Ken Qiu, and Sabrena Song, all of China; (front) Nancy Tsai of Taiwan and Maria Montano of Venezuela.



## A Slam Dunk for the Lady Choctaws

Mississippi College's Lady Choctaws shot their way to post-season play in an exciting 2008-09 basketball season that saw the team compete in the NCAA Division III championship tournament for the first time in the program's history.

Marked by 22 wins and just five losses, the stellar season ended when the Lady Choctaws fell to Greensboro College 77-70 in the first round of the NCAA Division III Basketball Championship Tournament. Greensboro sported an impressive 26-2 record coming into the contest with MC. Despite the heartbreaking loss, the season was quite an improvement from last year's 15-11 record.

"This season was something I'll never forget," said senior point guard Casie Hilton. "Hopefully the program will continue to build on this year's success. I feel fortunate I was able to be part of it."

"This year, give credit to the kids," said Coach Paul Allen Duke, who logged his 14th season as coach. "This was one of my favorite groups of players, and they really worked hard this year."

"We were so successful this year because we had such great chemistry as a team," junior guard Anna Patterson said. "On the court, we were balanced and good in every spot, but it was our bond that truly made the impact. This will be the team that raised expectations for women's basketball at MC."

### MORE HOOPLA FOR THE LADIES

Several Lady Choctaws were recognized for their performance on the court and in the classroom. Players named to All-American Southwest Conference teams included senior forward Rosemary Green, who was named to the All-Conference Team and the All-East Division First Team. Green averaged 12.5 points and 4.3 rebounds per game, while ranking in the top ten in the ASC in field goal percentage (.555). Senior forward Anesia McBride was also named to the All-East Division First Team. Senior guard Brittany Dukes was named ASC East Division Co-Newcomer of the Year, while junior guard Anna Patterson and senior guard Casie Hilton were named to the ASC East Division Defensive Team. Patterson also earned ASC All-East Division Honorable Mention honors.

**AMERICAN SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE (ASC) ACADEMIC ALL-CONFERENCE AWARD RECIPIENTS INCLUDED:** Senior Forward Rosemary Green, Senior Guard Casie Hilton, Senior Forward Kelsey Hopkins, Sophomore Guard Randa Lee, Senior Forward Anesia McBride, Junior Guard Anna Patterson, and Senior Guard Deanna Powe.

### MEN'S HOOPS

Led by Coach Don Lofton, the men's basketball team posted an impressive 20-7 record, including a 14-6 mark in American Southwest Conference play. The men lost to the University of Texas-Dallas in the ASC Tournament Championship to end the 2008-09 season.

Above: Lady Choctaw Anna Patterson dribbles against Greensboro College. / With an average of more than 18 wins per season, basketball coach Paul Allen Duke has an impressive 234-95 (.711) record. Duke's winning percentage is among the best for Division III coaches in the country.



**MARTY, MIKE JR.,  
AND MIKE "THE THIRD"  
FRASCOGNA SCORE  
WITH TRIBUTES TO  
MISSISSIPPI HIGH  
SCHOOL FOOTBALL**

## THREE MAN **3** FRONT

MARTY FRASCOGNA STILL RECALLS THE ARGUMENT HE OVERHEARD BETWEEN HIS FATHER AND THE PRINCIPAL AT JACKSON PREPARATORY SCHOOL.

"I was sitting in class and I heard them talking in the hall," Marty recalls. "The principal couldn't believe my father was actually checking me out of school to attend the Mississippi high school football state championship game. Dad told him, 'My son will learn more important things at that game today than he will in class.'"

Marty wasn't surprised when his father, X. M. "Mike" Frascogna, Jr., won that argument. In the Frascogna family, high school football had always been more than just a sport. It was a passion that would eventually lead Mike, Marty, and Marty's older brother, Mike Frascogna III, to write not one but two books capturing the triumphs, tragedies, and life lessons played out every fall Friday night on football fields across Mississippi.



Mike Frascogna, Jr. and Mike III are graduates of Mississippi College School of Law; Marty will graduate from MCSOL in December 2009. Mike and Mike III are attorneys and Marty is a clerk with Frascogna Courtney, PLLC, a Jackson-based law firm specializing in entertainment and sports law. But while the three Frascognas know their torts, they also know their sport.

"My birthday present in the first grade was a blue tackling dummy," Mike III recalls.

"Mine was yellow," Marty says. "Growing up in our house, football was pretty much non-stop."

The Frascognas didn't stop at playing on their own schools' teams or cheering on their *alma maters*. Instead, they developed a family passion for following high school football statewide.

"There's just no comparison between pro or even college football and high school football," Mike Frascogna says. "High school football runs so deep in the community that it's a part of the root system. There's a genuine loyalty there that doesn't exist at the college or pro levels."

"Take a team like South Panola," Mike continues. "The Tigers are unbelievably important to the people of Batesville and every player on that team knows it. Those kids would rather die in a ditch than let the community down. That's what high school football in Mississippi is all about – the kind of passion that's inspiring to see."

Although the Frascognas have never tried counting all of the games they've each attended – Marty says that would be like "trying to count the number of times you've eaten a hamburger and French fries" – Mike estimates that he's attended somewhere in the neighborhood of 1,000 football games. Often accompanied by one or both of his sons, Mike has been in the stands at every Mississippi high school football championship game since the playoffs were implemented in 1981.

"It never gets old and it doesn't matter who's playing," Mike says. "We get sideline passes and go from one side to the other, cheering for whichever team is behind."

The Frascognas' decision to turn their shared passion for Friday night football into a book was inspired by a 2006



FOR YEARS WE'D BEEN SAYING THAT MISSISSIPPI HAD A DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENT THAT MADE OUR HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL THE BEST. WERE WE BIASED? ABSOLUTELY. BUT USA FOOTBALL WAS NOT, AND THEY RANKED MISSISSIPPI #1.

#1

study conducted by USA Football, a non-profit organization supporting youth football, and the Wharton Business Initiative at the University of Pennsylvania. The study cited Mississippi as having the best high school football program in America.

“For years we’d been saying that Mississippi had a different environment that made our high school football the best,” Mike Frascogna says. “Were we biased? Absolutely. But USA Football was not, and they ranked Mississippi #1. When that survey came out, we realized that no one had ever researched *why* high school football in Mississippi is such a cultural phenomenon.”

The Frascognas decided to tackle that research project, and ultimately, to memorialize Mississippi high school

football in a way it had never before been showcased.

“The study looked at stats, but that doesn’t make for an interesting read,” Mike III says. “Instead, we wanted to capture the emotional side of things. How did people describe and explain high school football in Mississippi?”

To get that unique perspective, the Frascognas interviewed 120 of Mississippi’s greatest high school football coaches and combined their insights, coaching philosophies, and war stories into the definitive book on Mississippi high school football. The three Frascognas participated equally in the interviewing, research, and writing, critiquing and contributing to each other’s work. Thanks to all those years of playing, watching, and loving football together, the collaboration came fairly easily. The Frascognas

agree that Marty was perhaps the best interviewer, Mike III the most skilled at factual writing, and that Mike – who wrote his drafts in longhand – poured a sense of passion into the pages.

The result of their team effort is a 300-page love letter to high school football titled *Gridiron Gold: Inspiring Stories of Legendary Mississippi High School Coaches, Guardians of the Greatest Football Talent in America*. Some of the stories in *Gridiron Gold* are humorous, some are heartwarming. Some reflect deep tradition, while others are a metaphor for social change. All point to high school football as an integral part of Mississippi’s culture. The jacket copy for *Gridiron Gold* describes high school football as “...more than just a sport to residents of the Magnolia

State. It is a mechanism for teaching right and wrong, a platform for preaching the word of God, an outlet for escaping farming and pulpwood hauling, a source of civic pride and a way of honoring your ancestry. To Mississippians, high school football is a necessary obsession.”

Reasons behind that “necessary obsession” examined in detail in the book include a small town make-up that allows the high school football team to become a symbol for the entire town, a strong work ethic, and the legacy and sheer pride of continuing a winning tradition. Mike Frascogna also credits Mississippi’s geographic location and the profound influence of high school coaches.

“We’re located in Bible Belt where rules, including those enforced by coaches, still apply,” Mike says. “And in

## THE FRASCOGNAS' NEXT PLAY

Tentatively titled *Bull Cyclone and the Lions of Scooba, Mississippi*, the Frascognas' next book tells the story of East Mississippi Junior College football coach Bull Cyclone, a coach so tough that his practices involved lining the defense up at the bottom of a hill with their backs against a pond filled with alligators. The book is scheduled for release in fall of 2009.

story after story, the coaches for the most part didn't see coaching as a profession, they saw it as a ministry. High school football coaches in Mississippi recognize they have a unique opportunity to minister to the young men they coach."

That philosophy is backed up by NFL superstar and former B. L. Moor High School Eagle Jerry Rice, who once said, "There were two important events during the week – Friday night football and Sunday church. In many cases, the coach and the preacher were saying the same things. You talk a lot of football at church and learn a lot about God at football practice."

During the course of researching *Gridiron Gold*, the Frascognas heard story after story of heated high school football rivalries played out not only on the football field, but also in the towns that were home to the teams. Those stories formed the basis of their second collaboration, *Y'all vs. Us: Thrilling Tales of Mississippi's Hottest High School Football Rivalries*.

To immerse themselves in those rivalries the Frascognas visited 30 schools, interviewing some 600 coaches, players, cheerleaders, principals, booster club members, town mayors, and fans. The result is a fun-filled, in-depth look at 15 of Mississippi's most intense high school football rivalries, replete with tales of trash talk, mascot mischief, game-changing plays, controversial calls, and even a brawl between cheerleaders from rival schools in a fast food drive-through line. Each chapter concludes with a series of often-hilarious comments made by each team about the other.

"The great thing about interviewing the kids was that none of them were politically correct," Mike III says. "They would say things an adult would never say with a tape recorder running. For example, the cheerleaders from Greene County told me that the kids at George County referred to them not just as hicks, but as 'inbred hicks.' Instead of worrying about being politically correct, their attitude was 'Come on, can't we just have fun with this?'"



**TIGER RAG** One of the Frascognas favorite stories from *Y'all vs. Us* focuses on the uniting power of high school football. But this tale doesn't focus on the winning football team, but on the band. • In 1967, predominantly white McComb High School, proud home of the Tigers, was integrated with African-American Burglund High School, equally proud home of the Lions. Many compromises were made, including retaining the Tiger mascot but adopting the Burglund school colors. But one of the biggest challenges was how to integrate the two schools' bands. The bands literally marched to the tunes of different drummers; combining their musical and performing styles without sacrificing either band's identity seemed an impossible assignment. In one of the most moving passages in *Y'all vs. Us*, band director Robert Vick, Jr. describes the football game at which the two bands merged into one. • "The stadium was packed; both sides were full. Basically all the blacks were together and all the whites were together. Everybody was wondering just how we were going to work things out. Both bands came on doing their own thing. McComb High came onto the field playing "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head" and marching military style. Burglund took the field to "Fever," marching at a faster pace. Then both bands came to midfield, merged, and struck up "Tiger Rag." When we hit that tune together, you just felt a great sigh of relief across the entire audience. The band marched off the field to a standing ovation."

More than just humorous tales, *Y'all vs. Us* offers inspirational stories that prove high school football is much more than just a game, including accounts of the Pearl vs. Brandon match-up that returned a sense of normalcy to an entire community in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks, an Oxford High School assistant coach whose terminally ill mother refused to die during the Lafayette-Oxford game, and the hope generated by the first Biloxi High School football game played in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.



X. M. "MIKE" FRASCOGNA, JR. played high school football at St. Joseph Catholic School and has more than 14 years' experience coaching youth football, including several of his sons' youth teams. Mike has attended every Mississippi high school football championship game since the playoffs were implemented in 1981. His law firm, Frascogna Courtney, PLLC, is the only firm in Mississippi with a specialty in entertainment and sports law. Mike is an adjunct professor at the Mississippi College School of Law.

X.M. "MIKE THE THIRD" FRASCOGNA III played high school football at Jackson Academy. He spent his freshman year at Millsaps College before transferring to the University of Notre Dame, where he was a wide receiver and special teams player for Coach Lou Holtz. Mike III coached wide receivers at Millsaps College while earning his M.B.A. from the Else School of Management. He practices with the entertainment and sports law division of Frascogna Courtney and treasures fond memories of his blue tackling dummy.

MARTY FRASCOGNA played high school football at Jackson Prep, where he also logged a few absences while attending the Mississippi high school football state championship game with his father. Marty played as a defensive back and kick returner for Millsaps College and was twice named an all-conference player in the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference. He was a member of the 2000 Millsaps team that renewed the rivalry with Mississippi College after a 40-year hiatus, but put the Backyard Brawl rivalry behind him in order to earn his master's degree in international communication from MC. A student at Mississippi College School of Law, Marty clerks for the Frascogna Courtney law firm.

DR. NAN FRASCOGNA, Mike's daughter and Mike III and Marty's sister, learned the game from the sidelines as a cheerleader at Jackson Academy.

JUDY FRASCOGNA, Mike's wife and Mike III and Marty's mother, is also a football fan. During a friendly family board game, Judy had to give clues for the term "hook and ladder." "Other people might have said, 'equipment on a fire truck,'" Marty recalls. "Not Mom. Her clue was 'the trick play where the quarterback throws the ball to the receiver and the receiver pitches it to a player in the backfield.'" Not surprisingly, all of the Frascognas guessed correctly.

*Gridiron Gold and Y'all vs. Us* are available at Mississippi bookstores, on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and at [www.yallvsus.com](http://www.yallvsus.com).

"The best part of this project for me was getting to meet so many people from across Mississippi and seeing and hearing first-hand what their towns' football teams meant to them," Mike says. "Because of this book, I'm much more knowledgeable about my home state. I came away with a stronger conviction and deeper appreciation of just how unique Mississippi really is."

That appreciation for high school football as part of what makes Mississippi unique is the reason that *Gridiron Gold* and *Y'all vs. Us* resonate not only with football fans, but also with those who might never learn the difference between a Hail Mary and a hand-off.

"Many women come to the Frascognas' book signings to get a copy autographed for their husbands or sons, and later they tell me they picked up the book themselves and couldn't put it down," says Dr. Ennis Proctor, executive director of the Mississippi High School Activities Association, who wrote the foreword to *Gridiron Gold*. "These books are about more than just a football play or a rivalry. I would recommend *Gridiron Gold* and *Y'all vs. Us* to any reader who wants to laugh, who wants to be inspired, and who wants to feel pride in Mississippi and her citizens."

## BILLABLE HOURS

IN KEEPING WITH THEIR BACKGROUNDS AS ATTORNEYS, THE FRASCOGNAS KEPT METICULOUS RECORDS OF THE HOURS INVOLVED IN RESEARCHING AND WRITING *Gridiron Gold* AND *Y'all vs. Us*. TIME SHEETS SHOW THE THREE HAVE LOGGED A COMBINED TOTAL OF 5,420 HOURS. "THE BOOKS WERE REWARDING PROJECTS," MIKE FRASCOGNA SAYS WITH A SMILE, "BUT A BAD BUSINESS DEAL."

# 42

*years ON THE ball*

DR. TOM WILLIAMS — TEACHER, MENTOR, *and* LIFELONG COACH

Got an obscure question about the rules and regs of NCAA baseball?

Ask Dr. Tom Williams.

Wondering about that new eligibility rule in college football?

Dr. Williams has the scoop.

Looking for the latest on basketball, cross-country, golf, tennis, track, soccer, softball, or volleyball?

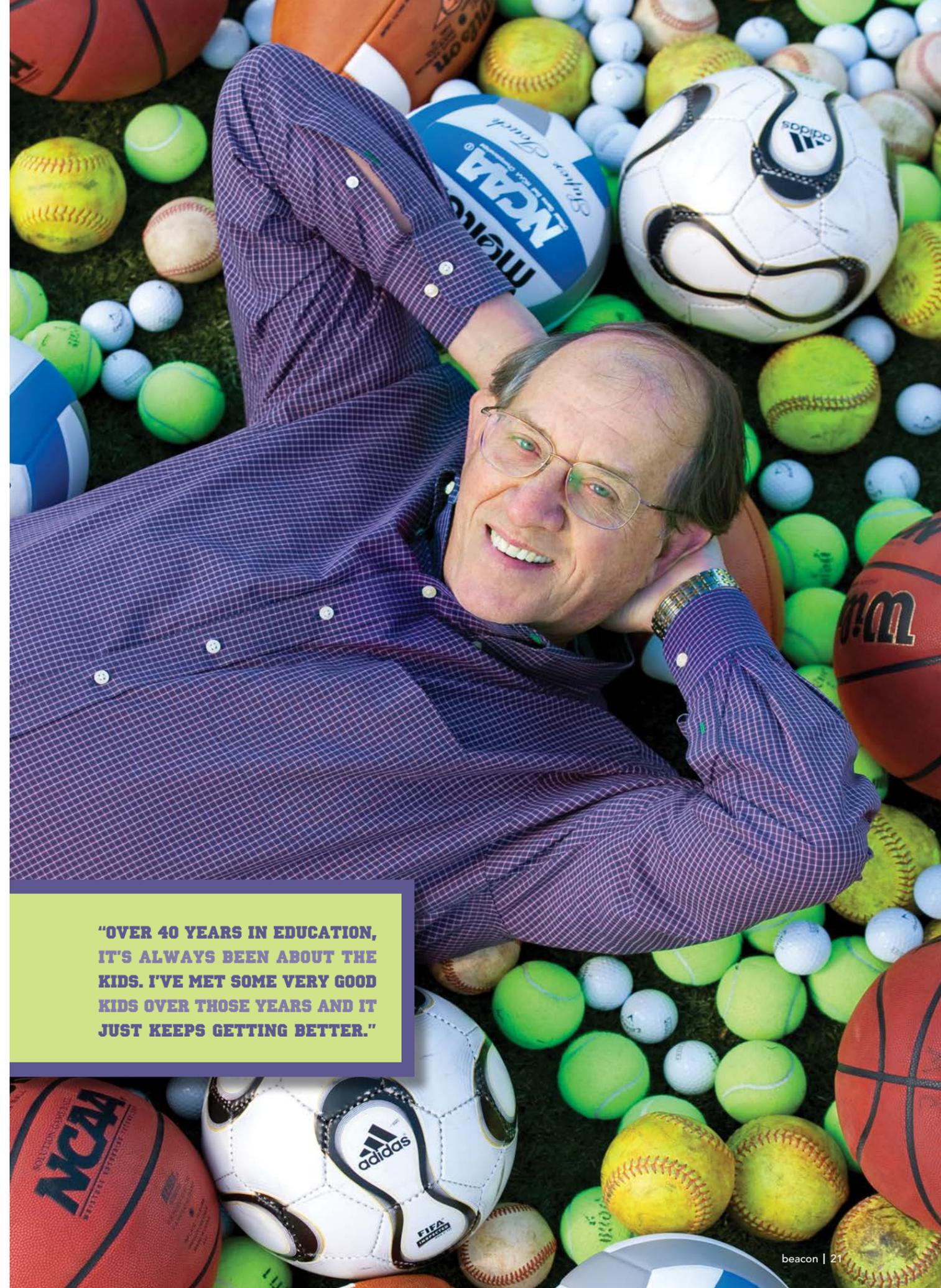
Tom Williams is your man.

And when it comes to table tennis, don't ping or pong 'til you've talked to Tom.

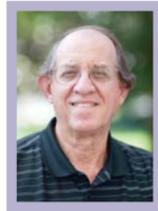
As Mississippi College's Faculty Athletics Representative, it's Dr. Williams' job to navigate the labyrinth of regulations put forth by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). But along with the knowledge and experience needed to interpret those policies, Dr. Williams brings a genuine heart for student-athletes that makes this administrator the exception to the rule.

Dr. Tom Williams is professor of education and chair of the department of teacher education and leadership in the Mississippi College School of Education. As the department head, Williams is responsible for shaping the curriculum that will prepare the next generation of elementary and secondary school teachers. He also teaches a class in research and statistics, saying with a smile, "the department chair teaches the subjects no one else wants to."

But in addition to his administrative and classroom duties, Dr. Williams holds multiple positions critical to the MC athletic program. He serves on the Intercollegiate Athletics Committee, which advises MC President Lee Royce and Athletic Director Mike Jones on issues related to the academic performance of student-athletes, academic/athletic issues affecting MC, and the hiring of new coaches. Dr. Williams also holds a seat on the Institutional Title IX Committee, which addresses any issues related to Title IX, the law that prohibits discrimination based on gender in educational activities, including sports.



**"OVER 40 YEARS IN EDUCATION, IT'S ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT THE KIDS. I'VE MET SOME VERY GOOD KIDS OVER THOSE YEARS AND IT JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER."**



## “TOM WILLIAMS

regularly puts other people and their needs before his own. I’ve seen him help numerous students with their career and academic goals. What I’ve *never* seen is Tom Williams meeting a stranger. He welcomes everyone he comes into contact with, whether it’s a casual meeting in the Caf or a formal recruiting event.”

Dr. Debbie Norris, MC graduate school dean and vice president for planning and assessment, who serves with Dr. Williams on the Title IX Committee

Dr. Williams’ most important role in relation to athletics is his position as Mississippi College’s NCAA Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR). Every college with an organized sports program has a faculty athletics representative whose job is to serve as a liaison between that school’s athletic and academic programs. As MC’s representative, Williams attends conferences and seminars that keep him up-to-date on the complex policies that govern collegiate sports.

“Most of the job is self-policing, making sure we stay in compliance with the NCAA,” Williams says. “If there is ever a rules violation, my role would become that of ‘special investigator.’ Fortunately, a rules violation has never occurred under my watch.”

Williams’ role also includes serving as a sounding board for MC Athletic Director Mike Jones.

“Tom Williams brings an athletic background and a history of success as a teacher that make him the ideal person for this position,” Jones says. “In all of the issues we deal with, Tom is always there to provide the wisdom, experience, and sound advice we need to make the right decisions. He’s not only a great faculty athletics representative for MC, but to me personally, he is a great friend and a great mentor.”

Williams’ depth of wisdom and experience comes as the result of a 40-plus-year history of teaching and coaching.

“By the time I was in the ninth grade, I knew I wanted to be a teacher,” Williams recalls. “I had some good teach-

ers who inspired me and I remember thinking that I’d like to be a part of something like that.”

Following his 1967 graduation from Mississippi State University, Williams held positions as a junior high and high school biology and science teacher at Peeples Junior High School and Wingfield High School in Jackson, Mississippi. Williams made the move to administration in the early 1980s, serving as assistant principal and later as principal at Callaway High School, then as principal at Chastain Junior High School and Murrah High School in Jackson. In 1992, he retired from Jackson Public Schools and joined the faculty at Mississippi College.

Dr. Williams’ service at the junior high and high school levels included coaching track, football, basketball, and tennis. In 1978, he was named Mississippi Tennis Coach of the Year in recognition of his outstanding leadership of the Wingfield High School tennis team.

“I was a very intense coach, both at practice and at the games,” Williams recalls. “I wanted my kids to do well.”

Those who know him today might have trouble imagining the caring, generous, and humble Dr. Williams as “intense,” but that description comes as no surprise to Jimmy Morton. Today, Morton is a Hinds County Justice Court Judge, but in the late 1970s, he was a player on Coach Tom Williams’ Wingfield tennis team.

“I arrived 30 minutes late to a match and Coach Williams gave me the greatest chewing out I’ve ever had in my

life,” Judge Morton says with a smile. “As a result, to this very day, I am always, *always* punctual.

“On a serious note, Coach Williams was a mentor to me during my high school years and he continues to be a mentor and a role model to me today,” Morton continues. “He was one of those instructors who not only inspired you to learn, but also taught you life skills. Under Coach Williams, I didn’t just learn biology facts and tennis moves. I learned integrity, the value of a work ethic, and relational skills. Hopefully, I’m passing on those skills to the people I come into contact with in court.”

Vianne Giddens Welch studied biology and played basketball under Dr. Williams’ guidance at Wingfield in the late 1970s. Welch was so inspired by Dr. Williams’ example that she followed in his footsteps; today she is an algebra teacher at Jackson Preparatory School.

“Coach Williams was an excellent leader, someone who always pulled the best out of you,” Welch recalls. “He was also an excellent teacher, constantly looking for innovative ways to get his point across. I remember a time in biology class when he walked in, threw a handful of M&Ms on the floor, then taught a lesson as to why it was biologically safe to eat them. I try to incorporate that same style into the classes I teach today. My hope is that my students will someday remember me the same way I remember Coach Williams.”

His passion for teaching and coaching young people has always been at the forefront of Dr. Williams’ career. While his work today is primarily administrative, he relishes his time in the classroom – even teaching research and statistics – and confesses that after 25 years off the court, he still misses coaching.

“At some point I realized it was a young person’s activity,” Dr. Williams says with a wry smile. “I never lost my passion for coaching young people, but I realized I probably couldn’t do it forever. So I became an administrator – something, by the way, that I said I’d never do.

“There’s something so worthwhile in conveying knowledge and interacting with the kids, and I still get that enjoyment from teaching,” Williams continues. “I do enjoy being an administrator, but I have to confess that I’d rather be in the classroom than in the office.”

As a teacher, an athletic liaison, and an administrative leader, Dr. Williams plays an integral role in helping MC

fulfill its vision to be known as a university recognized for academic excellence and commitment to the cause of Christ.

“Our mission is to be a Christian university and we don’t apologize for that,” Dr. Williams says. “We hire coaches with a solid Christian foundation who know the value of a life grounded in Christian principles, and they recruit and train kids who reflect that.

“We don’t have a win-at-any cost mentality,” Williams continues. “We still like to win – being a Christian institution certainly doesn’t mean you like to lose – but we want to win fairly. Mississippi College does not have a ‘problemless’ athletic program, but we do have coaches who are role models and an ethical program that makes a difference for our kids, not only today but in their futures.”

One of Dr. Williams’ favorite parts of his role as the faculty athletics representative is helping secure MC students’ futures by nominating them for NCAA scholarships. Williams was key in helping Tyler Winford ’08, a former standout for the Choctaw basketball team and current student at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, win a post-graduate NCAA scholarship.

“Dr. Williams made sure he did everything he could to ensure my success in the scholarship process,” Winford says. “I have him to thank for organizing my requirements and serving as a liaison between myself and the NCAA. The money I received has given me a great head start in financing my medical school education.

“Dr. Williams definitely has the student-athletes’ best interests in mind,” Winford continues. “It’s essential to have a person like him at a school like MC, which works to present its athletes as students first.”

“Tom has been an invaluable help to me, but he always considers his first responsibility to be to our student-athletes,” Jones adds. “His door is always open to them. He is a kind, generous gentleman. The greatest thing he does is just being here to offer his leadership, and the greatest thing MC can do is keep him here.”

“Over 40 years in education, it’s always been about the kids. I’ve met some very good kids over those years and it just keeps getting better,” Dr. Williams says. “I’m also happy to say I’ve kept in touch with several of my former students. Some call me ‘Mr. Williams,’ some call me ‘Dr. Williams,’ and some call me ‘Coach Williams.’ I have to say that ‘Coach’ is my favorite name.”



“Coach Williams was an excellent leader, someone who always pulled the best out of you.”

VIANNE GIDDENS WELCH,  
Former Student



### COACHING AS A CALLING

“Athletics play a *tremendous part* in the development of young people. Sports teach kids the *value of hard work*, practicing, and *doing something for others at a high level*. Many people who are *strong leaders* have at some point participated in athletics. That’s not to say our country was founded on sports, but I do believe they are important. The coaches who *dedicate themselves* to working with young people do a *great service not only to those kids, but also to this country*.” — DR. TOM WILLIAMS



**JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT** Between them, Dr. Williams and his wife, Mary, have two sons, two daughters, and six grandchildren. Despite his love of youth sports, Dr. Williams never pressured his own children or grandchildren to play. “I never wanted them to play sports just because they thought I wanted them to play,” Dr. Williams says. “We did participate in some church basketball teams and summer softball programs and I enjoyed that. If they wanted to play, we played, but I was never going to push them.” Today Dr. Williams plays “occasional, inconsistent” golf. In addition to cheering on the Choctaws, he’s a devout New York Yankees fan and still pulls for the Green Bay Packers, “even without Brett Favre.”



“The message to me was very clear. God was saying that in my case, I could reach more people through soccer than I could serving on a church staff.” — Rusty Bryant



# WHEN THE MISSION FIELD IS THE PLAYING FIELD

THE SOCCER GAME THAT CHANGED RUSTY BRYANT’S LIFE and launched an unlikely, worldwide ministry was played on a sun-drenched field in Costa Rica in January of 1996. Bryant, a senior Christian studies major and soccer player at Mississippi College, was in Costa Rica on a choir trip when a local missionary invited the singers to a soccer game.

“We said sure, we’d love to watch the game,” Bryant recalls. “Then he said, ‘No, they aren’t inviting you to watch. They’re inviting you to *play*.’”

It seemed a regional tournament was underway and the bus transporting one of the participating teams had broken down miles outside of town. Hearing that a group of American singers – including 11 men, just the right number for a soccer team – was in town, the locals hoped the visiting

Americans might be willing to fill in. The Costa Rican natives making the request had no way of knowing that five of those 11 singers were actually college soccer players.

“We had no cleats, no shin guards, and no uniforms,” Bryant recalls. “We borrowed some mismatched gear and headed over to the field, where we found ourselves in the middle of this huge tournament.”

As the ragtag American choirboys took the field, hundreds of locals gathered to watch, lining the fence and climbing on rooftops for a bird’s eye view of the action. To their surprise and delight, the Americans won the match 7-2 and advanced to the tournament finals, only to be forced to forfeit when they had to leave the field at half-time to sing.



“Therefore, let your *light so shine* before men that they may see your good works and glorify your *Father who is in Heaven.*” — MATTHEW 5:16

“During the game, I’d noticed a guy on the team we were playing,” Bryant says. “He was a lot older than the others and he was terrible at soccer. I kept wondering what he was doing there.”

That terrible soccer player was Ben Argil, a sports evangelist serving in Costa Rica through the International Mission Board. After the game, Argil approached Bryant and pointed out to him the huge crowd the game had drawn, then made a bold suggestion. Argil asked Bryant to consider returning to Costa Rica with a real soccer team, setting up matches between local pro and college teams, and using the games as a platform for sharing the Gospel.

“Before I left Costa Rica, I had scheduled a week’s worth of matches for the following May, lined up places for the team to stay, even arranged for our meals,” Bryant says. “There was just one problem. I didn’t have a soccer team.”

On the flight back to the United States, Bryant scribbled down a roster of soccer players he thought might be interested, many of them players for Mississippi College. Back in Mississippi, Bryant established a fund through the MC Civitan Men’s Club that would enable him to accept tax-deductible donations to sponsor a soccer mission trip. With his team lined up and support trickling in, Bryant had only to choose a name for the endeavor. Flipping through the Bible he was led to Matthew 5:16, which reads, “Therefore, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.” Bryant christened the team “Brilla,” the Spanish word for shine.

In May of 1996, just five months after the Choir Boys vs. the Costa Ricans match that started it all, Bryant led a 19-man Brilla team to Costa Rica and kicked off a new ministry based on soccer. The team played seven exhibition matches that week, but even more important than their 5-2 record was the work they did for the Lord. Brilla team members passed out more than 4,000 trading cards with

Christian testimonials printed on the back, witnessed to opposing team members and fans, and gave free Gospel concerts in the evening.

“I came back to the United States thinking hey, that was one good thing we’d done for Jesus,” Bryant says. “Then I started getting requests for Brilla to play exhibition matches in the United States.”

Those exhibition matches led to requests from churches nationwide for Brilla to run summer soccer camps for children. Bryant agreed, creating camps that were equal parts soccer drills and Christian devotionals and focused not only on building soccer skills, but also on building relationships with Jesus Christ.

Over the next several months, Bryant graduated from MC, married his college sweetheart, Heather Bacon ’97, completed studies at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and accepted a position as a youth minister at a church in Petal, Mississippi, all while continuing to operate Brilla part time. By late 1997, Bryant and his wife realized they were being called to expand Brilla into a fulltime ministry.

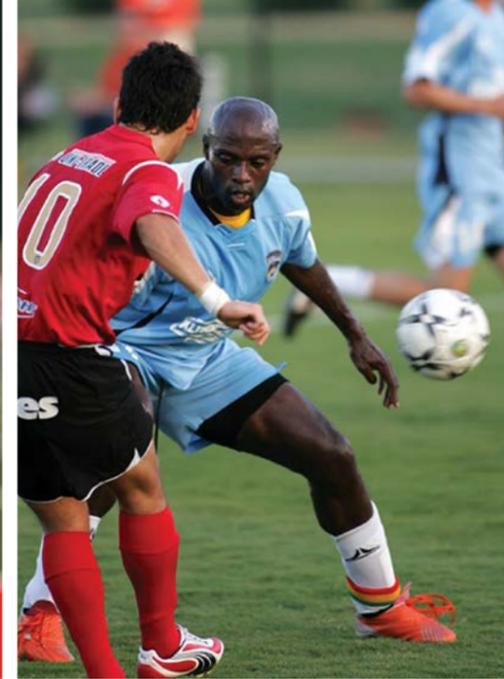
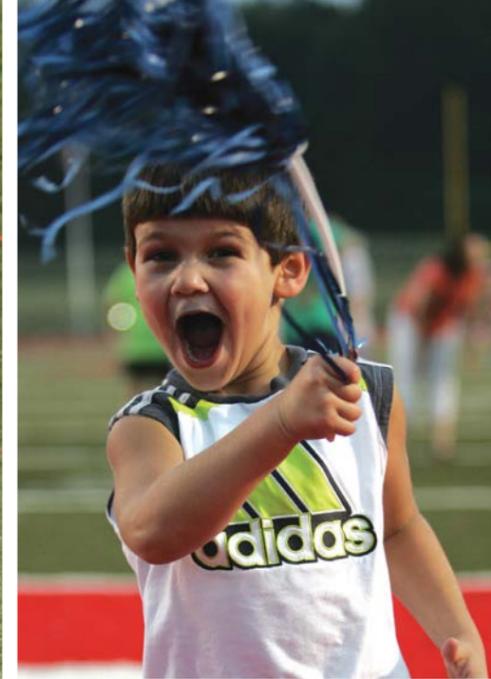
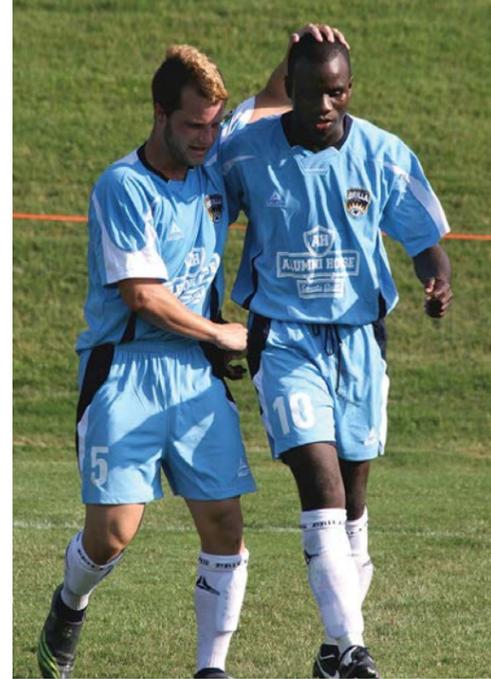
“My running joke is that God saved me from being a youth minister,” Bryant says with a smile. “The message to me was very clear. God was saying that in my case, I could reach more people through soccer than I could serving on a church staff.”

In 1998, Bryant left his job and he and Heather moved back to Clinton, where they began raising support for a fulltime soccer ministry. Brilla Soccer Ministries’ first donor was Jewell Longabaugh, the mother of Mississippi College women’s soccer coach Darryl Longabaugh and the widow of Robert Longabaugh, for whom the MC soccer field is named.

“Having Mrs. Longabaugh make that first pledge jump-started the whole thing,” Bryant recalls. “It was an affirmation of God saying, ‘I’m going to take care of everything.’”

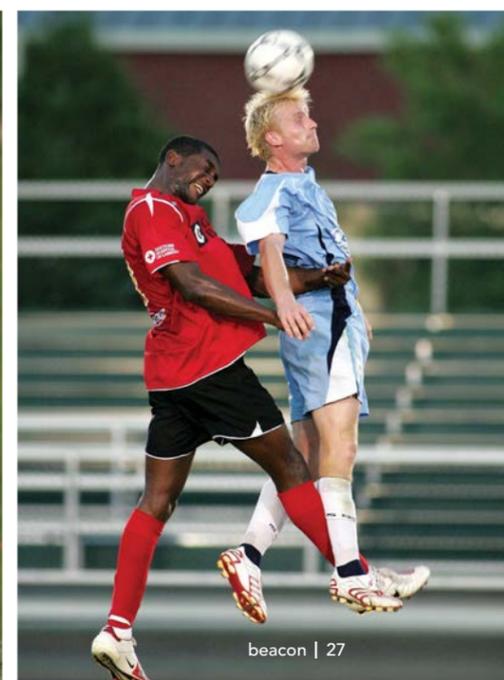
THE WIDOW’S MITE

As Brilla Soccer Ministries’ director of soccer operations, Scott Taylor ’00 has experienced many memorable moments, but nothing has moved him more than a humble gesture of gratitude and sacrifice from an unexpected source. • On a mission trip to El Salvador in 2005, Brilla team members visited a government rehabilitation facility for gang members, playing a hard-fought soccer match and sharing their faith with the inmates. In return, these hardened young men, many of whom had committed serious, violent crimes, invited the Brilla team to share a meal with them. • “We accepted, then realized that they were offering us their personal food – what would have been their only meal of the day,” Taylor recalls. “These hard-core gang members were showing us their gratitude for coming and sharing with them. We were floored by their generous act, which reminded me of the story of the widow’s mite. They were giving us the only thing they had to offer.”



**THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE**

Pronounced “bree-ya,” *brilla* is the Spanish word for “shine.” The name of the organization comes from Matthew 5:16, which says, “Therefore, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.” • Rusty Bryant christened the ministry “Brilla” in 1996. A Spanish name seemed logical as the group’s first mission trip was to Costa Rica. As the ministry expanded in the United States and abroad, Bryant considered renaming it, but soon realized the distinctive name was a tool for witnessing. • “The first question is always, ‘What does the name mean?’” Bryant recalls. “That’s a great opening for us to explain that Brilla is all about shining for the Lord.”





“I had faith that *God was leading us in this direction*. When you have *faith*, you have to *smile* and say ‘I knew God was going to take care of it – *why am I surprised?*’” — RUSTY BRYANT

For the next eight years, Brilla Soccer Ministries grew its summer soccer camp program and scheduled exhibition games and an annual international mission trip for its amateur team, all while remaining true to its mission to use soccer to share the Gospel with campers, players, and fans. The ministry eventually grew to include four staff members, as well as dozens of volunteer players and coaches.

Then, at a staff retreat in 2006, Bryant asked his staff to prayerfully consider the future of the ministry. Specifically, was there a way to expand Brilla to reach more people? The four staff members retreated to pray independently.

When they reconvened, all four reported hearing the same answer from God – the next step was to purchase a minor league soccer franchise. Unlike purchasing an existing football or baseball team, purchasing a minor league soccer franchise would mean buying a territory in which to operate. Brilla would be free to recruit its own players and to build a team based around its Christian mission. A minor league soccer team would mean a higher profile, larger attendance at games, greater exposure for the ministry, and a chance to reach thousands more with the Gospel.

But while they were confident of their calling, Bryant and his staff faced a daunting challenge. The initial cost to purchase the franchise would be \$50,000, and Bryant estimated operating the team would run at least \$100,000 annually. It seemed an insurmountable challenge for a small, non-profit ministry funded by soccer camp fees and private donations. But convinced that God was calling the plays, Bryant set about pursuing that goal.

His first step was inviting Brilla sponsors and soccer fans to a presentation at the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame during which he planned to make a case for purchasing a franchise and hopefully, to raise financial support. As Bryant was preparing to take the podium, he was approached by a local businessman.

“His question for me was, ‘If you get that first \$50,000, are you committed to following this through?’” Bryant recalls. “I told him yes, absolutely. Before the meeting even

started, he had agreed to donate the \$50,000.

“It was a huge relief and overwhelming in a way, but I can’t say that I was shocked,” Bryant continues. “I had faith that God was leading us in this direction. When you have faith, you have to smile and say ‘I knew God was going to take care of it – why am I surprised?’”

Brilla Futbol Club or Brilla FC, celebrated its inaugural season in 2007. The team competes in the Premier Development League, a division of the United Soccer Leagues. Brilla FC is comprised primarily of college soccer players who play during the summer months while maintaining their college eligibility. The team includes players from throughout the United States, as well as international players from Nigeria, Sweden, Ireland, and Trinidad.

“The games offer great exposure for these players, many of whom are hoping to go pro, but selfishly, the purpose of Brilla FC was always to draw more attention to the ministry,” Bryant says. “The team is a vehicle for attracting a larger audience and reaching more people with the message.”

Brilla FC is fulfilling that purpose. The team attracts more than 1,000 fans to each of its home games at MC’s Longabaugh Field. In 2008, Brilla FC ranked ninth out of the Premier Development League’s 69 teams in terms of game attendance.

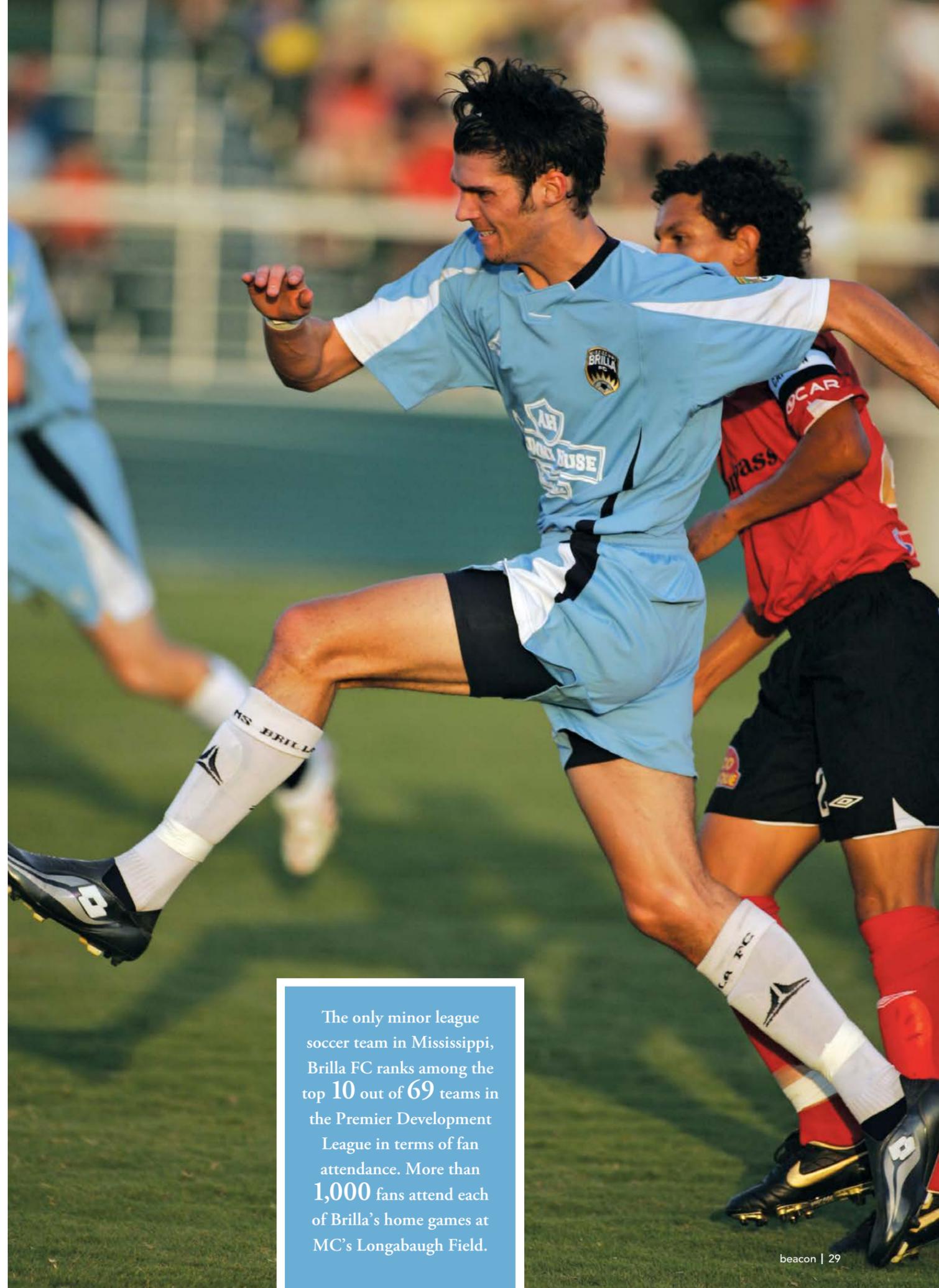
Jacob Lawrence, a senior soccer player at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, has spent his summers playing for Brilla FC since the team’s inaugural season.

“As a team we’ve grown stronger and better every year, both in terms of playing soccer and in terms of our commitment to what we stand for,” Lawrence says. “We’re competitive players and we fight hard to win on the field, but that’s only half our mission. We’re here as a team to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. Soccer is a beautiful thing. Living out your faith is a beautiful thing. Put them together, and it’s just awesome.”

While Bryant’s goal is to build a team of strong soccer players who are equally strong witnesses for Christ, he has also signed on some non-believers who were searching for answers.

“*De nada.*”

MC soccer player James Wells didn’t speak Spanish when he headed to Costa Rica on a Brilla mission trip in 1996, but he did make an effort to learn a few basic phrases. When Wells slammed into a Costa Rican player during a match and broke the other man’s nose, he stood over the bleeding player repeating, “*De nada, de nada, man, de nada.*” Wells didn’t understand why his sincere, profuse apologies not only failed to appease the injured man, but seemed to anger the other Costa Rican players. Then a friend pointed out that while Wells had been trying to say, “I’m so sorry,” what he was actually repeating over and over in Spanish was “You’re welcome.”



The only minor league soccer team in Mississippi, Brilla FC ranks among the top 10 out of 69 teams in the Premier Development League in terms of fan attendance. More than 1,000 fans attend each of Brilla’s home games at MC’s Longabaugh Field.



## In 2008, Brilla Soccer Ministries:

Distributed 5,000+ evangelistic testimony cards at Brilla FC home matches • Operated 12 summer soccer camps attended by more than 500 children • Gave 1,000 devotional books to campers, fans, and players • Distributed more than 2,500 evangelistic tracts during a mission trip to Guatemala

“I’ve seen God at work in their lives,” Bryant says. “They question us about Christ, and I’ve heard them ask their teammates to take them to church. I tell every player who comes to play for us, ‘when you leave here in three months, I want you to be different than when you came.’”

In addition to operating the minor league team, Brilla Soccer Ministries continues to build its summer camp program, running 10 to 20 camps each summer nationwide. Bryant estimates some 1,000 campers will participate in 2009, learning soccer techniques and hearing the Gospel from the Brilla FC players who serve as coaches. Brilla also has plans to launch a youth soccer club, the Mississippi Brilla Juniors, for serious players ages 10 to 18, and an academy for players five to 10 years old.

“We’re all about building relationships and putting the right coaches in place to be strong Christian role models for these kids,” Bryant says. “One of the greatest joys I’ve had is to see children make decisions for Christ at the camps.”

One of those children was Cameron Coleman. Now a senior at Clinton High School, Cameron attended Brilla soccer camps from first grade through sixth grade and made his profession of faith in Jesus Christ at a Brilla camp. Today Cameron works at the camps, assisting the coaches and sharing his faith with the campers.

“I remember what a strong influence Brilla had on me,” Cameron says. “Professing my faith was a huge event in my life, and I credit Rusty and my Brilla camp coaches for helping me get to that point. I hope I’m doing for these kids what they did for me when I was that age.”

Bryant’s hopes for the future of the ministry include expanding Brilla’s efforts to reach youth, continuing to build on the relationships Brilla has established overseas, and perhaps someday building a stadium complex in which Brilla could host larger matches and residential soccer camps. No matter where Brilla goes, the ministry will continue to be led by faith.

“For the last 15 years God has taken care of everything,” Bryant says. “Whenever I start to wonder where we’re going next or how we’re going to manage, I remind myself that He is in control. Any success we achieve is because we are a team with His purpose behind us.”

The success of the unconventional ministry is an inspiration not only to those touched by Brilla today, but also to those who were there for its humble beginnings. James Wells was an MC soccer player who participated in the first Brilla mission to Costa Rica in 1996. Wells – who had never before traveled outside the United States – had planned to become an English teacher, but inspired in part by his experience with Brilla, he went on to serve as a missionary with International Mission Board in London, England, then graduated from seminary. Today, the Rev. James Wells, now a pastor with First Baptist Church of Eustis, Florida, credits Brilla with helping shape his life both professionally and personally.

“Brilla gave me a comfort level with international missions that inspired me to serve with IMB,” Rev. Wells says. “But when I think of Brilla, what comes to my mind is faith. When Rusty first told me God had put the vision for this ministry into his heart, I remember having doubts that it could work. A few years later, Rusty asked me if I’d be interested in serving with Brilla. It was a ministry in which there were no salaries and everyone was raising their own support, and honestly, I didn’t have the faith to make that leap.

“Looking at Brilla now, I see how God has blessed and used the ministry and how He has provided for Rusty and his family. Seeing that first-hand has dramatically increased my own faith. Brilla taught me many things, but the most important thing is that God can do anything, that He will always pick the right person to lead and to do the job, and that when it is His plan, God will provide.”

### THE SOCCER FIELD AS A MISSION FIELD

Brilla takes one international trip annually during which members of the Brilla FC team and other college soccer players participate in exhibition matches and share the Gospel with players and fans. Brilla’s mission field has included soccer fields in Costa Rica, Antigua, Venezuela, Mexico, England, Spain, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BRILLA SOCCER MINISTRIES, INCLUDING SOCCER CAMPS FOR CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING THE BRILLA MINISTRY, VISIT [WWW.MSBRILLAF.C.ORG](http://WWW.MSBRILLAF.C.ORG).



Soccer is a family affair for Heather, Logan, Rusty, and Luke Bryant.

### SPORTS MINISTRY AS A CAREER

In 2007, Mississippi College created a degree track in sports ministry. Developed in association with the Department of Christian Studies, this kinesiology major/ministry minor degree is designed for individuals who wish to work in churches or Christian organizations with sports ministry programs. Graduates might manage church basketball and softball teams, youth sports programs, golf tournaments, and other sports venues used as ministry or outreach tools. • “Many parents want their kids to receive the benefit of the lessons taught by participation in sports, but are hesitant because of the less wholesome aspects we sometimes see in sports today,” says Dr. Christopher Washam, chairman of the Department of Kinesiology. “As a result, more and more churches and Christian organizations are working to provide sports programming that’s consistent with the teachings of Christ. Students majoring in sports ministry have a strong sports background, but are taught to use sports to teach positive lessons and to make sports an essential part of Christian development.”



COACH'S BOX

NEXT BATTER'S BOX

MAKING *The* RIGHT

# Call

ON A HOT DAY IN LATE JUNE OF 2006, JENNIFER BARKSDALE HEARD A MESSAGE FROM GOD IN A BASEBALL PARK.

Jennifer arrived at Turner Field in Atlanta that afternoon to meet her husband, Lance Barksdale, who was working as an umpire for Minor League Baseball. Entering the park, Jennifer passed a petite, African-American woman perched on a stool outside the visiting team's locker room. Judging by her official red shirt and the walkie-talkie strapped to her waist, Jennifer assumed the woman was part of the security team, but in more than a decade of following Lance from ballpark to ballpark, Jennifer had never before seen a security guard at a baseball game clutching a Bible in one hand.

As Jennifer walked past, the woman – whom the Barksdales would later come to know as “Miss Pam” – rose from her stool and grabbed Jennifer’s hands.

“I need to tell you something,” she said, staring urgently into Jennifer’s eyes. “The Lord is going to bless y’all in your husband’s new position. I don’t know you and I don’t understand it, but I felt like I needed to tell you that the Lord is going to bless you.”

Jennifer was stunned. There was no way this woman could know that Lance Barksdale was being considered for a promotion to Major League Baseball. No way she could know how life-altering that promotion would be for Lance, Jennifer, and their two small children. No way she could know that they were expecting a decision on July 1, just a few days away.

And there was no way Miss Pam could have known that Jennifer Barksdale had spent the entire six-hour drive to Atlanta praying, “Please God, let this be his turn. Please, let this be Lance’s time.”



Lance Barksdale came to Mississippi College in 1985 on a baseball scholarship, but his playing career was cut short by a rotator cuff injury. Still enamored with America's favorite pastime, Barksdale decided to pursue a career as a professional umpire. After earning his business degree from MC in 1989, Barksdale enrolled in the Harry Wendelstedt School for Umpires in Daytona Beach, Florida, one of just three training schools for professional umpires in the United States.

The one-month program – which carried tuition of \$3,000 when Barksdale enrolled in 1992 – covers the rules and mechanics of the sport, as well as the philosophy of umpiring. But while umpire school is all about baseball, it's far from fun and games. The program is highly competitive, and instructors are looking for more than just knowledge of the game.

"Confidence, a strong presence on the field, knowledge of the mechanics, hustle, and the ability to handle situations on the field are all important," says Mike Fitzpatrick, director of the Professional Baseball Umpire Corp. "But instructors are also looking for good judgment and character. We're looking for the highest quality type of individual we can possibly recruit because the whole integrity of the game rests with that umpire out on the field."

Completing the training program does not by any means guarantee a position on the field. Instead, top graduates are selected to attend a second umpire development course, during which umpiring supervisors select the most outstanding of the students for work in the Minor League.

Some 600 candidates enrolled in the three umpire schools the same year Lance Barksdale signed up. Just 20 of those students, including Barksdale, left the school employed as Minor League umpires.

Making it to the Minor League was tough enough. But as Lance Barksdale would discover, the road to Major League Baseball would require more than just hard work and ability for the sport. It would be a test of his perseverance, character, and most of all, faith.

The path from Minor League umpire to Major League umpire is similar to that of Minor League player to Major League player, with contenders working their way up through the Minor League to get the experience and training they need for a shot at the big league. But for an umpire, the odds of making it are even tougher to beat than for a player. There are only 68 Major League umpiring slots. For a Minor League umpire to move up, he not only has to be the best of the best, but a Major League umpire must retire or quit. On average, an umpire spends seven to 10 years in the Minor League before ever calling a Major League game – twice the average time it takes for a Minor League baseball player to make the move to the Majors.



**"Lance Barksdale so much fits the mold of what we look for in an umpire. This job requires men of ability, integrity, and first-class bearing, and Lance is at the highest level in all those respects."**

**MIKE PORT,**  
Vice President of Umpiring  
for Major League Baseball

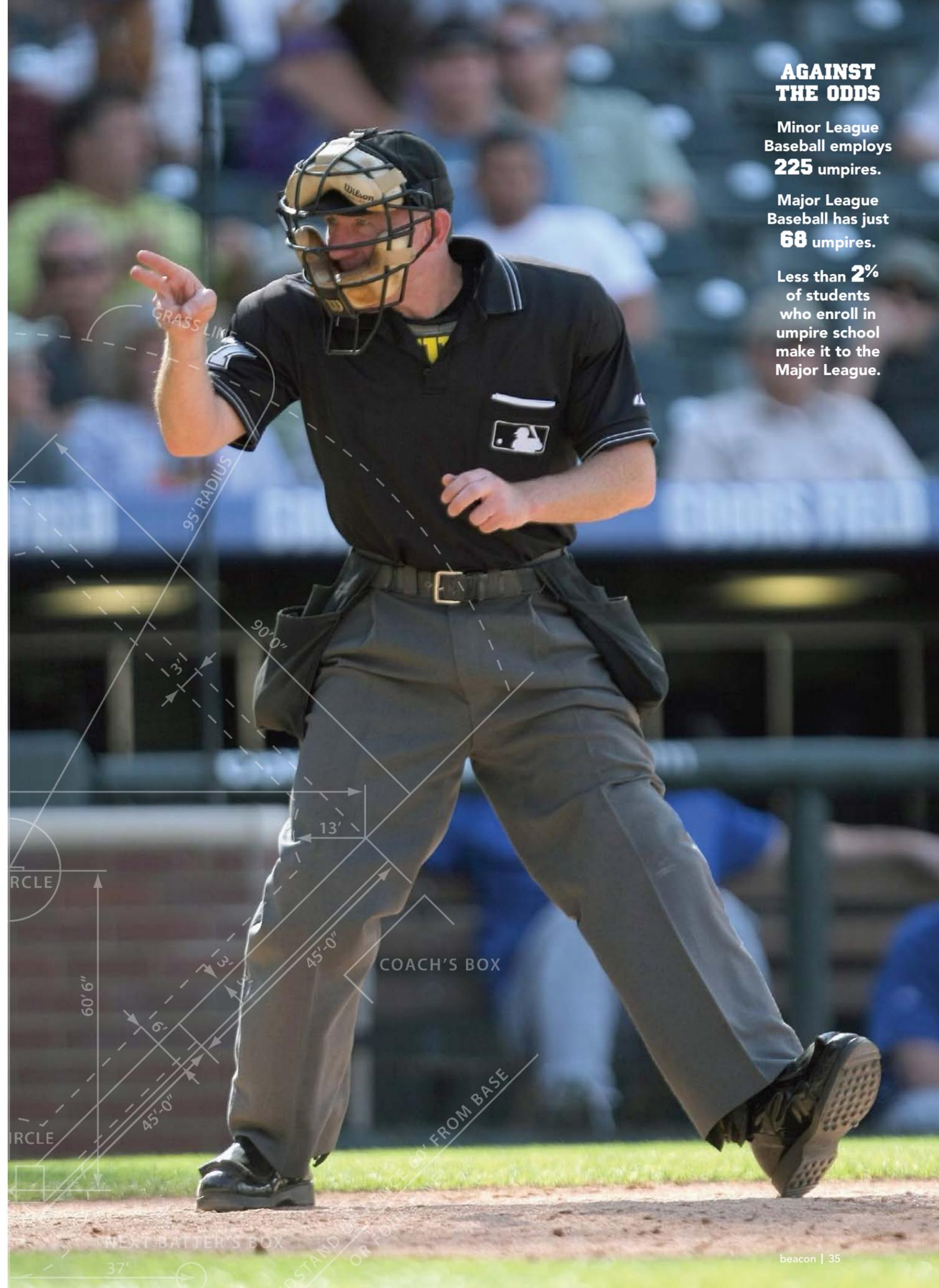
Supervisors from the Major Leagues scout Minor League games, observing the performance of the umpires. A sign that a Minor League umpire is being groomed for the majors is when that umpire is asked to fill in for Major League umpires who are out sick or on vacation. For a Minor League umpire trying to crack the Majors, everything can hinge not just on one game, but on one call.

"You have to hustle every game, all game," Barksdale says. "If you're not in the game mentally or physically for even one ball that's hit, you could lose your chance. Even if you're just having an off day and that's the day a supervisor happens to be watching, you're out, and you've just wasted 10 years."

The differences between the Minor League and Major League are vast. Minor League umpires have no vacation time and limited benefits. Once they begin filling in for Major League umpires, Minor League umpers have no set schedule. An umpire might be calling a game in Louisiana one day and find himself en route to California the next. The pay for a rookie ball umpire today is somewhere around \$1,800 per month during the six-month season, \$0 per month in the off-season. A Triple A umpire with seven years' experience brings home around \$3,200 per month in season. By comparison, a Major League umpire's annual salary begins around \$80,000, with the senior umpers earning up to \$350,000.



MAJOR LEAGUE UMPIRING CREWS include four umpires who work all of the games together for a season. The umpires rotate positions, taking turns working each of the bases and home plate. "I'd always rather work the plate," Barksdale says. "It's a pressure position but it keeps you in the game mentally." Barksdale had the plate when Randy Johnson of the Arizona Diamondbacks became the second pitcher in Major League history to strike out 20 batters in a game. When Johnson threw that pitch into baseball history, it was Lance Barksdale's voice proclaiming the "Out!" that made it official.



## AGAINST THE ODDS

Minor League Baseball employs **225** umpires.

Major League Baseball has just **68** umpires.

Less than **2%** of students who enroll in umpire school make it to the Major League.

Other than free admission to the games, umpiring in the Minor Leagues comes with very few perks.

"I called a Minor League game in Martinsville, Virginia, where we didn't even have a dressing room," Barksdale says. "We had to get dressed in full gear at the hotel, and when we arrived at the field, we had to park outside the fence."

**L**ance Barksdale began umpiring in 1992. To supplement his \$1,500-per-month income, he returned to the part-time job he had held in high school, working behind the counter at Discount Hunting and Fishing during the off-season. The other six months of the year were spent traveling the Minor League circuit on a \$15-per day meal allowance and trying his best not to actually *lose* money while he was on the job.

Barksdale certainly wasn't getting rich or famous, but he was confident the sacrifices required to pursue his dream would be worth it in the long run. Then, in his third year as a professional umpire, Barksdale was set up on a blind date with a pretty nurse named Jennifer Tillman. The two quickly fell in love, but both knew from the beginning that it would be a long distance relationship.

"That was before everyone had a cell phone, so we kept in touch the old-fashioned way, by mail," Jennifer recalls with a smile. "Over the next two years, I think I addressed at least one letter to every motel in every city with a Minor League baseball team."

Lance and Jennifer Barksdale were married on November 11, 1995. The couple went into the marriage fully aware of the emotional and financial challenges Lance's career would hand them. They would be separated six months out of the year, and even with Jennifer working full time, money would be tight.

"It was tough, but there always seemed to be just enough to pay the bills," Jennifer recalls.

In July of 1998 the Barksdales welcomed a daughter, Jordan. Two years later, the couple's son, Hayden, was born, and Lance Barksdale found himself facing the biggest challenge of his career. While the low pay, grueling schedule, and pressure to perform had never fazed him, Barksdale found the separation from his family almost more than he could bear.

"It was so hard to be away from them," Barksdale says, "and this is a profession that brings a lot of challenges and temptations. You're on the road constantly, and I know some guys find it difficult to stick to their principles because you're trying so hard to fit in. There's a strong temptation to just go with the flow and do what everyone else is doing. What got me through was my faith. I believed God had a plan for me and that I was where He wanted me to be, and I just wasn't going to do anything to jeopardize that plan."

Things were also tough for Jennifer, a married woman who found herself playing the role of a single mom while Lance was on the road.

"He would call me right before a game, then call me hours later after it ended to tell me he was finished, he was going to the movies or to the gym or to dinner now," Jennifer recalls, "and I'd say, 'That's great, I'm still sitting here in the same chair with the same screaming child.' But I knew Lance, and I knew I could trust him on the road.

I realized that God had come up with this way of providing for our family, and that even if it was challenging sometimes, we were way more blessed than we needed to be."

"I kept thinking that this would be the perfect job if I could just do it at home," Barksdale says. "Instead, I was in a different city every three days with this crazy schedule and no vacation time."

A move to the Major Leagues would change all of that, and it looked as though after all those years of hard work, Barksdale was being groomed for that opportunity. During the 2001, 2002, and 2003 seasons, Barksdale worked more Major League games as a fill-in than any other Minor League

*"Lance has a contagious spirit. He loves the sport, his work, and his family, and he brings a breath of fresh air to every assignment. Most of all, Lance makes those he works with something better than before he got there."*

BRANCH RICKEY,  
President of the Pacific Coast League

**TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME** While she knows the ins and outs of the game, Jennifer Barksdale confesses that she's really not a baseball fan. When she accompanies Lance to games, she brings along a Sudoku puzzle to pass the time. The one rule of baseball Jennifer knows by heart? "I never tell the fans sitting around me that I'm there with the ump."



Lance, Jennifer, Jordan, and Hayden Barksdale



*“I pray for everyone on the field and if I miss a call or make a mistake, I pray for the strength to deal with it. God has taken care of me throughout my whole career, and He’s the reason I’m where I am today.” — LANCE BARKSDALE*

umpire. He had the skills, he had the experience, and the Barksdales began to allow themselves to imagine what it would be like when Lance got the call.

“I could’ve named a thousand reasons why it would be life-changing and the paycheck would be the last thing on the list,” Barksdale says. “Moving to the Majors would mean a set schedule, four weeks of vacation during the season, and knowing my off days in advance. It would mean job security and benefits for my family. It would literally secure our future.”

Then in 2004, the Major League games stopped coming. Other Minor League umpires – many with far less experience than Barksdale – were put in games ahead of him. All those years of struggling and separation appeared to be for nothing. For the first time in 15 years, Lance seriously considered leaving the game. But quitting posed its own set of problems. Close to 40 years old, Lance had never held a traditional job and wondered whether he had any marketable skills with which to support his family.

“I saw all these other guys getting promoted and I couldn’t help thinking, ‘Why not me?’” Lance recalls. “But I realized I had no choice other than to put it in God’s hands. I told Him, ‘If this is what You want me to do, I’ll stay. I’ll stick it out at least until the end of this season. Just please let me know.’”

Two months later, Barksdale found himself calling games in the Major Leagues again, his slump apparently over. In the spring of 2006, Lance Barksdale was notified that a Major League umpire had decided to leave the game, and that he was one of three Minor League umpires – all

with equal experience – being considered for the position. The decision would be made and the new Major League umpire would be notified on July 1.

**J**ennifer Barksdale still gets chill bumps when she remembers her encounter with Miss Pam, the security guard in Atlanta who told her God had plans to bless her family. “I had never experienced that before,” Jennifer says. “Someone had given me a word she had heard from God. For that whole game in Atlanta, I was a basket case.”

But then, July 1 came and went with no word from the Major League. Lance Barksdale assumed one of the other candidates had been chosen. As the days passed, Jennifer, too, had to assume that once again, it simply was not Lance’s time.

Barksdale tried to maintain a positive attitude, telling Jennifer, “it’s okay, we’ll get it next time,” before heading off to his next fill-in assignment in Tampa, Florida. He was still in Tampa on July 6, when Tom Leppard, Major League Baseball’s director of umpire administration, called with the news Lance Barksdale had waited 15 years and 2,300 baseball games to hear.

“He said, ‘Lance, I know there are a lot of rumors going around, but you’re the man,’” Barksdale recalls. “I thought he was just giving me a pat on the back, consoling me because the job had gone to someone else. I said, ‘Well, thanks, I appreciate that,’ and he said, ‘No, Lance, I mean you *are* the man. You got the job.’”

“Lance called me, really casual, and said, ‘The job is mine,’” Jennifer recalls. “I was in a Japanese restaurant with my daughter eating at a hibachi table and I just started screaming. There were all these businessmen sitting around us and my daughter was horrified. She kept saying, ‘Mom, you’re embarrassing me.’ All I could think was that after all that waiting and praying, the call had finally come. In that instant, our life changed.”

“I woke up that morning as a Minor League umpire filling in, and I called the game that night as a Major League umpire,” Barksdale says. “What I remember feeling the most was relief.”

**T**he Barksdales’ family life is still far from simple. Lance is still on the road six months out of the year and Jennifer still finds herself playing the role of a single mom. But Lance’s regular schedule allows the Barksdales to plan family vacations – a luxury they never had in the past – and his days of working part time in the off-season are over.

“When he’s home, he’s here,” Jennifer says. “He works the bake sales, he coaches the kids’ sports teams, he goes on the field trips. Lance spends more time with his kids than most dads who work nine to five.”

Jordan, now 10, and Hayden, nine, play basketball, softball, and baseball. Lance pitches in as their basketball coach, but has graciously declined any role involving umpiring. Both his daughter and son are pitchers; when Jordan or Hayden takes the mound, their father can be found sitting by himself in center field.

“Lance says he goes out there by himself so no one can ask him whether a call was good or bad,” Jennifer explains, “but I know it’s also because while he would never yell at the umpire, he has a wife who will.”

Barksdale’s career is now marked by new challenges. While the move to the Major League brought more perks, it also brought the pressure of a brighter spotlight.

“A few years ago I was calling a Phillies game. It was the ninth inning, the bases were loaded, and I called a guy ‘safe,’” Barksdale recalls. “On the first three replays, I was convinced I was right. Watching the fourth replay, I knew I was wrong. Not only had I made a bad call, I had sent the game into extra innings. Fans were screaming at me, both teams and my whole crew were kept on the field when the game should’ve been over, and the sports writers had plenty

to say about it in the paper the next day. But I’ve learned the only thing I can do in a situation like that is shake it off and get ready for the next game to start.”

Getting ready for that next game still brings a thrill. Even after 17 years as an umpire, Lance Barksdale has never lost his love for baseball.

“I love going to those older parks, like Fenway in Boston or Wrigley Field in Chicago,” Barksdale says. “The park is always full, people are singing along, and when I’m working the bases, glancing around the field and looking up in the stands still gives me that ‘awed’ feeling.”

While his promotion to the Major Leagues has greatly changed Lance Barksdale’s life, it hasn’t changed Lance Barksdale. He still trusts the Lord to help him make the right calls.

“I pray for everyone on the field and if I miss a call or make a mistake, I pray for the strength to deal with it,” he says. “God has taken care of me throughout my whole career, and He’s the reason I’m where I am today.”

“Some guys change when they’re on the road,” Barksdale continues. “Maybe the pressure and the temptation are too much, or maybe they just think they can live fancy-free and not worry about their lives off the road. I never changed the way I acted, but it’s not because I’m in any way better than anyone else. It’s because I kept my focus on God and He gave me the strength I needed, and I just had too many good things happening in my life off the road to mess it all up.”

Fellow umpire Ted Barrett has known Lance for more than a decade; the two served on the same crew in 2008. Barrett and Barksdale look for opportunities to minister together while on the road, whether that means visiting a children’s hospital with signed baseball memorabilia for the young patients or looking for opportunities to witness by example to their fellow umpires.

“So many people get it twisted, but with Lance Barksdale his priorities are clearly God, his wife, his children, and his job, in that order,” Barrett says. “To find someone who can maintain his integrity as a man and as a man of Christ the way Lance does is rare. I honestly believe Lance Barksdale was put in this position in Major League Baseball to glorify God.”

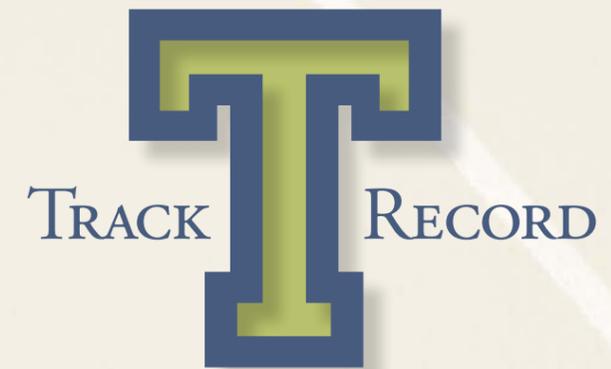
It’s that faith in God that gave Lance Barksdale and his family the perseverance they needed to make it to the Major League. And no matter what happens on or off the field from this point forward in the game, as long as He is making the calls, Lance Barksdale will always be safe. 🍪



**PUT A CORK IN IT** The Major League game that stands out most for Lance Barksdale is also memorable for millions of baseball fans. Barksdale was filling in at third base during the June 3, 2003 game between the Chicago Cubs and the Tampa Bay Devil Rays when the Cubs’ star slugger, Sammy Sosa, was ejected from the game for hitting with an illegal corked bat. It was Barksdale’s assignment to confiscate and safeguard the bat in question until it could be turned over to Major League Baseball for investigation. A photo of Barksdale holding the tainted bat as a dejected Sosa looked on made the cover of sports sections nationwide • “I was in the stands with some of our family when that happened,” Jennifer Barksdale recalls. “My nephew turned to me with this look of horror and said, ‘Is Uncle Lance going to eject *Sammy Sosa*?’”



**"SUPPORTING MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE GIVES ME GREAT SATISFACTION SINCE IT'S A WAY TO BOTH HONOR MY FATHER AND TO BENEFIT OTHERS."**  
— JIM PARKMAN



*Jim Parkman*

HONORS HIS FATHER'S COACHING CAREER WITH A GIFT TO MC ATHLETICS

DR. JAMES PARKMAN GREW UP AS ONE OF NINE SIBLINGS ON A FARM NEAR THE MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE CAMPUS. SEVEN OF THE PARKMAN SIBLINGS, INCLUDING JAMES, WENT ON TO GRADUATE FROM MC.

Today, a youthful, 86-year-old Dr. Parkman still speaks fondly of how he and his siblings "took great joy in beating the town kids from Clinton at school work." As an MC student, Parkman played football and captained both the basketball and track teams. A history and physical education major, his dream was to become a coach.

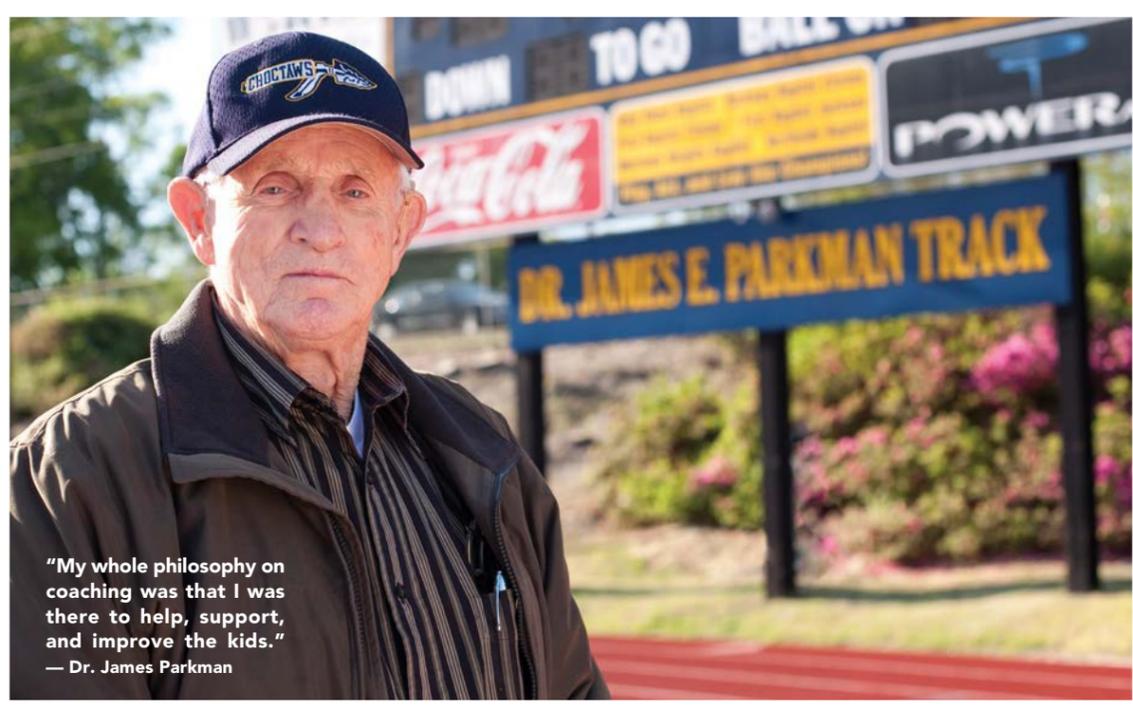
"When I graduated in 1948, I had 15 cents in my pocket," Dr. Parkman recalls. "But I was still able to get the prettiest girl in Stone County to marry me."

That pretty girl, Parkman's wife, Helen, was by his side as he worked to make his coaching dream come true. In the early 1950s, the couple moved to Bentonia, Mississippi,

where Dr. Parkman served as the coach at Bentonia High School. In that day, being the high school coach meant coaching every sport.

"I was the head baseball coach, the head football coach, and the head basketball coach," Parkman recalls. "I had one kid who wanted to run track, so I also became the track coach. That job description involved setting up five hurdles for that one boy, who *was* the Bentonia track team."

In 1955, Parkman was recruited to return to Mississippi College as the head track coach and assistant football coach, an opportunity he still describes as "too good to be believed." The growing Parkman family, which now included five-year-old James Junior and his younger brother, Mark, returned to the MC campus, where they settled into an apartment in Alumni Hall.



“My whole philosophy on coaching was that I was there to help, support, and improve the kids.”  
— Dr. James Parkman

“I remember watching the basketball games from the window of that apartment when I was five or six years old,” James “Jim” Parkman, Jr. says. “I delighted in exploring every inch of that old building. Sometimes I was accompanied by our dog, Fella, who was given to us as a puppy by one of my father’s fellow faculty members. MC was a great place to grow up.”

In those days, football teams didn’t share game films. As assistant football coach, part of James Parkman’s job description was scouting future MC rivals. Jim often accompanied his father on those clandestine football missions; he still remembers his father holding a clipboard and scribbling down every offensive play run by the Choctaws’ upcoming opponents. Another of young Jim’s favorite assignments was helping his father set up the hurdles on the track.

“I knew my father was in a leadership position and remember him sharing his rationales for coaching the track team,” Jim recalls. “He had a knack for arranging the order of the relay events, and I remember the team

winning often against much stronger competition.”

The coaching rationale Jim Parkman remembers was fairly straightforward; James Parkman always saw his calling as simply to encourage young people.

“My whole philosophy on coaching was that I was there to help, support, and improve the kids,” Dr. Parkman says. “I was never a cussing, hell-raising coach. I encouraged a lot of kids to participate and I always tried to be a good Christian example. If I had any attribute, I guess that was it.”

It was a philosophy that worked. During Dr. Parkman’s tenure as MC’s track coach, the Choctaws never had a losing season. Dr. Parkman coached at MC until 1965, when the family, which now included sons Bruce and Joel, relocated to Georgia, where James Parkman assumed the position of athletic director at DeKalb College.

Jim Parkman returned to MC to earn a business degree, graduating with honors in 1972. He served as an officer in the U.S. Air Force, then earned a master’s degree in

**JIM PARKMAN**

**IS A STRONG SUPPORTER OF EDUCATIONAL CHARITIES THROUGH THE SUSAN K. BLACK FOUNDATION, AN ENTITY PARKMAN FOUNDED IN 2001 IN HONOR OF HIS LATE WIFE. THE FOUNDATION ADVANCES ART EDUCATION THROUGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS, WORKSHOPS, AND MUSEUM PROGRAMS.**



“I knew my father was in a *leadership position* and remember him sharing his *rationales for coaching* the track team. He had a knack for arranging the order of the *relay events*, and I remember the team *winning often* against much stronger competition.” — JIM PARKMAN

economics from Texas Tech University. He has since built a successful, 30-plus-year career as an investment banker and entrepreneur providing financial services to energy companies. Parkman has advised public and private companies, investors, and government officials on transactions and strategic planning; his experience also includes special assignments for the United States government and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Today, Jim Parkman’s work revolves around his position as co-founder of Parkman-Whaling, a successful energy investing and banking advisory firm based in Houston, Texas. His two children and three grandchildren also live in Texas.

But Jim’s fond memories of growing up on the MC campus and the pride he felt in watching his father coach were never far from his heart. When he learned that MC was in need of a new track, Jim Parkman provided the lead gift needed to fund the project. Dedicated in 2006, the new facility at Robinson-Hale Stadium was christened the

Dr. James E. Parkman Track in honor of his father.

“Supporting Mississippi College gives me great satisfaction since it’s a way to both honor my father and to benefit others,” Jim Parkman says. “It’s a great honor to have our family name associated with such a fine facility and to create an enduring connection to Mississippi College.”

The new facility has made a tremendous difference to the MC track and field program. Thanks to the enhanced facility, MC is now able to host track meets attracting athletes and spectators from throughout the South to the Clinton campus. But for Dr. James Parkman, it was the old friends the track brought back to MC who mattered most.

“I have plenty of good memories from my years at Mississippi College, but my best memory will always be of the day the track was dedicated,” Dr. James Parkman says. “So many of my former track team boys came back to campus for the dedication. To have those boys come by more than 40 years after I’d quit coaching meant more to me than I can say.”

**A STRONG TRACK RECORD WHEN IT COMES TO FAMILY** DR. JAMES PARKMAN was married to his late wife, Helen, for 25 years before he lost her to cancer. Dr. Parkman and his second wife, Dot, recently celebrated their 33rd wedding anniversary. Between them, Dr. and Mrs. Parkman have eight children, three of whom graduated from Mississippi College. Dr. Parkman still describes his late wife, Helen, as “the prettiest girl in Stone County,” and is quick to point out that his wife, Dot, “was voted Most Beautiful in her high school class and is still the most beautiful woman I know today.”

# Class Notes

**50s** Neil King (B.S. '59), State Farm agent in Clinton, received the Distinguished Service Award from the Clinton Chamber of Commerce. In recognition of his support in 2008, King was also presented The Century Award by the Clinton Nature Center.

**60s** Dr. Jimmy Earl Jackson (B.A. '61), pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, has been elected president of the Alabama Baptist Convention.



Dr. Bobby Douglas

Dr. Bobby Douglas (B.A. '61) completed 50 years in ministry in December. He serves as associational missions director for Mid-Delta Baptist Association in Cleveland, Mississippi.

Bob Newell (B.A. '66, M.A. '68), published a series of Advent reflective sermons online via Smyth & Helwys Worship. *It Takes A Child!* is Bob's take on the well-known

African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." The series introduction and five-sermon set are available free of charge at [www.helwys.com/worship](http://www.helwys.com/worship). A minister and sociologist, Newell's professional service includes nearly 25 years at academic institutions in Kentucky, Mississippi, and Texas, as well as numerous years of service as a pastor in Texas and Mississippi. He and his wife, Jan, serve as missionaries for Albanian immigrants through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

**70s** Dr. Walter A. Price (B.A. '69, M.Ed. '72), pastor of Fellowship in the Pass in Beaumont, California, has been elected president of the California Southern Baptist Convention.

Dr. Frank McDonald (B.S. '72), a neurologist in Gainesville, Georgia, has been elected vice speaker of the Medical Association of Georgia's House of Delegates.

Rev. Deborah Pope (B.A. '74) has moved to First Congregational United Church of Christ, Algona, Iowa, to serve as pastor.

B. Gail Reese (B.A. '74), an attorney with Wyatt, Tarrant & Combs, LLP, specializing in bankruptcy and creditor/debtor rights, has been selected for inclusion in the 2008 Mid-South Super Lawyers by *Law & Politics*, one of the nation's leading legal journals.

Dr. Michael Catt (B.A. '75) signed a book deal with Broadman & Holman Publishers. The first book, *The Power of Desperation*, will be released in June 2009. Dr. Catt appeared on the Dr. Phil Show in September 2008, promoting Sherwood Pictures' latest film, *Fireproof*. Dr. Catt is the senior pastor of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia, and the executive producer of *Fireproof*.

Richard A. "Rick" Courtney (B.A. '75), former assistant dean and current adjunct professor at the MC School of Law, has been elected to the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys board of directors. He was also selected for the third consecutive year as a Mid South Super Lawyer in the field of elder law. The New York-based Theresa Foundation honored Courtney with its 15th Annual Theresa Award, which carries a \$2,500 gift to a charitable organization of the recipient's choice. Courtney selected The Mustard Seed, a Christian organization serving the developmentally disabled based in Brandon, Mississippi.

Jeanette Jarmon (B.S.Ed. '76, M.Ed. '91), artist and certified art teacher for grades 7-12, received a grant to produce a video series and supplemental resource manual for use in statewide staff development. The 12-part series, entitled *The Creative Child*, aired on Mississippi Public Broadcasting and won an award in child development from the International Film and Video Festival. Jarmon is presently artist in residence for the Baptist Healthplex in Clinton, Mississippi, where she displays and sells artists' work, including her own. For more information about Jarmon and Art by Jnet, visit [www.artbyjnet.com](http://www.artbyjnet.com).

Carol E. Cooper (B.A. '78) has been awarded the designation of Certified Meeting Professional by the Convention Industry Council organization. Cooper joined the Microsoft Events and Studios Team in 2006 after six years in the Microsoft Enterprise Partner Group. She serves on the Fort Worth Convention and Visitors Bureau Customer Advisory Board and is a member of the Professional Convention Managers Association.

Andy Taggart (B.A. '79) published his second book with co-author Jere Nash, *Mississippi Fried Politics: Tall Tales from the Back Rooms* (Red/Blue Publications, 2008). The book is a collection of political anecdotes, editorials, speeches, and photographs from a colorful cast of Mississippi's political figures. Taggart and Nash's first book, *Mississippi Politics: The Struggle for Power, 1976-2006* (University Press of Miss., 2006), will be released in a second edition containing new material in the fall of 2009.



Andy Taggart

**80s** Scott Straw (B.A. '83) is one of less than three dozen people in the world to hold designations as both a Certified Technology Specialist for Integrated A/V Systems Installations and a Certified Technology Specialist for Integrated A/V Systems Design. Straw is employed by AVI-SPL, the nation's largest audiovisual systems integrator. In November he was promoted to the position of project engineer and transferred to the company's Houston, Texas, office.



## HITTING IT OUT OF THE PARK

Dr. Michael Catt '75 is the senior pastor at Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia. The church's many ministries include Sherwood Pictures, the production company responsible for developing the inspirational feature films *Facing the Giants* and *Fireproof*.

Under Catt's leadership, the church invested a substantial portion of the proceeds from both films into a sports park serving the Albany community. The facility includes tennis courts, soccer fields, volleyball courts, a walking track, an equestrian center, a 1,000-seat pavilion, and a fishing pond, all positioned beneath a towering, 110-foot cross. As Dr. Catt explains, the universal appeal of sports makes the park a key tool for ministry.

"Sports and media are things our culture buys into and even worships," Dr. Catt says. "We decided to take something that consumes people and families and use it as an avenue for the gospel."

Each season, hundreds of local families visit the sports park in conjunction with the Upward Sports ministry, a national program that coordinates athletic activities for children, or to enjoy walking trails and other facilities open to the public. Freedom Fest, an annual Fourth of July celebration held at the park, attracts more than 10,000 people.

"The sports park has provided us with a space to reach our community in ways we wouldn't otherwise have been able to accomplish," Dr. Catt says. "This facility builds a positive perception among people in Albany and southwest Georgia who might never attend a traditional church service. We've seen more than 100 people baptized as a direct result of the outreach provided by the park."



Tressa Walker Guynes

Tressa Walker Guynes (B.S.B.A. '84) was named secretary of the Mississippi Senate by unanimous vote of the body. A 26-year veteran of Mississippi government, Guynes joined the Senate staff in 2004 and worked in all capacities associated with the job before being appointed by Lt. Governor Phil Bryant to assume the post. Prior to joining the Senate, Guynes worked as the chief examiner/director of examinations for the State Department of Insurance.

Chip Wilbanks (B.S.B.A. '84) has been approved by Clinton's Board of Aldermen to serve as the city's newest school board member. He was nominated by Mayor Rosemary Aultman for a five-year term on the five-member board. Wilbanks and his wife, Alicia '84, who was recently named the district's Parent of the Year, have three children. Wilbanks holds a business administration degree from MC and a law degree from the University of Mississippi School of Law. He practices general litigation law with the Jackson-based firm of Wells Moore Simmons Hubbard.

G. Charles Bordis, IV (J.D. '88), an Ocean Springs attorney, has been appointed by Gov. Haley Barbour to the Chancery Court seat for George, Greene, and Jackson counties.

**90s** Sara Saxton (B.S.B.A. '90) is a vice president at BankPlus, Adkins Boulevard. Saxton has more than 20 years' experience in the banking industry and was formerly a vice president at Trustmark National Bank.



Ray Roland

Ray Roland ('92) was hired as an associate for Cooley & Associates. The Madison, Mississippi-based firm evaluates companies' internal processes and cost structure in order to streamline and cut unnecessary costs. Roland brings more than 16 years' experience as a certified accountant with vast knowledge in financial and accounting functions. His career emphasis is on financial reporting and internal controls.

Michael K. Graves (J.D. '92) has joined the Walker Brown, Brown & Graves law firm. He will continue his practice in commercial and general litigation, zoning and land use, and creditors' rights.

## HOME COMING

October 30-31, 2009 Alumni Association members are gearing up for Homecoming 2009. Those classes celebrating reunions include: 1954, 1964, 1969, 1974, 1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, and 2004. A golf tournament, awards brunch, tailgating on the Quad, football games, parade, and departments' receptions will round out this fun-filled, nostalgic weekend. If you'd like to help plan a reunion, please contact the Office of Alumni Affairs at 601.925.3252.

Pete Smith (B.S. '94) is the new director of communications for the Mississippi Department of Education in Jackson. He previously worked as Gov. Haley Barbour's press secretary and was communications director for the state auditor's office. Smith also serves as current state president of the Public Relations Association of Mississippi.

Dr. Clay Anthony (B.A. '94) published his first book, *Prove Thyself A Man*, with ColdTree Press. For more information about his book, visit [www.provetheysselfaman.com](http://www.provetheysselfaman.com).

Angela Poole (B.S.B.A. '96) has been promoted to trust operations officer for BankPlus' Wealth Management Group. She has three years' experience in the banking industry.



Stephen S. Ashley, Jr.

Stephen S. Ashley, Jr. (J.D. '97) was selected for the second consecutive year to *Business North Carolina* magazine's "Legal Elite" in the field of intellectual property law. Ashley is a registered patent attorney and owner of Ashley Law Firm P.C. in Charlotte, North Carolina, specializing in patent trademark and copyright law.

**00s** Elizabeth "Lizzie" (Fortenberry, B.A. '01) Beber received her master of divinity in 2004 from George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University. She is the director of volunteers for Christ House, a comprehensive medical care facility for homeless men and women in Washington, D.C. Her husband, Eric, is an urban missions coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship at Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

Kevin Stringer (B.S. '01), branch manager of Trustmark's Northpointe branch, has been promoted to assistant vice president for Trustmark in Jackson, Mississippi.

Charles Russell III (J.D. '01) is a shareholder of the Wise Carter Child & Caraway law firm. He practices in the areas of railroad litigation, personal injury defense, health-care litigation, medical malpractice defense, aviation litigation, toxic torts, general litigation, and insurance defense.

Jenny Hazelwood (M.S.C. '02) has been named head volleyball coach at Mississippi State University. The MSU record-breaking player joins its athletics department after serving the past two seasons as head coach at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tennessee. Hazelwood launched her coaching career on the NCAA Division III level at Mississippi College, serving as head volleyball coach of the Lady Choctaws in 2000 and 2001. At MC, she was responsible for recruiting the American Southwest Conference East division Freshman of the Year for 2000, 2001 and 2002. Hazelwood and her husband, Brian, have a three-year old daughter.

Dr. Wendy Hawkins Lewis (B.S. '03) graduated from the University of Mississippi School of Dentistry in May of 2008. She is a partner at The Winning Smile Dental Group with locations in Brandon and Flowood, Mississippi.

David Berry (B.S.B.A. '04, J.D. '08) has joined the Deaton & Daniel law firm as an associate.



## THE POWER TO PERSEVERE

Rachel Blackledge '08 is the recipient of a 2009 Strong Women Award presented by Mississippi Baptist Health Systems.

The annual awards program honors exceptional women in five categories – perseverance, leadership, mentoring, defending, and promising. The 2009 program attracted more than 100 nominations representing women of every age from every walk of life. Blackledge received the award in the perseverance category, which honors a woman who has overcome significant personal adversity, in recognition of the challenges she has met since losing her leg in a boating accident the week before her high school graduation.

"I have never considered myself alone to be strong, and I know that my ability to persevere is nothing that I've been able to conjure up on my own," Blackledge says. "It's ultimately the strength I receive from my Heavenly Father that allows me to be strong. There have been many days when I just wanted to quit and tell myself that I am not the one cut out for this job. But the Lord is gracious to us, and I believe Him when He says He will never pile on a load that's too heavy for us to bear."

Prior to the accident, Blackledge planned to attend Samford University with a major in graphic design. But as she recovered from her injuries, Blackledge became convinced the Lord was using the accident to place her on another path. Heeding that call, Blackledge earned a degree in kinesiology from Mississippi College last December and began physical therapy school at the University of Mississippi Medical Center this spring. Her goal is to work with other amputees.

"I would hope that someone would look at me and not see me, Rachel, but would see the hand of God working through me," Blackledge says. "James 1:2-4 sums all this up nicely. That scripture says, 'Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you maybe mature and complete, not lacking anything.'"



## IS THERE A DOCTOR (OR DENTIST) IN THE HOUSE?

Last February, 11 Mississippi College alumni who went on to become physicians or dentists traveled to the Alluvian Hotel in Greenwood, Mississippi, for the inaugural meeting of the Medical and Dental Alumni Association (MDAA). This partnership between the alumni association and the biology/chemistry department focuses on building mentoring relationships between alumni and undergraduates.

The initial meeting was held to set up the basic structure and to elect officers for the chartered chapter of the MC Alumni Association. Officers for 2009-10 include: Dr. Steve Mills, president; Dr. Suezan McCormick, vice president; Dr. J. Mark Reed, secretary; Dr. Eddie Donahoe, alumni board representative. Other board members include Dr. John Smith, Dr. Harry Phillips, Dr. Gary Bolton, Dr. Tim Case, Dr. Mark Kennedy, and Dr. William Middleton.

All MC physicians and dentists are encouraged to join the MDAA. To join or for more information, please contact Ross Aven, director of alumni affairs, at [aven@mc.edu](mailto:aven@mc.edu) or Dr. Stan Baldwin, dean of the School of Science and Mathematics and chair of the Department of Biological Sciences, at [sbaldwin@mc.edu](mailto:sbaldwin@mc.edu).



Autumn Stallings

Justin Holley (B.S.B.A. '06) has been promoted to credit officer at Trustmark National Bank in Jackson. His responsibilities include underwriting commercial loan applications and analyzing financial statements.

Autumn Skellenger Stallings (B.S. '06) received certification with the National Council for Interior Design Qualifications. She is a designer with JBHM Architects in Jackson, Mississippi.

Ryan Fortenberry (B.S. '06, M.S.C. '07) is a Ph.D. candidate in theoretical chemistry at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VT) in Blacksburg, Virginia. He is also a Virginia Space Grant Consortium Graduate Research Fellow, a graduate of the 2008 NASA/JPL Planetary Science Summer School in Pasadena, California, and a graduate research assistant in the Crawford Theoretical Chemistry Group at VT. Fortenberry is engaged to Lauren Fix of Harrisonburg, Virginia. The two plan to marry in the summer of 2009.

Heather Davis (B.S.B.A. '08) has joined the Eubank & Betts accounting firm as a staff accountant.

Linda F. Cooper (J.D. '08) has joined the Wise Carter Child & Caraway law firm as an associate. She practices in the areas of commercial litigation and appellate practice. Cooper received her undergraduate degree from Yale University and her law degree from Mississippi College School of Law.

## Friends of Mississippi College

Leland R. Speed, Mississippi College trustee, was presented the 2009 Industry Leadership Award by the National Association of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REIT). The Leadership Award honors an REIT executive who has made a significant contribution to the growth and betterment of the real estate industry and to the programs of the association. Speed is chairman of the board of both EastGroup Properties, Inc. and Parkway Properties, Inc. He began his career in 1978 and is noted as one of the first to see the potential for the publicly traded equity REIT.

Shane Hand, son of Carolyn (VanDevender, B.S.Ed. '65, former MC director of residence life) and Dr. Shelton Hand (B.A. '65, MC School of Law professor), works at the Bayer Global headquarters in Germany. Formerly the global product development manager for the company, he is now serving in global portfolio management. Hand, his wife, Paige, and their three daughters live in Dusseldorf.

## Births & Adoptions

Mark (B.A. '97) and Staci (Strebeck, B.S. '98) Sellers, David Andrew Sellers, March 9, 2007

Jennifer (Hale, B.S.B.A. '99) and Chris Brunetti, Aiden Rials Brunetti, February 27, 2008

Wade (B.S.B.A. '00) and Lee (White, B.S. '01) Sumrall, Anna Katherine Sumrall, July 8, 2008

Nikki (Rainey, B.S. '01) and Craig Case, Sidney Rae Case, November 21, 2008

## BECOME AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE MC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Your annual contribution to Mississippi College ensures that you remain an active member of the Alumni Association. Why become an active member? Your contribution to Mississippi College:

- Is tax-deductible.
- Provides opportunities to meet and interact with other alumni through nationwide chapters.
- Ensures that you receive invitations to special events on campus and in your local area.
- Provides you with career planning and employment services through a partnership between the MC Alumni Association and Career Services. Alumni can participate in resume's critiques, on-campus interviews, mock interviews, seminars, and training.

- Allows you to participate in continuing education courses that offer lifelong learning opportunities and enrichment experiences to the community.
- Lets you take advantage of special travel programs provided by your Alumni Association.
- Gives you the chance to hold local or national offices in the Alumni Association.
- Guarantees that you receive *Beacon* magazine, the official magazine of the MC Alumni Association.
- Gives you the opportunity to give back to the university that has provided all of us with so much.

TO BECOME AN ACTIVE MEMBER, VISIT [WWW.MC.EDU/ALUMNI/MEMBERSHIP](http://WWW.MC.EDU/ALUMNI/MEMBERSHIP)

## Marriages

Elizabeth "Lizzie" Fortenberry (B.A. '01) and Eric Bebbler, November 15, 2008

Anne Rebecca Ranson (B.S. '02) and Scott Elliot Duncan, May 1, 2008

Wendy Hawkins (B.S. '03) and Jayson A. Lewis, July 12, 2008

## In Memoriam

MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE EXTENDS SINCERE CONDOLENCES TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF THE FOLLOWING ALUMNI, FRIENDS AND FORMER FACULTY/STAFF MEMBERS.

### Alumni

Rev. Charlie A. Webb (B.A. '35) October 11, 2008

Helen Burnett Savell Stancil (Hillman '40, B.A. '45) November 29, 2008

Dr. Samuel Duff Austin (B.A. '41) November 2, 2008

Nan Cartledge Henry (B.A. '42) January 17, 2009

Katherine Roberts (B.A. '45) March 12, 2009

Rev. Mitford Ray Megginson, Sr. (B.A. '46) January 6, 2009

Lawrence J. McAlpin ('47) September 11, 2008

Rev. Jack D. Nazary (B.A. '47) February 1, 2009

Thomas W. Williamson (B.A. '48) April 29, 2008

Selby F. Barnes (B.A. '49) February 27, 2009

Henry Hamilton Hancock (B.A. '49) January 22, 2009

Robert F. Rowsey, Jr. (B.S. '49) November 4, 2008

Dr. Bert Lavon Sharp (B.S. '49) August 31, 2008

Dr. Bob Simmons (B.A. '49, former MC trustee) October 3, 2008

Rev. Edward Eugene Eckman (B.A. '50) February 14, 2009

Delos Dee Kennedy, Jr. (B.S.Ed. '51) July 31, 2008

Mildred Boling Still (B.S.Ed. '52) January 23, 2009

Rev. Wilburn Matthews (B.S.Ed. '53) January 31, 2007

Joseph Stewart "Joe" Johnson, Jr. (B.A. '55) September 12, 2008

Lenno Powell (B.A. '55) February 12, 2008

Jane Austin Weber (B.A. '56) November 4, 2008

Robert Chadwick (LLB '58) February 18, 2009

Etoile Loper Hopkins (M.Ed. '62) October 18, 2008

Sherrell R. Marshall, Sr. (B.S.Ed. '62) October 13, 2008

Donald R. McCrory (M.Ed. '62) September 11, 2008

Lynette Neely Phillips (B.A. '62) February 8, 2009

John Charles Williams (M.Ed. '62) October 31, 2008

Dr. Paul V. Chidester (B.S. '63) January 28, 2009

Roddie Festus Bailey (B.S. '65) June 16, 2008

Fred Hartzog (B.S. '65, M.B.A. '69) February 10, 2009

Jack Jordan (B.S.Ed. '72) September 29, 2008

William Lewis Brigham III (B.S. '73) November 26, 2008

Rep. Tommy A. Horne (J.D. '73) January 2, 2009

Curtis C. Williams, Jr. (J.D. '76) January 7, 2009

Joyce P. Clarke (M.C.C. '83) January 18, 2009

Lucille Scoggins McLendon (B.S.Ed. '86) January 13, 2009

Joseph A. Daniels (B.M. '93, M.M. '96) February 6, 2009

### Friends

Jesse Woodall, father-in-law of Deborah Woodall, assistant professor in computer sciences, October 16, 2008

Patti Dent, mother of Terry Dent, instructor of biology, October 27, 2008

Louis R. Perkins, Jr., grandfather of Brent Perkins, security officer in public safety, November 4, 2008

Edith (Nell) Lewis, mother of Rick Lewis, part-time instructor for the School of Nursing, November 16, 2008

Mary Kathryn Magee, mother of Mitti Bilbo, director of the Dyslexia Education Center, November 21, 2008

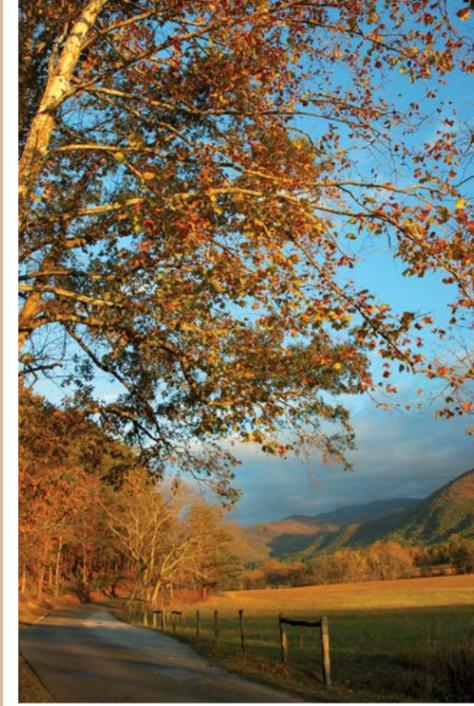
Lee Gardner, pastor of First Baptist Church, Smithville, Mississippi, and father of MC students Ben and Luke Gardner, November 30, 2008

## COMING SOON TO A CITY NEAR YOU

President Lee Royce and representatives of the alumni office will be traveling to the following locations this summer and fall:

Magee, Tupelo, Brookhaven, Vicksburg, and Hattiesburg, Mississippi • Shoals, Alabama • Atlanta, Georgia • Nashville, Tennessee • Pensacola, Florida • New York, New York

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN CONNECTING WITH ALUMNI IN YOUR AREA OR IN ORGANIZING AN ALUMNI EVENT, PLEASE CONTACT THE ALUMNI OFFICE AT 601.925.3252.



## ON TOP OF OLD SMOKY

The Alumni Association invites Mississippi College alumni, parents, and friends to experience the breathtaking natural beauty and exciting entertainment and attractions of the Smoky Mountains. This five-day, four-night tour includes stops in Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, and Asheville, North Carolina.

**SMOKY MOUNTAINS**  
NOVEMBER 30 – DECEMBER 4, 2009

The tour includes:

- Four nights hotel accommodations in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee
- Reserved seats for "Country Tonight" Christmas Show
- A morning at Billy Graham's "The Cove"
- Admission to Biltmore Estate
- Shopping at Tanger Outlet Mall
- Reserved seats for Dolly Parton's Dixie Stampede dinner and show
- Dinner at historic Grove Park Inn
- Admission to Dollywood Theme Park
- A step-on tour guide for a day trip to North Carolina
- A viewing of the magnificent Winterfest Christmas Light Display
- Two lunches, four dinners, breakfast every day, round trip luxury motorcoach transportation with restroom on board, and all luggage handling, taxes, and gratuities

The cost is approximately \$825 per person (based on double occupancy).

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [WWW.MC.EDU/ALUMNI/PROGRAMS/TRAVEL/](http://WWW.MC.EDU/ALUMNI/PROGRAMS/TRAVEL/) OR CONTACT THE OFFICE OF ALUMNI AFFAIRS AT 601.925.3228.

Robert S. Leigh, father of Melanie Fortenberry, instructor and director for the health services administration program and father-in-law of Dr. Cliff Fortenberry, professor and chair in the department of communication, December 12, 2008

Mary Lou Doughty, mother of Vicki McCann, coordinator of transcript evaluations in the office of the registrar, January 4, 2009

Thomas Kirkwood Ford, Sr., father of Dr. Kirk Ford, professor of history and political science, January 28, 2009

Fannie H. Peebles, recipient of the 1973 MC Service to Humanity Award, January 31, 2009

Geraldine J. Gholson, mother of Dr. Gerald Hasselman, associate professor in education, February 12, 2009

Dr. Donald B. Roark, former trustee of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and a former MC board member, February 15, 2009

Mary Quick Hurst, mother of Dr. Van "Doc" Quick, vice president for alumni and student affairs, emeritus and grandmother of Karon McMillan, director of financial aid, February 15, 2009

### Faculty & Staff

Joe Ford, retired groundskeeper, January 2, 2009

Dr. Frances J. McGuffee, retired professor and former chair of the department of home economics, February 25, 2009

Beatrice Patton, retired housekeeper and mother of Evelyn Palmer in housekeeping, March 4, 2009

Rachael Pyron, former special collections/Mississippi historical archives librarian at the Leland Speed Library, March 18, 2009

A gift in memory or honor of an individual may be made through the Mississippi College Annual Fund. For more information, contact Barbara King at 601.925.3968, [Brown16@mc.edu](mailto:Brown16@mc.edu), or by mail at Office of Advancement, Box 4005, Clinton, MS 39058.



Dr. Bob Simmons

### Dr. Bob Simmons 1927-2008

Dr. Bob Simmons, MC alumnus, former MC trustee, and Professor Emeritus at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS), died October 3, 2008. In addition to serving as a professor of missions at NOBTS, Dr. Simmons pastored several churches in Mississippi and served on the board of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. He and his wife, Mary '51, served as missionaries in Hong Kong, the Philippines, Germany, and Rome.

IF YOU HAVE NEWS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE, please send it to Class Notes, *Beacon* magazine, Box 4003, Clinton, MS 39058 or e-mail to [pr@mc.edu](mailto:pr@mc.edu). Please provide your class year(s), degree(s) and phone number for verification with each note. Photos submitted should be of professional quality.

# ENTERING *and* DEPARTING

A TRACK AND FIELD LEGEND AND A LEGEND IN THE MAKING REFLECT UPON THE WORDS  
ADORNING THE GATES TO THE MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE CAMPUS.

Enter here to increase in stature, knowledge, and wisdom ✦ Depart to share your culture with all mankind

## ENTERING

At a March 2008 track meet at Sewanee, I qualified for the 2008 Olympic Trials. It was one of the high points of my career to that point. Competing in the Olympics was something I'd dreamed of since I'd been running track at Brandon High School, and now that dream appeared close to becoming a reality.

Ten minutes later as I competed in the long jump, I heard a loud pop and felt a tearing pain in my leg. The pop was the sound of my hamstring ripping. It was also the sound of my Olympic dream ending; that pulled hamstring was a season-ending injury.



I was crushed.

*Crushed.*

For a moment, I just laid there on the track, knowing it was all over.

But within a few days, I stopped looking back at what might have been and began looking forward to what still could be. I would still be coming

back for another year of track and field as a Mississippi College Choctaw. I would still be able to train for the 2009 USA Championships and for the 2010 World Championships. And while 2008 would not be my year to compete for the gold, there would still be 2012.

Part of increasing in stature, knowledge, and wisdom is developing the maturity needed to overcome disappointments and setbacks. It hasn't been easy. Sitting in Mississippi and watching the 2008 Olympic games in Beijing on TV, I kept thinking, "It could've been me." But my goal now is to be saying, "It *is* me" in London in 2012.

Whether "sharing my culture with all mankind" means I'll have the Olympics as a platform or whether it means some other path in life, I know that the stature, wisdom, and knowledge I've gained at Mississippi College will be something I'll always carry with me. In the meantime, I'm training hard, and I'm taking very good care of my hamstrings.

*Al Winsley is a senior majoring in kinesiology. During his junior season, Winsley was the American Southwest Conference champion in the high jump, long jump, and triple jump and was named the Division III National Field Athlete of the Year. He is currently training for the 2009 USA Championships in June.*

## DEPARTING

I came to MC on a track and field scholarship and for the first semester, I didn't take academics as seriously as I should have. Then my coach, Joe Walker, called me into his office and said, "Look, I really don't care how good an athlete you are. You are here as a student first. Get it straight or go somewhere else."

That conversation was my wake-up call. From that day since, I have considered myself a student.

I was blessed with natural athletic ability, but in order to compete at the highest levels, I had to become a student of my sport. That meant not only learning the mechanics of



track and field, but also learning my own abilities and limits. I realized that how I reacted to athletic victories and failures and how I handled obstacles and hurdles – both literal and metaphorical – was an indication of how well I would cope with victories and failures, obstacles and hurdles in my life outside sports.

As a black student at a predominantly white university in Mississippi in the 1970s, I was also a student of people. During those years, I learned not to judge people based on a stereotype or on what the media told me to think, but to approach people from other walks of life and appreciate them for who they were. That ability prepared me to befriend athletes from all over the world when I competed in four Olympic games.

Today, I am a student of my professional work, knowing what it will require from me if I'm going to succeed. I'm a student of my relationships. I have to study my wife and know what makes her tick for our relationship to be fulfilling.

Looking back, I thank my track coach for cracking down on me. That wake-up call encouraged me to earn a business degree that has served me well since my career as an athlete came to an end. But while a degree is an admirable goal, I've learned that to truly increase in stature, wisdom, and knowledge means that one never really stops being a student.

*Larry Myricks '79 competed on the 1976, 1980, 1984, and 1988 USA Track and Field Olympic Teams and won the bronze medal for the long jump at the 1988 games. A former NCAA, U.S. National, and World Cup titleholder in the long jump, Myricks' career included 14 world rankings. He is a member of the USA Track and Field Hall of Fame. Myricks still runs daily, but as a student of his own abilities, he is no longer tempted to try a long jump.*



"WE HAD FOUR PLAYERS WON TO THE LORD THIS YEAR.  
THAT IS BY FAR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF WHICH I'M MOST PROUD."

— BRIAN OWENS, AMERICAN SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE COACH OF THE YEAR



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RECOGNIZED FOR ACADEMIC  
EXCELLENCE AND COMMITMENT  
TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST.