About the cover...

Dr. Mildred Vance (standing) recently retired after having taught six decades of students at Arkansas State University. Representing five of those decades are Dr. Vance’s former students: (from left) Maxcine Strickland, 1970s; Jerry Allison, 1950s; Lisa Hogan, 1980s; Wanda Ferguson, 1960s; and Josh Alexander, 2000s.
Thoughts about a teacher we love

We try to guard against it, but sometimes in development work for higher education we inevitably get caught up in things like numbers, committee assignments and deadlines.

I think we make it difficult for ourselves when we fail to remember our work is always about people – really good people.

Over the course of its 94 years, Arkansas State University has been guided in various ways by some of the best people.

Presidents V.C. Kays and Carl Reng were visionaries in different eras who certainly guided ASU to great things at key points in the university’s historical development.

There are other names that come to mind:

Moore in student development; Ellis in math; Pasmore in both language and art; Plunkett in communications; Tomlinson, England, Nedrow, Minx, and the list could go on ...

Of all those who have served with distinction, vision and dedication–of all those who have made impact beyond measure at Arkansas State, let us add the name, Vance.

With 54 years of service to teaching, and the College of Education, it’s difficult to calculate just how much of an impact Dr. Mildred Vance has had on the world.

While Dr. Vance just recently retired as a professor of education at ASU, her impact drives on. Let’s think about it conservatively for just a moment.

If Dr. Vance taught an average of 50 students a year every year since 1948, that’s 2,700 students, most of whom went on to become teachers. If each one of those students taught just 20 students a year for 10 years, that’s 54,000 students. You can do the math from there.

Dr. Vance taught my mother, and my grandmother. As so many others do, they speak of her with such fondness that we consider her to be a part of the family. I suspect she is a genuine part of many families like ours.

Consider what Mark Ledbetter, a former student of Dr. Vance who is now a Memphis attorney had to say at her recent retirement reception.

“It was the love you gave us that let us know love was more important than that day’s lesson,” Ledbetter said.

Another of her students, now Jonesboro attorney Bobby McDaniel also helps to put Dr. Vance’s career in perspective.

“Today, there are teachers in classrooms across this country who have a little bit of Dr. Vance with them each time they write a lesson plan, make a homework assignment or pause for just a moment to help a child who needs to be loved.”

Those who have learned from Dr. Vance over the last 50 years say she was encouraging students to think about their role in a global society long before it ever became popular to think in a “global” perspective. She was “cutting-edge” before that phrase was ever coined.

At her retirement reception, Dr. Vance expressed what her career and affiliation with Arkansas State have meant to her.

“Teaching is the greatest profession. Without teachers, there would be no other professions. It has been my joy, my life, my happiness to be associated with ASU,” she said.

The privilege has been ours, Dr. Vance.

(Steve Watkins is director of development at Arkansas State University and serves as executive editor of “The Foundation News.”)

Dear Alumni and Friends:

Spring has been a very exciting time on the Arkansas State University campus. The world premiere of the Hallmark Hall of Fame’s “A Painted House,” based on the novel by Jonesboro-born author John Grisham, was a wonderful event that benefitted the young doctoral program in Heritage Studies.

The book, and now the film, capture a moment in time that is not at all foreign to many of us. Several of you have commented on the attention that was given to authentic detail, and on your memories of that time in our history.

This is what the Heritage Studies program is about. Examining our history, culture, architecture, customs, music and literature are ways in which we better understand ourselves today and remember our past tomorrow.

No matter how you support Arkansas State, whether it be through gifts to academic programs like Heritage Studies, to service areas like the museum or KASU, or to private scholarships, you are making a difference and creating your own heritage with this university.

We are extremely grateful for your trust in us as stewards of the legacy you are creating. Thank you for your generous support of Arkansas State University. ❖

Very Sincerely,

Steve Owens
Vice President, University Advancement
President/CEO, ASU Foundation
Arkansas State hosts world premiere of “A Painted House”

A little piece of Hollywood came to Northeast Arkansas April 14 when Hallmark Hall of Fame’s presentation of “A Painted House,” based on the novel by John Grisham, debuted to the world via a capacity crowd at Fowler Center’s Riceland Hall on the Arkansas State University campus.

The book on which the film is based, is set in Black Oak, Ark., where Grisham spent the first seven years of his life. Filming for the Hallmark Hall of Fame production was done in Lepanto (Poinsett County) and Clarkdale (Crittenden County).

Period equipment used in the film, including a cotton wagon, tractors, trucks, cotton sacks and bales flanked Fowler Center, only to be divided on one side or the other by the red carpet, which guided guests into the Grand Hall.

At a news conference immediately preceding the event, Grisham spoke to the media about the film, his book, his family and the premiere.

“I never see the film the way the film maker sees it,” Grisham said.

“But you could bring in ten film makers and each would see it ten different ways.”

Grisham said actor Scott Glenn, of films including “The Right Stuff” and “Urban Cowboy,” portrays the character of Pappy Chandler in such a way that resembles Grisham’s own grandfather “pretty closely.”

He also said he was happy to work with Hallmark Productions, because he trusted it would be a quality presentation. He noted that he and Hallmark literally had a “handshake deal” that Hallmark would make the film.

Brad Moore, president of Hallmark Productions, said Hallmark Hall of Fame was attracted to the story because of the family dynamics playing on different levels, and because of Grisham’s writing.

Grisham asked that the event be presented as a fund-raising opportu-
Arkansas State University

Arkansas State University President Dr. Les Wyatt with suggesting the newest doctoral program in Heritage Studies as the benefactor.

“I just thought it was a great fit,” he said.

Dr. Wyatt said the Heritage Studies program is dedicated to preserving the rich history and culture of the Delta, a history that is woven into the story of “A Painted House.”

“Through this program, we hope to understand and explain this place to those who will come after us,” Dr. Wyatt said to the capacity crowd immediately preceding the showing of the film.

Congressman Marion Berry, of Arkansas’ First Congressional District, said he was also honored that Grisham had chosen to write about and explain the heritage of the Arkansas Delta, and expressed his thanks to Grisham for his work and his generosity to Arkansas State.

Linn Sitler of the Memphis and Shelby County Film Commission told the group, “John has never forgotten where he came from. The love that went into this production is felt on the screen. Thank you, John, for perhaps the best one yet.”

Grisham received a standing ovation from the crowd as he came to the lectern to speak. He noted this is the seventh of his books that have been adapted to film, and compared the work of an author to that of a film maker.

“Books and movies, it’s not fair to compare them,” he said. “So forget about the book and enjoy the next 105 minutes of the movie.” ⏩

Bridgestone/Firestone donates to ASU Newport

Representatives of Bridgestone/Firestone North American Tire, LLC recently made a donation of 30 new truck tires to Arkansas State University-Newport’s Commercial Driver Institute, which operates several tractor-trailer rigs in its training program.

Don Darden, marketing communications manager for the Commercial Division of Bridgestone/Firestone, visited the ASU-Newport facility to announce the gift.

"Schools like ASU-Newport need more than bricks, mortar and books to do their work,” he said. "At Bridgestone/Firestone, we’re happy to contribute the tires on which tomorrow’s truck drivers will learn their skills."

Dr. Larry N. Williams, ASU-Newport chancellor, expressed the institution’s appreciation for the gift.

"We are very pleased Bridgestone/Firestone chose to support our Commercial Driver Institute," he said. "This gift not only helps us with operating the program, but it makes a strong statement throughout the industry about the quality of training ASU-Newport provides to commercial drivers."

Williams also cited John Kent of Batesville, an affiliated Bridgestone/Firestone dealer, and Nelson "Bulldog" Drummond, executive director of the Tire Dealer Association, as being instrumental in arranging the donation.

ASU-Newport operates the largest collegiate commercial driver training program in the state. With more than 22 trucks and seven full time faculty members, it graduates more than 700 students annually. It is the only certified program in the state of Arkansas, and has placed graduates with all major transportation carriers throughout the state. ⏩
The premiere of Hallmark Hall of Fame’s “A Painted House” on April 14 was not only a great event for fans of Jonesboro-born author John Grisham, it was an encouraging endorsement of Heritage Studies, the newest doctoral program at Arkansas State University.

Instituted in the Fall 2001 semester, the program is designed to develop heritage professionals who identify, preserve, interpret, manage and promote regional history and culture for non-specialist public audiences. Dr. Clyde Milner, ASU professor of history and director of the Heritage Studies program, said graduates of the program will qualify for positions at the highest level in cultural and historical agencies, cultural and historical tourism, museums and archives, parks and historical sites, consulting firms and heritage related businesses.

“The Heritage Studies program is highly distinctive,” Milner said, “in that it is an interdisciplinary program that is focused on serving the public sector as opposed to teaching. Our graduates will be giving back to their respective communities and enhancing related programs. This is the only Ph.D. program of its kind in our area of the South.”

Milner said many of the 17 students currently enrolled in the program are already established in their careers, but they recognize how this doctoral program will enhance their position and move them ahead in their respective careers.

Dr. C. Calvin Smith is Presidential Distinguished Professor of Heritage Studies. He said he believes the national exposure garnered from the premiere will help attract additional quality students from around the country, as well as locally.

“The program’s primary focus is the Delta region, a region that has remained largely untouched by scholarship,” Smith noted. “We’ve just begun to scratch the surface of the culture. We want to train more people who are in public service. This program will enhance their skills, as well as reveal more about the Delta.”

Both men expect enrollment to increase by at least eight more students in the fall. The proceeds from the premiere will fund an endowment that will provide additional opportunities for the program to grow.

Milner and Smith are grateful for Grisham’s interest and involvement in the Heritage Studies program, and Milner said Grisham has an amazing sense of place.

“This sense of place, identity and heritage is what we’re all about,” Milner said. “He obviously cares about the people and the heritage of our area.

“I like to say we’re building a program that’s our own ‘painted house’ project.”

“A Painted House” arrived at Fowler Center from Technicolor Studios in North Hollywood, Calif. The showing of the film and dinner with John Grisham prior to the film’s premiere were charitable events to benefit the Heritage Studies doctoral program at Arkansas State.
If you’ve been to one of Arkansas State University’s theatre productions at Fowler Center, chances are you may have seen the facility’s designers in the audience.

Jonesboro architects Jerry Brackett and George Krennerich say they thoroughly enjoy the dramas and musicals performed by students in the Department of Theatre, so much so that they’ve established a $25,000 endowment to provide a scholarship to aid these students with their education.

“When we designed Fowler Center, we got to know (ASU Department of Theatre Chairman) Bob Simpson in working on the design of the drama and black box theatres,” Krennerich explained. “The resulting theatres turned out to be very intimate and nice. We’ve both attended several productions now. We’ve been extremely impressed with the quality of the faculty and the caliber of the students who participate in the program.”

“The students have just been outstanding,” Brackett agreed. “For instance, take the recent production of ‘The Elephant Man.’ It showed the kind of quality production the students and staff are capable of. I’ve designed several sets over the years; this one done by the students was great.”

Simpson said the relationship with the architects has been rewarding.

“Jerry and George have been good friends of the ASU theatre program for more than 15 years, going back to the preliminary planning meetings for a new performing arts center,” said Simpson. “They have provided support and encouragement in the designing and building process of Fowler Center, corporate sponsorship of the ASU Summer Children’s Theatre, and now an endowed scholarship fund for theatre students.”

Krennerich said Summer Children’s Theatre was how the architectural firm first became involved in supporting the theatre department. He said his excitement for the program grew after attending a performance.

“Not just because of what was being performed on stage,” he said. “But watching the kids in the audience see and experience the play. Their reactions were great. We just enjoy the theatre program.”

“And we wanted to endow this scholarship, because we saw the need,” Brackett said. “We believe that the support of the community is imperative in assisting ASU retain good students. As an architect, I had a good liberal arts education. That education has contributed to my quality of life.

“Theatre, like all the arts, leads to a better quality of life. And students who’ve been through theatre classes make good speakers, good bank presidents and good professionals.”

The Brackett-Krennerich Associates Scholarship Endowment for Theatre will be available to junior and senior level theatre majors at Arkansas State University and will be awarded for the first time in the Fall 2003 semester, Simpson said. He noted the scholarship is another great plus for the Department of Theatre.

“This endowment will help us move one step closer to reaching our goals in increased enrollment of quality theatre students/artists.”
In the fall of 1948, Harry Truman was president of the United States and enrollment at Arkansas State College was 1,093 students, many of whom were World War II veterans and spouses.

A young educator named Mildred Vance joined the faculty that year, supervising kindergarten classes in the Demonstration School, a public K-12 school operated by the college as an extension of its program in education.

More than 54 years later, she told the College of Education she had decided to retire from full-time service to Arkansas State University. A reception was held in her honor at Fowler Center.

“It has been my joy, my life and my happiness to be associated with ASU,” she said at the event.

For Dr. Mildred Vance, the achievements, the accolades and the dedication have been remarkable.

Extraordinary adjectives are not extraordinary at all when describing her and her career in education, according to her professional colleagues and friends. Legions of her former students would surely agree.

“I’m happy for your wonderful career and the many contributions you have made here,” Dr. Les Wyatt, president of the university, wrote to her. "You have touched many lives, including mine. Thanks for all that you have meant to all of us."

The dean of the College of Education, Dr. John Beineke, praised Dr. Vance as an exemplary model for the education of teachers and children in this state and across the nation.

"Her work in Arkansas, Michigan, Texas and Tennessee over the past 50 years has consistently been a beacon for best practices for educators and the children in their classrooms,” he said. "Dr. Vance has been generous and supportive of me as dean with her time, advice and counsel."

The chair of the Department of Teacher Education, Dr. Veda McClain, who came to ASU in 1997, was quickly impressed with her new colleague.

"I soon realized after getting to know Dr. Vance that here in our midst was a treasure of wisdom and knowledge, not only about preparing teachers, but about life and the world in general," she recalled. "Dr. Vance continues to display an open mind about interacting with individuals from diverse backgrounds and about exploring new and different places.

"She always talked about preparing our students to live and teach in a global society. As a result of that notion, Dr. Vance challenged our students to think beyond the confines of the walls at the university, wrote to her. "You have touched many lives, including mine. Thanks for all that you have meant to all of us."

Long-time educator Dr. Mildred Vance visits with friends and former colleagues during her retirement reception held recently at Fowler Center.
Arkansas State University

"Dr. Vance” continued from page six

ASU and those of their communities. We will miss her warmth, her kindness, her love for teaching and learning, her faithfulness and dedication to her students, and openness about the world.”

Over the years, recognitions have come her way many times, in many ways. One of the most recent major honors occurred last year, when the ASU Alumni Association recognized her as a Distinguished Alumnus. Selection is based upon professional achievement, community service and service to ASU.

In a profile published in Voices, the ASU Alumni Association magazine, she recalled the joys of teaching kindergarten and the professional development that experience offered.

"Teaching kindergarten, I learned how to respond to a person in a very positive way and how to help them become the kind of person they wanted to be," she said.

Memphis attorney and former kindergarten student Mark Ledbetter said not only the lessons he learned but the love he received from “Miss Vance” were a good beginning to his education.

“It was that love you gave us that let us know love was more important than that day’s lesson,” he said.

Most of her career was spent teaching students how to be effective teachers.

"Teaching is the greatest profession," she asserted. "Without teachers, there would be no other professions. Teaching encompasses the imagination and commits one to the pursuit of excellence in yourself and your students."

Her love of teaching, the College of Education, and ASU inspired her to write a book, "Reflections: Fifty Years of Teacher Education at Arkansas State University,” which was published last year. In the book, she chronicled the development and success of ASU’s teacher education program, which produces more teacher education graduates than any university in the state.

In 1996, the Southern Early Childhood Association, which involves professional educators from 14 Southern states, named her SECA Outstanding Member of the year in recognition of her contributions to SECA and to the field of early childhood education.

Mayor Hubert Brodell proclaimed "Mildred Vance Day" on May 8, 1989, in honor of her commitment to early childhood education and because she has "made such a difference in the lives of citizens in Jonesboro, in Arkansas, and the Mid-South region.”

The native of Sedgwick, where she still lives, received her bachelor’s degree from what was then Arkansas State College in 1946, then taught in public schools before joining the ASC faculty in 1948. Her other prior experience included the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington and the American Red Cross in Illinois.

While continuing to work at ASC, Dr. Vance continued her own education, earning a master’s degree at George Peabody College for Teachers at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee, and her doctorate at the University of Texas in Austin. She was promoted to professor of education in 1959.

During her tenure at ASU, Vance designed and developed three early childhood degree programs for the College of Education, two of which are at the master’s level. She was the first regional training officer for the Head Start program in Arkansas and one of the first in the nation. She wrote the successful Title 20 grant in 1977 for the ASU daycare center.

In 1978 she was named the first recipient of the ASU Outstanding Faculty Award for Teaching and later served as chairman of the President's Fellows. Her research and articles have been published extensively in professional journals and she has made numerous presentations to area schools and to regional, state and national education associations.

She has served on numerous committees and organizations throughout her lengthy career, including serving as president of the ASU Faculty Association. Vance is a member of many professional organizations including the World Organization for Preschool Education, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Southern Early Childhood Education Association and the Arkansas Early Childhood Association. She also is a member of Phi Mu Fraternity, Kappa Delta Pi, Kappa Delta Gamma, Phi Kappa Phi and Phi Delta Kappa.

A scholarship honoring Dr. Vance for her years of service and dedication to her students has been established at ASU. Persons wishing to honor her may send gifts, made payable to the ASU Foundation, to P.O. Box 1990, State University AR 72467-1990. Please note on the check the gift is for the Mildred B. Vance scholarship.
Ac c o u n t i n g alumnus makes retirement assets gift to ASU

Because the years he spent at Arkansas State College were so special, and because he wanted to provide a lasting tribute to his mother and aunt, Dr. Paden Neeley of Lewisville, Texas, has named Arkansas State University the beneficiary of his retirement plan assets.

Neely’s mother, Orthany Dekker, and his aunt, Attie Horrell, were both employees of Arkansas State. In fact, Ms. Dekker moved herself and her young son from Hardy so that she might work for the university and put him through college.

Dr. Neeley started his Arkansas State career at the Demonstration School, a public kindergarten through 12th grade school operated by Arkansas State College as an extension of its education program. When the school closed in 1951, Dr. Neeley transferred to Jonesboro High, where he graduated in 1952. He entered ASC soon thereafter.

“Arkansas State was a small campus at that time,” Dr. Neeley recalled, “about 1,200 or 1,300 students. We had some great football teams then under Coach Frosty England. We had a big rivalry with Memphis State.

“And there was the Wigwam. The music that came from there. Freshmen were required to wear beanies. There were some great dances in the common areas of the women’s residence halls. It was just a great time to grow up.

“The faculty was tough, but good to us kids in their own way. Dr. Nedrow was my fraternity sponsor. Dr. Carruthers and Dean Moore were a great influence on me. I developed a love for education.”

Dr. Neeley graduated from Arkansas State in 1956 with a Bachelor’s degree in accounting. He then went on to earn a Master’s degree in economics at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, and then joined the U.S. Army. (He had also been involved with ROTC at Arkansas State.) After his Army service, he earned his Ph.D. in economics at UAF. It was his love for education that led him to teach for 45 years, 34 of which were at the University of North Texas.

“Trying to help students pursue an education has been such a wonderful experience for me,” he said. “It is important for me to make this gift to allow many more students a chance to achieve their goals.”

Dr. Deborah Turner, ASU director of Planned Giving, said retirement plans represent a major asset in many estates.

“One of the simplest ways a donor can maximize distributions from a retirement plan is to name a charitable organization like Arkansas State University or the Arkansas State University Foundation as beneficiary of an IRA or qualified plan assets,” she noted. “The gift passing to charity will avoid income and estate tax. And, making a gift of these assets, like Dr. Neeley has done, is relatively easy to do. The donor simply completes a beneficiary designation form, available from his plan administrator or financial adviser, naming the charity as beneficiary. It is wise to discuss such gifts with one’s accountant, financial adviser or attorney in order to maximize the estate planning benefits of making such a gift.

“Arkansas State is very grateful to Dr. Neely for his generosity. He has a wonderful history with the university, and has been a great friend and alumnus.”

“It is important for me to do this,” Dr. Neely said. “I’ve had a wonderful life, so much of which started here.”
Arkansas State University alumna Dr. Kathy Brittain White on Sept. 13 presented the ASU College of Business with a $2 million gift to establish the Horizon Institute of Technology.

The gift will enable the College of Business to be the catalyst in bringing technology and advancement to the students and residents of the Arkansas Delta, according to Mark Young, director of the Institute.

The Horizon Institute of Technology will expand technology education at the university in both undergraduate and graduate programs. It will also provide additional technology education opportunities for secondary education teachers who are laying the foundation for students who represent the future workforce.

Business and industry will also benefit from the Horizon Institute of Technology. The Institute will focus on providing solutions and increasing productivity via technology.

"Arkansas State University is in a unique position here in the Delta," White said. "The university will make a tremendous difference in the lives of students and residents by bridging the digital divide through this outreach program."

Dr. Jan Duggar, dean of the College of Business, said, "What makes this gift unique is that Dr. White is not only giving a monetary gift but is also giving a gift of her time and expertise. Dr. White will continue to provide vision by serving on and chairing the Board of Directors of the Horizon Institute of Technology."

White received her bachelor’s degree from ASU in 1977. She continues to support the university through this endeavor, and past support includes the establishment of the Virtual Internship Program with Cardinal Healthcare (see Foundation News, Spring 2002), the Kathy Brittain White Fellowship in Management Information Systems, and the White Computer Lab at ASU-Mountain Home (see Foundation News, Fall 1999).

In making this gift to ASU, White says she has had an opportunity to reflect on her time spent as an undergraduate at Arkansas State University. "ASU was an incredibly supportive environment for me, both financially and through the faculty" she said.

"The faculty’s personal involvement and encouragement gave me a vision of more; that I could go to graduate school and pursue my career goals."

That vision of doing more is consistent with White’s vision of the Horizon Institute. White expects the Horizon Institute of Technology to challenge and inspire people to believe they are capable of more than they think. "One person believing that they are capable of more can change everything. I want to make a difference one life at a time."

White is executive vice president and chief information officer for Cardinal Health, a company currently ranked 23rd on the Fortune 500 list. The long-time advocate for advancement in technology serves on the Boards of Directors for Mattel, Inc., and Certegy, Inc. She was named to Forbes magazine’s Top 25 America’s Businesswomen 2001 list and was also named one of the top CIOs in the United States by Information Week magazine in 1997.
Family establishes new scholarship in memory of Dr. John Knight

John Knight loved baseball.

So much so that his family has provided a lasting legacy to him by establishing an academic scholarship in his memory at Arkansas State University. Fittingly, the scholarship will benefit a local baseball player who is pursuing a college degree.

The $5,000 gift to the ASU Foundation, Inc., represents designated memorial contributions made in honor of Dr. Knight following his death in February 2002. The Dr. John E. Knight Baseball Scholarship, when it reaches the endowment level of $10,000, will be awarded to a full-time member of the ASU baseball team, with preference given to students who are high school graduates from Craighead, Poinsett, Greene, Mississippi, Jackson, Lawrence, Randolph and Cross counties.

“John played baseball as a child,” Melinda Knight said. “When our son Cody was old enough to play, John began coaching. He was involved for 15 years with the Jonesboro Baseball League, and served on its board for many years. Our daughter Kristen, Cody and I believe this is a wonderful way to acknowledge John’s dedication to the local baseball program.”

Dr. Knight grew up at Boydsville and graduated from Corning High School. Following his graduation from Arkansas State in 1970, Dr. Knight taught one semester at Cross County Junior High School, Mrs. Knight said. In the fall of 1971, he entered the Southern College of Optometry in Memphis. After receiving his degree of optometry, he established a practice in Jonesboro in 1975 in the former Spanish Mall on Caraway Road, a practice he maintained until his death last year.

Jonesboro attorney Keith Blackman was a friend of Dr. Knight. They coached baseball together and enjoyed hunting.

“He loved baseball,” Blackman said. “He loved softball, and played too. He was more of a low-key coach, helping kids work on the fundamentals of baseball. He was really interested in the mechanics of the game.

“Kids loved him. It was not unusual for him to buy equipment for kids who needed it. He had a pitching mound and home plate constructed in his backyard where kids could come and practice, from the time they were 7, 8 and 9-year-olds to 18-year-olds. He was very generous at heart. That’s just the kind of guy he was. He would be pleased about the scholarship, because it encourages collegiate activity for Arkansas baseball players.”

Keith Kessinger, ASU baseball coach, said the university’s baseball program is proud to be affiliated with the Knight scholarship.

“We are very honored to have the Dr. John Knight academic scholarship established for Arkansas State’s baseball program,” he noted. “Dr. Knight provided immeasurable and valuable service to this university.”

Dr. Dean Lee, ASU athletic director, said he is also grateful the Knight family has established the scholarship.

“It is scholarships of this nature that allow the athletic department to expand our opportunities for our student-athletes,” he noted. “Our scholarship program is critical to ensuring that ASU continues to provide the best possible environment for our student athletes to be successful in competition and the classroom.”

Mrs. Knight said memorials represent gifts from colleagues, friends, family and former patients of her husband.

“He would be so pleased to be remembered by others interested in helping a local young person to pursue a dream of playing university baseball while earning a degree.”

To contribute to the scholarship, interested persons may send their gift to the ASU Foundation, P.O. Box 1990, State University AR 72467-1990 or call (870) 972-3940 or toll-free (888) 225-8343 for more information. The check should be made payable to the ASU Foundation, with a notation that the gift is for the Dr. John E. Knight Baseball Scholarship. All gifts to the ASU Foundation are tax deductible.
She’s like your favorite cousin. You know, the one who always keeps up with the family’s goings-on, arranges the family reunions or is always there if you need a little help.

That’s Beth Smith, Arkansas State University director of Alumni Relations. She and her staff keep tabs on the family of more than 55,000 alumni of ASU—their families, their careers and their interest in Arkansas State.

An alumna herself, Class of 1982, the journalism/public relations graduate began her career as a marketing and trust officer at a local bank. When the chance to work at ASU came along, she didn’t hesitate to make the move.

“I had a great experience here as a student,” Smith said. “I believed it would be a great opportunity. ASU is an important part of our community and the region.”

Smith said all alumni programming comes through the Office of Alumni Relations, which includes maintaining the alumni database, planning alumni activities and special events, and membership and chapter programming.

“We also act as the liaison between the ASU Alumni Association Board and Arkansas State University, award alumni scholarships and monitor the alumni license plate program in the state of Arkansas,” she explained.

I love my career because it has allowed me to maintain relationships I’ve developed over the years. The opportunity to share with other alumni the exciting things that are happening is just terrific. Meeting new people and seeing the university grow and move forward is also very rewarding.”

A significant cancerous health issue during this last year may have slowed her down for just a bit, but Beth is back and going big guns. While her sunny outlook never wavered, she said she did learn something important.

“During this last year I’ve had a greater appreciation for the role of family and friends in my life. I feel fortunate that has included my ASU family and friends.”

She and her husband Tom stay busy with the family activities of their two sons, Hunter—15, and Ross—13.

“We also act as the liaison between the ASU Alumni Association Board and Arkansas State University, award alumni scholarships and monitor the alumni license plate program in the state of Arkansas,” she explained.

Beth’s biggest wish, which she and her staff are working to make happen, is the construction of a new Alumni Center. It will be located at the lake on the Jonesboro campus, at the site of the old pavilion.

“The construction of this new center will transform the role alumni play in the future of ASU. It will give us a permanent location that will not only acknowledge contributions of time and talent, but will provide a forum to recognize all future partners in our growth. It will be the alumni home on the ASU campus.”

And “Cousin Beth” will be there, like always, helping us all out.
James L. Thompson was always going places...his career as an aircraft pilot kept him on the move.

His devotion to Arkansas State University and his generosity will help keep many others on the move for years to come.

He probably would be pleased to know that all those hours spent at the controls of an airplane would help make it possible for needy students to pursue higher education, and for faculty members to pursue their research projects.

Thompson, who died in spring 2001, was a retired airline pilot living in Houston, Texas, and a 1944 alumnus of what was then Arkansas State College.

ASU has received an estate gift of approximately $2.8 million as a result of Thompson’s financial planning, ASU President Dr. Les Wyatt announced on November 14.

“We are grateful to acknowledge Mr. Thompson’s generosity and vision for helping others,” Dr. Wyatt said. “In accordance with his expressed wishes, the interest from this endowment gift will provide $80,000 in student scholarships and $50,000 in faculty research scholarships each year. This gift will have long-term impact in the lives of students and faculty for decades to come.”

When he designated Arkansas State University in his will, Thompson became a charter member of the Legacy Society, the group organized by the Arkansas State University Foundation, Inc. to recognize donors of planned gifts.

Providing a lasting gift of support to his alma mater was an honor, he said in a 1994 interview.

“When I graduated, I never dreamed I would be able someday to make a financial gift to Arkansas State University,” he said. “I am happy to have this opportunity.”

After retiring in December 1985 as a captain for Delta Air Lines, Thompson attended a financial planning seminar and learned about the positive tax benefits of charitable giving. With assistance from a financial advisor, he set up a charitable remainder annuity trust and named ASU as the beneficiary.

The trust had several financial benefits with which he said he was very pleased, while providing the assurance of a significant gift to the university.

His graduation is a story in itself—raised by a relative, finishing college at age 18, being one of the few males in his war-time graduating class, then facing the uncertainty of military service.

Yvonne Forgey (Puddin) Richardson raised Thompson as her own son. Growing up on Cate Street in Jonesboro, he attended grades one through 12 at the Arkansas State College Training School, which was operated for local children by ASC. His favorite teacher was Emma Rogers.

He proceeded quickly, finishing 12 grades in nine years, then entered college in the fall of 1940 shortly before his 15th birthday. A year later, just weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbor, he enrolled in Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). He recalled that he was one of the few male students left on campus when World War II erupted the next year.

In preparation for his inevitable military service, Thompson majored in engineering and minored in mathematics and military science. He even began flight training, making his first solo flight in 1943 in Jonesboro.

Soon after his June 1944 graduation, the 18-year-old Thompson joined the Navy and served eight years as a flight officer in the Naval Air Transport Service. The military flight training prepared him well for a career as a commercial airline pilot.

His first job was with Chicago and Southern Airline, which later merged with Delta Airlines.

In the 1994 interview, he fondly recalled his experiences as a pilot, emphasizing his good fortune to have never had an accident.

“One day in the early years, I was flying as a DC-3 co-pilot on the Memphis, Shreveport, Houston route,” he recalled. “It was tornado
A significant contribution by the daughter of the late Al Mink, dean of the College of Engineering, has established a scholarship that will assist students pursuing a degree within that college at Arkansas State University.

Marlette Mink Stevenson said her father loved Arkansas State, so much so that after he earned his Bachelor’s degree here, he left the state to pursue higher degrees in order that he might come back and work to establish an independent Engineering program at ASU.

After receiving his Master’s degree from Louisiana State University and his doctoral degree from Oklahoma State University, Dr. Mink did just what he set out to do. On September 30, 1999, the Department of Engineering in the College of Agriculture became the College of Engineering.

“He wanted to make the engineering program a great one,” Ms. Stevenson said. “I’m glad he got to see it happen.”

Mink grew up around the Brookland-Dixie area of Northeast Arkansas. Stevenson said although he had many chances to work in the corporate world, he had a desire to teach and to help his students do their very best.

“‘He just loved the students who would come through the program here,’” she explained. “He especially enjoyed recruiting; he enjoyed getting out and visiting with the kids.”

The oldest of six children, Mink grew up working on the farm, which MS. Stevenson said helped him relate well to his students who had come from humble beginnings like himself, and would do what he could to assist in their success.

“He’d say ‘I just like to help people.’ That’s what he was all about.”

In his time outside the classroom, Mink enjoyed deer and turkey hunting, and still maintained the family farm, always striving for his crop to be the best in the area.

Stevenson said she hopes by establishing this scholarship, her father’s legacy of helping students in their pursuit of an education will be maintained forever.

Persons interested in making gifts to the Dr. Albert Mink Memorial Scholarship may do so by sending a check, made payable to the ASU Foundation, to P.O. Box 1990, State University AR 72467. Additional information can be obtained by calling the Development Office toll free outside Jonesboro at (888) 225-8343, or locally at 972-3940.
Endowment established to honor Lorena J. “Rockie” Smith in ASU’s Theatre Department

The Arkansas State University Foundation, Inc., in Jonesboro has received a $25,000 gift from the estate of the late Lorena J. “Rockie” Smith of West Memphis, establishing a significant private endowment in ASU’s Department of Theatre.

“This is probably one of the most exciting things to happen to the department,” said Bob Simpson, ASU Theatre Department chairman. “We are so very appreciative to the Smith family for their generosity.”

Rockie Smith was known throughout the Delta for teaching thousands of young people the art of dance, first in Blytheville and then in West Memphis, said her husband, A.B. Smith, Jr.

“We met at Mississippi State University after I came home from World War II,” Mr. Smith said. “After I graduated, we married, and when we moved to Blytheville in 1948, she opened her dance studio. She was always involved in helping promote the fine arts and little theatre. She wanted children to be exposed to the fine arts; she believed it was important.

“We have many friends who graduated from ASU,” he continued. “When she was making her final plans, we thought leaving this gift to Arkansas State was a good thing to do.’

“That was the beauty of her gift,” said Rockie’s daughter, Llana Smith. “She had no connection to ASU whatsoever. But she knew that many of the kids she taught, and even their children, would be going there. She loved to teach, and taught many children over the years. She really wanted to help them reach their potential. After I became involved in the Miss America program, sponsoring the Miss Teen Delta and Miss Delta pageants, she choreographed each one. She had hopes that her students would go on to do something wonderful.”

One young lady “Ms. Rockie” influenced was Miss Arkansas 2000, Sara Harris of Forrest City. A senior journalism student at Arkansas State University, Sara said Ms. Rockie provided advice and moral support as she competed over the years.

“We first met in 1996, when I won Miss Teen Delta,” Sara said. “She and Llana were always good to keep in touch after the pageants; they were like a second family to me. Ms. Rockie was the epitome of a Southern lady. She loved education and the arts.

“She instilled etiquette and good manners in young women throughout the Delta. She loved education and the arts, and believed people should challenge themselves in their education. Even though I wasn’t one of her dance students, she taught me a lot. The greatest lesson I learned from her was that one can be polite and still assert oneself. I won’t forget that.”

The Department of Theatre was established as a stand-alone department in the College of Fine Arts in July 2000. Located in ASU’s Fowler Center, the program continues to grow. Approximately 50 students are theatre majors at Arkansas State, and an average of 15 to 20 students minor in the subject. Simpson said ASU is a great training ground for performing, directing and theatre management, and gifts like the Smith endowment help the department recruit good students to a good program.

Established to assist in performances that promote the artistic and cultural quality of the community, the endowment will primarily focus on aiding students participating in activities related to the annual Summer Children’s Theatre performances.

“This is a shot in the arm for the children’s theatre program,” Simpson noted. “We can expect this program to grow by leaps and bounds in the next five to 10 years.”

For others who would like to make a contribution to the Lorena J. “Rockie” Smith Endowment for Theatre, they may do so by sending their tax-deductible gift to the ASU Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 1990, State University AR 72467. For more information, please call toll-free at (888) 225-8343, or (870) 972-3940.
Athletics and academics working together helped increase attendance at an Arkansas State University football game, and sent a Phonathon student to Idaho.

In August 2002, the Development Office “teamed up” with the Athletic Department by helping Phonathon students call ASU alumni living in Central Arkansas and notifying them about the upcoming ASU-San Jose State University football game at War Memorial Stadium.

Elaine Poynter, ASU coordinator of Annual Giving, said Phonathon students told her it was great to talk with alums and hear how excited they were about ASU playing at War Memorial Stadium, the first time since Larry Lacewell was football coach during the 1980s.

“Our purpose was to get the word out about the game and increase attendance,” Poynter said. “Our alums came through at the gate. The attendance was great! It was a nice change for our students from their regular Phonathon duties.”

Poynter said a contest was held during the special Phonathon, in which the student who sold the most tickets would win a round-trip ticket for two to a football game of the winner’s choosing on the Football Indians schedule.

Melissa Troup, a freshman undecided major from Smithville, was the winner. A Phonathon caller since May 2002, Troup cinched the contest by selling tickets to the Pulaski Academy Junior High School football coach for his team. She decided to attend the ASU-University of Idaho game at Moscow, and took her mother, Elizabeth Kingcade of the ASU Alumni Office, with her.

“I had never been that far west,” Troup said. “It was so different from here in Arkansas. There were lots of hills and not as many trees. We took a lot of photos. It was fun because Mom and I got to spend time together.

“Plus it was a very exciting game—we won!”

Troup recently became the fourth Phonathon caller, joining Kristin Pratt, Diana Iles and Maria Cibils, to garner more than $10,000 in Phonathon gifts. It is a job she said she enjoys, because she talks to a diverse group of ASU graduates.

Troup said although she had never attended an Arkansas State football game, she was thrilled to be going, and really enjoyed herself.

“Seeing our team play was great and I was really proud to say I am from ASU. This experience has turned me into a ASU fan for life!”

Phonathon caller Melissa Troup traveled with the Arkansas State University football team as they left Jonesboro en route to the ASU vs. University of Idaho game in Moscow, Idaho.
George Herndon graduate scholarship established in ASU’s Communication Disorders program

A scholarship that will benefit graduate students in the Communication Disorders program at Arkansas State University has been established in honor of Dr. George Herndon, emeritus professor of Speech Pathology.

The Regional Association for Communicative Disorders, a local professional association, recently made a $5,000 gift to establish the scholarship in honor of the man who is known as the “founding father” of the program at ASU.

Sheila Best, president of the association, presented the gift at a public announcement establishing the scholarship in September. She said her organization unanimously voted to support the endowment.

“RACD is willing to ‘put it’s money where its mission is,’” she noted. “We are very pleased to have a part in supporting the graduate education of a deserving student for years to come.”

“In the 15 years I have served in the program, as a faculty member or administrator, the entire faculty and I have been asked to make many decisions,” said Dr. Rick Neeley, ASU professor of Communication Disorders. “Some of these decisions were complicated and required serious thought. We often agonized about our options and occasionally disagreed about our course of action. But when it came to making a decision about the naming of this scholarship, without exception, every faculty member, alumnus, colleague and friend said we should name the scholarship after Dr. Herndon.”

Dr. Neeley said when Dr. Herndon first came to ASU in 1968, he was charged with starting an undergraduate training program in Speech Pathology. Not only did he build the undergraduate program, but by the time he retired in 1985, he had established graduate training programs that have continued to flourish even after his retirement.

“I’d say the most significant accomplishment, however, was his ability to instill the qualities of leadership, character, loyalty to the profession and a desire to change the world one client at a time in the many talented young people who have come through the Communication Disorders program at Arkansas State,” Dr. Neeley said.

The scholarship is being built toward the endowment level. For more information on making a gift to the George Herndon Graduate Scholarship in Communication Disorders, interested persons may contact the ASU Development office toll-free at (888) 225-8343 or at (870) 972-3940. Friends and alumni who wish to make a gift may do so by sending a check, payable to the ASU Foundation, to P.O. Box 1990, State University AR 72467.
Arkansas State University Foundation appoints seven to serve on Board of Directors

The Arkansas State University Foundation, Inc., has announced the appointment of seven new members to its Board of Directors.

Todd Cooper joined Stephens Inc. in 1997 and currently holds the position of Senior Vice President, Power Electronics Analyst. He was instrumental in formulating Stephens Inc.’s research initiative in the field of power electronics. Prior to joining Stephens, he was employed for 12 years with a Houston, Texas-based public utility where he held management positions in strategic planning, pricing and regulatory affairs. Cooper is a 1984 alum, having graduate with a bachelor of science in Business Administration; he obtained his MBA from the University of Central Arkansas in 1990.

Stephen W. Edwards of Marianna is owner and president of GES, Inc., a corporation that owns and operates Food Giant Supermarkets. He is also managing partner for EDPROP Development Co., LLC, Edwards Properties and Tobacco Warehouse, LLC. Additionally he serves as commissioner and chairman of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission. He and his wife Laura have three children.

Cathy Eoff-Tiratto of Beebe is owner of Eoff & Associates Realty, Inc., Goff Insurance Agency, Inc., Eoff Rentals and Mini Storage. A native of Dell, she formerly taught public school in Jacksonville before entering the real estate and insurance businesses. She is a lifetime member of the Million Dollar Producers of the North Pulaski Board of Realtors. She is married to Thomas Tiratto of St. Petersburg, Fla.

Dr. Michael Fullington of Jonesboro manages Blue Diamond Ranch, which specializes in the breeding and training of quality horses, and heads the Fullington Foundation, a foundation committed to assisting youths. A holder of a Ph.D. and three master’s degrees, Dr. Fullington is a former professor at ASU and was the co-founder, president and chief executive officer of Continental Computer Corp., from which he is now retired. He and his wife Denise have four children.

Jim S. Gowen, Sr. of Newport is chairman and chief executive officer of M&P Community Bancshares, the holding company for Greers Ferry Lake State Bank in Heber Springs and Merchants and Planters Bank, Preferred Choice Financial Services, and McCartney, Manning, McDonald and Guinn Insurance in Newport. He currently serves as the state director for Arkansas on the national board of the Independent Community Bankers Association, and is chairman of the Board of Regents for the Paul W. Barret, Jr. School of Banking in Memphis.

Don Winton of Little Rock is registered as the principal of Financial and Operations, Municipal and General Securities, and Registered Options with Crews and Associates, Inc. He manages the Client Services Group for Clearing and Operations and has direct responsibility for personnel, training, branch broker activity and communications/network systems. Additionally he serves as a securities industry arbitrator for the National Association of Securities Dealers. Both graduates of ASU, Don and his wife Patty have two sons.

These seven new members will serve until their terms expire in 2005.