

Owensboro High School/Owensboro Public Schools' Hall of Achievement

The "halls" of Owensboro Public Schools have been home to a Pulitzer Prize winner, a former Kentucky Supreme Court Justice, a Kentucky Lieutenant Governor, a former Broadway star, authors, scholars, diplomats, corporate executives, and a prisoner of war, just to mention a few.

Fourteen former OHS students, including a Western High School graduate, who have distinguished themselves in career, profession, and community service were honored as inductees into the first annual OHS Hall of Achievement at OHS in September 2001.

While four were posthumous awards, nine of the ten living honorees came together from across the country for the induction ceremony. OHS students had the opportunity to listen as the honorees talked about how their educations prepared them for success and how much their experiences in the Owensboro Public Schools shaped their lives.

The program was designed to inspire students to set their goals high and work to achieve them. And, inspire it did. Students enjoyed meeting and talking with the graduates as they stopped in to visit classes and talk with students and teachers. Girls were impressed that Denise Griffith had played basketball before beginning her career as a corporate executive. They asked Lt. Gov. Steve Henry about political life and they exploded in applause as they listened to the original recording of Christine Johnson Smith's "You'll Never Walk Alone" from *Carousel*. The song was originally written for her voice.

The first ceremony was such a success, that it continues as a biennial event. To date, 37 alumni have been honored. The Hager Foundation has helped make the Hall of Achievement possible. Nominations are accepted from anyone who would like to recommend alumni for consideration by the Hall of Achievement Committee.

CRITERIA for the award

Each of the honorees has distinguished himself/herself through service to others as well as through excellence in their fields. They were selected from more than 100 nominees. Criteria for the award are:

- *Attendance at an OPS high school (OHS, Western High, Owensboro Technical High)
- *Excellence in one's career or occupation
- *An accomplishment and/or attribute worthy of emulation
- *Extraordinary service to one's community and/or country
- *Candidates are considered after they have been out of high school for at least 20 years.

The Hall of Achievement is made possible through the generous support of the Hager Foundation.



OHS Hall of Achievement inductees who were able to attend the first ceremony in 2001, were (seated) Dr. Tom Meredith, Christine Johnson Smith, Denise Griffith, Dr. Anthony Casale, (standing) Lt. Gov. Steve Henry, Dr. David Watkins, John Walker Jones, Terry Bisson, and Morton Holbrook III.

2001 Inductees in the OHS Hall of Achievement

Terry Bisson

Class of 1960

International award-winning science fiction author. His short story, *Bears Discover Fire*, won both the Nebula and Hugo awards, the highest honor for science fiction writers.

Dr. Anthony J. Casale

Class of 1969

Author, lecturer, Professor of Urology at Indiana University and surgeon at Riley Hospital

Stephen F. Cohen

1950s Graduate

Russian scholar, CBS news analyst

William M. Gant

Class of 1936

Former Kentucky Supreme Court Justice (deceased)

Denise Griffith

Class of 1975

PepsiCo's highest ranking African-American executive
Serving as Region Vice President of Sales for Frito-Lay

Lt. Gov. Stephen L. Henry

Class of 1972

Pioneering orthopedic surgeon and Kentucky Lt. Governor

Morton Holbrook III

Class of 1960

Counselor for Economic Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in the Philippines

John Walker Jones

Class of 1961
Entrepreneur, civic leader
President/CEO of Modern Welding Co. Inc.

Thomas C. Laswell, Jr.
Class of 1939
Businessman and tireless community leader (deceased)

Dr. Thomas C. Meredith
Class of 1957
Chancellor of the University of Alabama System prior to becoming
Chancellor of the University of Georgia System effective January 2002

Charles E. Shelton
Class of 1950
Decorated Air Force pilot, 29-year prisoner of war (presumed dead)

Moneta Sleet, Jr.
Class of 1942
Pulitzer Prize winning photographer (deceased) who chronicled Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life in pictures.

Christine Johnson Smith
Class of 1929
Internationally-acclaimed vocalist,
Broadway and opera star

Dr. David Watkins
Class of 1962
Leader in medical rehabilitation,
President of the medical staff of Louisville's Jewish Hospital

2003 Inductees in the OHS Hall of Achievement

Owensboro High School inducted seven distinguished alumni into its Hall of Achievement on Sept. 19, 2003, bringing to 21 the number of Owensboro Public Schools' graduates to be honored since the program began in 2001. Honorees are:

Gladys Combs
Class of 1942
OHS teacher from 1946 until retirement in 1990. In the '50s, she designed and supervised the first foreign language lab in Owensboro. Senorita Combs taught Spanish for many years.

Tom Ewell (deceased)
Class of 1924
Stage and screen actor Tom Ewell (Yewell Tompkins) was one of the founders of the Rose Curtain Players. His acting career included 40 Broadway plays and numerous movies and television. He starred opposite Marilyn Monroe in *The Seven Year Itch*.

Dr. Ronald Jandacek
Class of 1960
Research Chemist, University of Cincinnati, College of Medicine Faculty
Dr. Jandacek spent 33 years in the research department of Proctor & Gamble centering his studies on dietary fats and their metabolism. His work has included development of olestra, a non-caloric dietary fat used in snack food.

Louise Gasser Kirtley (deceased)

Class of 1921

Mrs. Kirtley was the first female attorney to be admitted to the Daviess County Bar Association in 1931. She led the way in the community for women as the first female trial judge in 1946, first female city attorney, first female State Representative, and first female Bar Association President.

G. Ted Smith

Class of 1955

Owensboro City Manager, retired; Senior Vice President for Administration at Texas Gas, retired; devotedly served the Owensboro Board of Education, which he chaired for 12 years until his retirement in 1991.

Bill VanWinkle

Class of 1951

Bill Van Winkle spent more than 34 years in education. For 20 of those years, he was Principal of Owensboro High School (1973-1993). After retiring from OHS, he was elected to the Owensboro City Commission and served three terms before retiring in 2002.

Terry Woodward

Class of 1955

WaxWorks, Inc. President and CEO, Terry Woodward, developed and expanded WaxWorks, Inc., into a nationally recognized retailer and wholesaler of music and video entertainment products. In 2000, he was selected Chairman of the National Association of Recording Merchandisers. He is an entrepreneur, civic leader, and benefactor.



Gathering for the 2003 OHS Hall of Achievement were recipients (seated) Terry Woodward, Gladys Combs, Bill VanWinkle, (standing) Dr. Ronald Jandacek, Bill Kirtley representing his mother Louise Kirtley, and G. Ted Smith. Mrs. Kirtley and Tom Ewell are deceased.



Hall of Achievement inductees on September 16, 2005 are left to right (front row) Jack Hicks, Tara Parker, Waymond Morris, Dr. Joe Survant, (back row) Judge Joseph McKinley, Cliff Hagan, Whaylon Coleman, Dr. Tom Maddox, Jr., and Major General (Ret.) Allen Youngman.

2005 Inductees in the OHS Hall of Achievement

Nine distinguished Owensboro Public Schools' alumni were inducted into the OHS Hall of Achievement on Sept. 16, 2005, during ceremonies at the high school. Joining the 21 previous honorees named to the Hall since it was initiated in 2001, were:

Whaylon Coleman, Sr.

Class of 1955

Retired OHS Assistant Principal, teacher, coach; Idaho Basketball Hall of Fame member, and Owensboro Riverport Authority board member.

Cliff Hagan

Class of 1950

Outstanding sports career including basketball player for Red Devils and University of Kentucky, National Basketball Hall of Fame, NBA St. Louis Hawks, and former UK athletic director.

Jack Hicks

Class of 1943

Organizer of Little League and Babe Ruth baseball and other youth activities, retired OHS coach, teacher, athletic director, and former Sportscenter manager.

Dr. Tom Maddox, Jr.

Class of 1961

Distinguished ophthalmic surgeon, member of the Owensboro Board of Education for 20 years including seven as Chairman.

Judge Joseph McKinley, Jr.

Class of 1972

A distinguished attorney and judge appointed as a U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Kentucky by President Clinton and nationally recognized for his work.

Waymond Morris

Class of 1955

Retired after 36 years as an outstanding educator and principal of Daviess County High School, a former City Commissioner, and served as Mayor of Owensboro for 10 years.

Tara Parker

Class of 1970

Leader in vocational education, first female technical school principal in the state, retired Kentucky Commissioner of Department for Technical Education and KCTCS Technical College Chancellor.

Dr. Joe Survant

Class of 1960

An internationally acclaimed poet, Kentucky's Poet Laureate from 2003-2004, and teacher of 37 years who helped establish Western Kentucky University's creative writing and contemporary literature programs.

Major General D. Allen Youngman

Class of 1965

A citizen-soldier for 34 years, an attorney returning to the military to serve at company-brigade levels and at the Pentagon with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, retired as Kentucky's Adj. General responsible for combat readiness following 9/11.



Hall of Achievement inductees on September 21, 2007 were (seated) Nelda Barnett, Jack Simpson, Carol Pate Palmore, (standing) Dr. George Moore, Col. Henry "Duffy" Nelson, Dr. William Wiles, and Dave Adkisson.

2007 Inductees in the OHS Hall of Achievement

David Adkisson

Class of 1971

President & CEO of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, Lexington, Kentucky; former Mayor of Owensboro. His leadership led the efforts to build RiverPark Center, construct the Natcher Bridge, and develop the Greenbelt project.

Nelda Barnett

Class of 1955

National Advocate for the Aging: AARP Board of Directors, AARP Foundation Board Chairman; Board Governance Committee; and AARP Financial Board. She has advocated for the aging both locally and all the way to the White House.

Dr. George T. Moore

Class of 1963

Research Scientist with the United States Environmental Protection Agency; associate minister and Director of Christian Education at the Morning Star Baptist Church. He also serves as President of the Mid-West Region of the Kentucky State University Alumni Association.

Col. Henry B. Nelson III

Class of 1968

A general practitioner, psychiatrist, retired from the Air Force in 2007 after a distinguished career. Dr. Nelson's military career has taken him from the Arctic Circle to Iraq. Recipient of the Bronze Star, he is currently a VA Hospital Staff Psychiatrist.

Carol Pate Palmore

Class of 1967

Attorney; retired from a career in public service having worked for five Kentucky governors and served in the Cabinets of four of them. She was the first female President of the Kentucky Bar Foundation and is past president of the Rotary Club of Frankfort.

Jack Simpson

Class of 1953

An entrepreneur in Elder Care; owns and operates personal care homes in Kentucky and three assisted living facilities in Owensboro including having opened Davco Rest Home when he was only 28. He also owns both commercial and residential real estate in Florida.

Dr. William W. Wiles

Class of 1949

Economist; Federal Reserve System Secretary of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve from 1981 until retirement in 1998. During his career, Dr. Wiles was very influential in formulation and implementation of fundamental policies and regulations within the Federal Reserve System.