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Thompson Lives Uncomplicated Life

Retiree Spotlight

Tommy Thompson
Richard DeSpain

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**DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION**
University of Arkansas System

Howell “Tommy” Thompson operates under two rules now that he’s retired:

1. Life doesn’t have to be complicated; don’t make it that way.
2. Only worry about the things you have control over.

Thompson worked 38 years in Extension before retiring in 2009. He started out as an assistant county agent in Greene County and then was promoted to associate agent in Faulkner County.

After a few years in Faulkner County, he was promoted to staff chair in Woodruff County and remained there for nearly a decade. He served in the same capacity in White County beginning in 1986. While there, his first wife, Brenda, needed a liver transplant. They eventually were able to move to Crittenden County to be close to the transplant center in Memphis, Tennessee, and Thompson worked as an Extension agricultural agent.

After a new medication improved his wife’s health immensely, they moved to Conway County in 1994. Brenda lived until 2002. After her death, Thompson was brokenhearted.

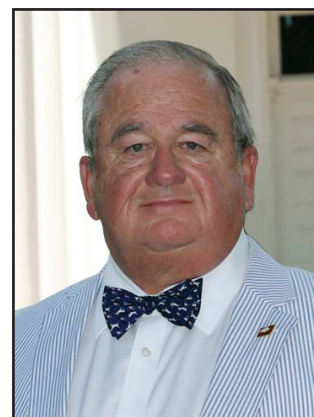
He worked with Dora Dinnan at the time, and he credits her and several other Extension Home-maker ladies with taking care of him for at least 1½ years through a deep grieving process.

Thompson finally got back on his feet emotionally and in 2004 met Diane, who was a widow. They had both been married to their former spouses for 33 years. They also had other things in common in addition to heartbreak.

The two married in 2006 after inviting all their friends to a bon voyage party. The friends thought they were there to wish them a safe, happy cruise, but the group was assembled for a wedding instead.

“God has a plan for all of us,” Thompson said. “[My wife and I] kind of operate under that country western song that says, ‘Someone had a hand in this long before we ever knew’ and we give God the credit.”

After a few years of second marriage and retiring from Extension in 2009, Thompson’s buddies at the Morrilton Fishing and Hunting Club convinced him to run for the House of Representatives. He was elected and served



Tommy Thompson

as a state representative from 2010 to 2014.

He doesn’t have plans to run again.

These days he spends some of his time helping out a neighbor with his pecan harvest, an operation that’s completely mechanized. Thompson knows how to run most of the machinery and does so on a regular basis.

“It’s a bunch of old guys getting together and helping a neighbor,” he said, noting they enjoy hanging out and having cookouts together.

Thompson also enjoys pheasant hunting in South Dakota and white tail deer hunting in Arkansas. Duck hunting, with his longtime friend and co-worker, Mike Hamilton, is also a passion, wherever it can be done. Fishing and golf are also on Thompson’s fun list.

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Art Is DeSpain's Vocation and Main Hobby

Whether it was drafting detailed plans for chicken houses that farmers could use to build their own – or painting portraits of Extension folks to hang in the State Office board room – Richard DeSpain always loved creating through his job at the Cooperative Extension Service.

DeSpain first started working for Extension in March 1970 as a draftsman and artist for the State Office. His duties included the aforementioned chicken house plans, house plans, creating brochure graphics and whatever his bosses needed in the way of art.

Since retiring 12 years ago, DeSpain has continued drafting and drawing as part of his everyday life. So much so that he built a special art room onto his house with a floor that could bear the weight of all his supplies, drafting table, computer and finished pieces.

“Art brings me joy,” he said. “It’s my main hobby and all I care to do.”

DeSpain said photography is a second hobby that’s actually related to the art. He likes to shoot detailed pictures so he can later ink or paint subjects without leaving anything out. His most recent photography project has been to shoot a series of pictures of the Broadway Bridge in Little Rock. The bridge is being replaced, and DeSpain has followed it every step of the way with his camera.

He’s already creating sketches based on his pictures.

DeSpain also enjoys drawing scenes from the racetrack in Hot Springs and from Little Rock Air Force Base. DeSpain, who spent several years in the Army and attended college on the GI Bill, often paints portraits of the soldiers.

One of his favorite subjects to draw is John Wayne. He also likes to draw Humphrey Bogart and various other movie stars. He sells his art, mostly pieces he’s been commissioned to create. He recently



Richard DeSpain

Painted a portrait of a grandfather, father and son that an Arkansas woman gave to her husband as a Christmas gift.

DeSpain and his wife, Gail, have two sons and several grandchildren. One son, Noah, lives in Louisiana with his family and the other son, Paul, lives in California with his.

The DeSpains are “very much stay-at-home people,” but they do venture out to church at Baring Cross Baptist in Sherwood and for art escapades, of course.

DeSpain doesn’t draw portraits of his wife because she says she is “portrait shy and not photogenic.” Gail DeSpain sticks to working in her yard rather than posing for her artistic husband.

To reconnect with Richard DeSpain, contact him at 501-753-1707, 101 Broken Arrow Circle, North Little Rock, Arkansas 72118.

– Shannon Magsam

Thompson (Continued)

He and Diane like to travel together.

Thompson has a daughter who lives in Fayetteville with her family. Diane’s daughters live in the Little Rock area. Between them, they have seven grandchildren.

Thompson is content.

His sign-off is this: “Life is short. Take it day by day. Accept God’s blessings as they come. Live in His will.”

To reconnect with Tommy Thompson, contact him at 501-208-2007, 15 Ashley Drive, Morrilton, Arkansas 72110-2287.

– Shannon Magsam

In Memoriam

The University of Arkansas Animal Science Department recently lost two distinguished emeritus professors.

Dr. Jack Perkins, who died Nov. 25, began as assistant professor in 1965 and served as interim department head from 1994-1995. He was named Friend of the Department of Animal Science in 2006.

"Everyone that took Dr. Perkins' classes or judged livestock for him knows he was truly a gifted teacher," said Michael Looper, head of the Animal Science Department. He influenced the livestock industry through the more than 6,000 students he taught.

Dr. Paul Noland died Dec. 31. Noland joined the department in 1951 and retired in 1994. He served as head of the Department of Animal Science from 1988-1994, during which time he participated in the establishment of the department's poultry science program as a separate academic department. In 1995 he was inducted into the Arkansas Agriculture Hall of Fame.

"Paul was not only a pioneer and excellent educator, but he was a neighbor and great friend," said Michael Vayda, dean of Bumpers College. "Our students benefitted tremendously from his expertise. He will be missed."

Honorary and Memorial Gifts

The following honorary and memorial gifts were received to support professional development opportunities for faculty and staff of the Cooperative Extension Service. This list covers honorary and memorial gifts deposited Dec. 1-31, 2015.

■ Cooperative Extension Service Retiree Scholarship

In memory of Lionel Barton

Ruben Johnson

Honorary or memorial donations may be forwarded to the Development Office, Cooperative Extension Service, 2301 South University Avenue, Little Rock, Ark. 72204. To ensure that proper notification is sent, please also include in whose honor or memory the gift is made and the mailing address of the person to receive the notification.

Jean Frisby Dies

Jean C. Frisby, age 98, of Warren died Dec. 21 at home.

Frisby held a B.A. from Arkansas A and M (University of Arkansas at Monticello) and earned a master's degree in home economics from the University of Arkansas.

During her Extension career, which began in 1946, Frisby served as Extension home economics agent in Ashley, Dallas and Bradley counties and as staff chair in Bradley County, before retiring in 1995. She improved many lives with her lessons on food preparation and preservation through home visits, demonstrations and a daily radio program.

Frisby is survived by nephews Walter Ellis of Tampa, Florida, and Curtis Holmes of Buffalo, New York, and niece Dr. Marsha Ellis Smith of Louisville, Kentucky.

Funeral services were held Dec. 24 at Frazer's Chapel in Warren with burial in Oakland Cemetery. Memorials may be made to First Presbyterian Church, 212 East Church Street, Warren, Arkansas 71671.

From the Editorial Board

Another successful Extension year has come and gone. In the new year, make plans to attend the Galaxy Conference scheduled for March 16-18, 2016, at the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute atop Petit Jean Mountain in Morrilton.

The Retiree Luncheon will be on Wednesday, March 17, during the conference and is free to retirees. The retiree scholarship(s) will be awarded at the luncheon.

Registration will be open later this month at <http://www.uaex.edu/about-extension/professional-organizations/galaxy/>. More information on the conference program will be provided at that time.

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2301 South University Avenue
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February Birthdays

Charlotte Chitwood, Feb. 2	Ella Geisler, Feb. 10
Booker Clemons Jr., Feb. 2	Jimmie Gooch, Feb. 10
Bobby Huey, Feb. 2	Steve Kent Rodery, Feb. 11
Lamar James, Feb. 3	Ann Ward, Feb. 12
Bob Reynolds, Feb. 3	Betty Oliver, Feb. 16
Larry Sandage, Feb. 3	Lynda Lee, Feb. 20
William "Gene" Woodall, Feb. 3	Delores Sowerbrower, Feb. 21
Beverly Henderson-Vincent, Feb. 4	George Davis, Jr., Feb. 22
Carol Patterson, Feb. 4	Larry Holeman, Feb. 22
Ed Rhodes Jr., Feb. 4	Denise Murdoch, Feb. 22
Sheila Brandt, Feb. 5	Gerald Van Brunt, Feb. 23
Mark Phillips, Feb. 5	Bob Felsman, Feb. 24
Nora Tomerlin, Feb. 5	Doyne Potts, Feb. 24
Dora D. Dinnan, Feb. 7	Clara Garrett, Feb. 26
Beverly H. Hines, Feb. 7	Charles Johnston, Feb. 26
Wanda House, Feb. 8	James Geisler, Feb. 27
Allan Beuerman, Feb. 9	Larry Keaton, Feb. 27
Gertrude Henderson, Feb. 9	Mary F. Warren, Feb. 27
Catherine Koch, Feb. 9	Carole Scaramuzza, Feb. 28
Joy Buffalo, Feb. 10	

Yes, I will subscribe to the *Extension Cord*.

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Yes, I want to support the fundraising initiative in support of the Cooperative Extension Service Retiree Scholarship.

Enclosed is my gift of \$_____

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Name/Address for notification of honorary and memorial gifts: _____

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