

ABILENE

CHRISTIAN

Preserving History

The Centennial Collections Task Force invites alumni to share their unique legacy with the university

Pieces of the life of the near-100-year story of Abilene Christian University live in your closets, garages, basements and attics. We want to help you preserve your part of the ACU story.

For example, trustee Charles Ezzell ('69) has donated a box from his attic – some memorabilia of his uncle and aunt, C.D. ('35) and Christine ('41) Holmes.

Contents of that box, in order of age, highlight a rich story of the Holmes family's relationship to ACU and fellow alumni:

- A cardigan-style, 1930s Trojans social club sweater
- A purple pennant with a rustic, tree-branch typographical rendition of the acronym "A.C.C."
- C.D.'s diploma signed by J.E. McKinzie and James F. Cox
- Christine's cum laude diploma authorized by W.H. Free and Don H. Morris
- A stereo recording of Sewell Auditorium Chapel singing led by Carl Brecheen and Richard Fulton
- A 1985 photo and roster of the "Cisco Kids," a group of C.D.'s and Christine's alumni classmates, children and grandchildren who created a multi-family retreat at Lake Cisco for their families, reflecting the quintessential networking of Wildcat alumni

ACU Centennial explorers almost two years ago grew acutely aware that a large percentage of university artifacts and archives resided in the private collections of emeriti, alumni and friends.

Planners also looked at means to preserve at-risk, disintegrating films, videotapes and audiotapes on campus. And they established an official policy, inviting all campus offices and departments as well as emeriti, alumni and friends to submit archives and artifacts for consideration by the university.

ACU president Dr. Royce Money ('64) authorized the formation of a Centennial

Collections Task Force, the first of 10 such work groups formed under his President's Council for the Centennial to plan and execute the university's celebration in 2005-06.

The president charged the Centennial Collections Task Force with policy-making, collections, preservations and exhibits during the Centennial of the university's rich history.

The task force comprises Dr. Larry Bradshaw ('65), professor of journalism and mass communication and a specialist in film and video; Dr. Vernon Williams ('70), professor of history and a specialist in

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Trojans men's social club sweater worn by C.D. Holmes ('35) in the early 1930s.

STEVE BUTMAN



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James Ridgeway ('63) used this camera to take photographs for The Optimist and Prickly Pear, then as a freelance photojournalist in Vietnam during the mid 1960s and 1970s.

museum collections; Dr. Tracy (McGlothlin '80) Shilcutt, assistant professor of history and a specialist in museum collections; Erma Jean (Alkire '58) Loveland, special collections librarian emeritus; Mary Manly, chair of the Women for ACU Museum Board; and Dr. Charlie Marler ('55) as chair, senior faculty, journalist and historian.

The rotting, vinegar-odor condition of the film located in the basement of Moody Coliseum and other locations monopolized the early efforts of the task force. The university approved a two-year plan for preservation technician Richard Chastain ('83) to rescue these at-risk images.

By Christmas 2003, Chastain had converted about 125 films to digital videodiscs and deposited them in the Brown Library archives. These discs will be accessible to researchers, and ultimately alumni can purchase DVDs of these restored images.

A sampling of images include the 1951 football game against all-America Johnny Bright and Drake University; a 1936 film "Early Days at ACC;" a 1937 film "ACC Today;" and a 1960 film "A City on a Hill." They capture images of a young Don H. Morris, James F. Cox in his heyday, Leonard Burford leading singing, students roller skating a Hill route known as "The Loop," students in dress suits and hats disembarking a train at the Texas & Pacific Station, and students strolling through a pre-1950s bluebonnet patch on campus.

Alongside the audio-visual preservation project, president Money approved the task force's recommendation to create the John C. and Ruth Stevens Historical Preservation Award to recognize heroic and pioneering efforts to collect and preserve the artifacts and archives of the university. The award depicts the ranch roots of the university campus, which early in the 20th century was the Hashknife Ranch. Sculptor Geoff Broderick of the Department of Art and Design replicates hashknives for the recipients of the award. Hashknives were the cutlery tools used by chuckwagon cooks and the inspiration for the ranch brand.

The first Hashknife award was presented to the Women for ACU Museum in the Jennings House at the corner of East North 16th and Campus Court. WACU women years ago acted with foresight and accomplished what no one

else had attempted – the collection of university artifacts and their exhibit in a campus museum. The WACU Museum will utilize its collection for a special exhibit during the Centennial.

The second Hashknife awardees were the namesakes of the award themselves – John and Ruth Stevens. John was honored for his significant historical research and writing, which culminated in "No Ordinary University: The Story of a City Set on a Hill." Ruth was cited for



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her extraordinary dedication to cataloging of *The Optimist*, presidential papers, and other archives at the Brown Library, which she continues to do.

The third Stevens award honored posthumously Dr. Lewis and Jerry Fulks because of their constant attention to the documentation and preservation of the plays and musicals he directed and produced in the Department of Theatre.

The Stevens historical preservation recognition program will continue throughout the Centennial year with the presentation of Hashknife awards.

The archival portion of the Centennial Collection will go into the ACU Archives in the Brown Library. Centennial artifact gifts will be stored in another secure facility. Here the task force and interns from the public history program classes of the Department of History will process, catalog and prepare artifacts for exhibition during the Centennial celebration in permanent, glassed exhibit spaces throughout the campus, a few new kiosks, and in the WACU Museum. The task force will produce a campus-wide walking tour guide for campus Centennial visitors.

Thus, the groundwork is laid for the university to replace multiple voluntary archival and artifact collections with a formal, intentional policy of screening and saving

significant archives and artifacts.

We're inviting alumni, emeriti and friends to submit their materials to the university for selection for preservation, storage and exhibits. The next history of the university cannot be written without these materials.

Now, the task force wants you to dig in your closet, garage, attic and basement for items that relate to your time at the university or later relationship to it. At www.acu.edu/centennial, you will find a link to the form you will need to initiate a query about a possible donation.

First, you should send to the Centennial Collections Task Force this form in which you list the items or describe the archival materials you would like to donate to the university. Loans of materials will not be considered. The task force will review your proposal and respond on a timely basis, letting you know whether part or all of the items are needed for university collections.

Second, after receiving approval, donors may ship materials to the Centennial Collections Task Force at the Brown Library, where archival material will be evaluated further for addition to the ACU Archives. The artifacts will be forwarded to a secure processing and storage facility, where they will be evaluated for possible inclusion in the Centennial and later exhibits.

Additional policies applicable to collections gifts include privacy concerns, which would be honored; acknowledgement of the gifts; and instructions clarifying the donor's responsibility of obtaining independent, third-party appraisals for tax purposes. Questions can be sent to the chair of the Centennial Collections Task Force at charlie.marler@acu.edu.

A random wish list of the Collections Task Force includes: correspondence from student years; diaries; the musical instruments of the Nauseating Nine; dated, identified photographs; gold star mothers' flags; the car pranksters put on top of the Administration Building; art objects made in Troy Caraway's elementary art teaching classes; athletics equipment from the 1920s and '30s; roller skates used in touring The Loop; military decorations; one of the "Grey Goose" limos used to transport athletics teams; and assorted meaningful memorabilia.

The task force has declared amnesty for items such as the brass letters taken from the Margaret and Herman Brown Library sign, the clapper from the Bean bell on the old campus, and any other purloined objects.

Your treasures will help us remember and tell the Christian college story during our Centennial and second century. ▲

– DR. CHARLIE MARLER



STEVE BUTMAN

A wood form of the masthead of *The Optimist* newspaper, circa 1920.