

The Museum News

The official newsletter of the Pearl River Community College Museum Patrons' Organization

Volume 2

June, 2005

Number 1

Kathryn Moody resigns as MAB Chairman

Kathryn Moody, Museum Advisory Board Chairman (MAB) since the board was founded in October of 2003, resigned the lead position on the board citing health reasons. Moody, who oversaw the organization of both the MAB and the Museum Patrons' Organization stepped down at the meeting on May 19, 2005. She will continue to serve on the board but not in the capacity of chairman.



The process of electing a new chairman was deferred until the August MAB meeting. The Patrons' Organization Bylaws (of which the MAB is the governing arm) allow the museum director to perform the duties of the chairman until a new one is elected.

The Museum Advisory Board would like to thank Mrs. Moody for her dedication and hard work," Museum Director Ronn Hague said. "She has been a wonderful asset to the museum, and we will miss her leadership. Our only consolation is that she will continue to serve on the board."

Museum Advisory Board meets

The quarterly meeting of the Museum Advisory Board produced positive results according to Ronn Hague, museum director. During the meeting, Hague resided as chair. A report on the "Dobie Holden and His Teams" exhibit was given by Arlin Regan, chairman of the fundraising committee. Regan reported that the committee had raised \$5,000 but that figure has already increased to more than \$6,000 due to recent gifts.

In board business, Hague recommended that the Museum take the leadership in applying to the Mississippi Department of Archives and History for a State Historical Marker to mark the state's oldest two-year public institution. The marker's cost, \$1,470, will be raised by the museum. He also recommended that the museum pursue an educational program, with tours of the museum and campus for PRCC's district schools. "The program," Hague said, "will entertain and enlighten the students in our district by making them aware of the school's incredible history." He said that he would undertake the development of a fact book with important trivia about the district's history.

Hague also reported on a meeting with Charles Gray, Executive Director of the Hancock County Historical Society, concerning a partnership between the museum and the historical society. "This is something I would like to accomplish with every county historical society in our district," he said. He stated that the partnership, though informal, would aid in the promotion of history in both organizations and should result in a sharing of ideas and information.

Hague also reported that a new time line booklet had
(see *Board meets* on page 3)

Museum to enter partnership with Hancock County Historical Society

Pearl River Community College's Hancock Center coordinator, Dr. Gaynell Roberts, and the college's museum director, Ronn Hague met for a second time with Hancock County Historical Society Executive Director, Charles Gray to discuss a planned partnership between the two organizations on Monday, June 6.

The partnership will be a cooperative effort to stimulate interest in history through adult continuing education classes, K-12 public and private schools, and PRCC students. Among the partnership projects discussed was the implementation of a public history program at the Hancock Center, utilizing, as a laboratory, the expansive document collection at the Hancock County Historical Society's Kate Loblano House on Que St. in Bay St. Louis.

"I consider it a regrouping of the family, we were originally all the same county until 1890 when Pearl River County was formed," said Gray. "The total collective resources will be greater than the sum of the two sources."

"Community involvement and partnerships are important to the Hancock Center," Roberts said. "It's vital for the community to feel ownership in the success of the center. This partnership offers a wonderful opportunity for our students to have hands-on experience with history."

"This 'pilot' partnership will give the PRCC Museum a chance to become involved with a local historical society," Hague said, "a step in the direction of partnering with all the chapters in our district. This fits right in with the initial design of the museum becoming a regional repository of historical artifacts and an educational center for our district's history."

The Hancock County chapter is one of the largest and most active in the United States with more than 1,000 members, and Pearl River Community College Museum, with 2,000 feet of exhibit space, is the first community college museum in Mississippi and the only college-run museum south of Starkville. Hancock County is one of six supporting counties comprising PRCC's district.

Museum to add "Military Years" exhibit

Pearl River Community College Museum announced a new exhibit to honor the school's time as a "junior college with military knowledge." The college received a charter establishing the nation's first junior college R.O.T.C. unit in 1935 (see PRCC Military Years story, page 2).

The exhibit will feature a full Class "B" khaki uniform from World War II on loan from the Armed Forces Museum at Camp Shelby near Hattiesburg. "We are currently in the planning stages, but we hope to have the core exhibit ready for the 2005 Homecoming," said Ronn Hague, museum director.

The exhibit will tell the incredible story of Pearl River College's transformation from a typical southern college into a co-educational Military school. "The military presence

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Pearl River College: Little Known Facts and Information

(This article is a result of research done for "The Pearl River College Story")

Pearl River nation's first junior college to offer ROTC

"Pearl River Junior College, Mississippi's only junior college with Military Knowledge," is what read on the front of the 1942-43 school catalog. This is significant because in 1935, the administration at Pearl River College began looking into adding a Reserve Officers Training Corps program to the curriculum. However, up to that time, the War Department had never issued a ROTC charter to a two-year institution of higher learning. These charters were reserved for high schools and universities. The two-year colleges were completely overlooked.

The administration met a stone wall when they attempted to persuade the War Department to change procedure and might have never overcome the objections, had it not been for the influence of one of the school's former trustees, Theodore Gilmore Bilbo, whose resume included Mississippi State Senator, Lieutenant Governor, twice Mississippi's Governor, and who was currently serving in the United States Senate.

Obviously, the War Department, when they refused Pearl River College, had never met "the man," as Bilbo liked to call himself. And with some southern "arm twisting," Bilbo was able to get the college approved for ROTC. This began the school's 18-year military program that would encompass one of the world's most bitter wars.

The 1939 Critique, the only annual published between the years 1932 and 1948, shows that in three years the school had already begun to look the part of a military school. Major Edward W. King was listed as the Professor of Military Science and Tactics. ROTC Major Delma Enterkin was listed as the Battalion Commander. Under Major Enterkin were Companies "A" and "B," composed of about 50 men each. The 100 men enrolled in the ROTC program made up a considerable portion of the enrollment in 1939.

Even the band, under the direction of Max Batson, was festooned with military style uniforms, and the bass drum was emblazoned with the words "1st Battalion R.O.T.C. Pearl River Junior College."

On December 7, 1941, "a day that will live in infamy," the Japanese army attacked Pearl Harbor. Following the attack a heightened sense of "Americanism" began sweeping the nation. Division and sectarianism became of little import as the nation struggled to gear up for an all out conflict. As Uncle Sam made his plea for men to enlist, the students on Pearl River College campus began to feel a fervent sense of patriotism. This affected all the students, even the ones attending high school who were too young to enlist. The college's administration, impassioned with the same patriotic zeal, began to increase the military atmosphere. All male students were involved in the Military Department's program, changing the face of the campus. Pearl River College no longer had the look of a small southern college but of a military school, as students marched from class to class dressed in military dress.

According to Roy T. Walker, who enrolled as a high school student in 1944 and graduated from Pearl River College in 1948, the campus was "more like a military academy than a boarding school." Walker said, "We had students from all over the U. S. and South America. We stood regular inspections, marched to the dining room and to all classes. We were even marched to the movies in town if our rifles were clean and passed inspection."

Pearl River students excelled at military discipline. By 1943, when there were very few college men (they were already in service), the high school was given the rating of "Honor High School, Fourth Service Command." An explanation of the term "Honor High School" was given in the 1944-1945 catalog. "The much coveted rating 'Honor High School' can be awarded only to schools maintaining a unit of the Reserve Officers Training Corps.



Battalion Staff and Sponsors (1939 Critique order not known) Maj. Delma Enterkin, Commander, sponsor Ethelda Beard, Capt. Robert Williams, Adjutant, sponsor, Mildred Ritchie, Lieut. Fred Madden, Band Commander sponsor, Sammy Lou Turner

Such institutions which have been rigidly inspected by officers designated by the Commanding General of the Service Command in which the school is located and found to maintain an exceptionally high standard of military training and soldierly discipline are awarded this rating."

Pearl River College produced many soldiers of excellence during World War II, but the most decorated was a former PRCC basketball player. Shelby Speights (right) of Baxterville was a graduate of Purvis High School. He enlisted, leaving PRC too early to graduate with his classmates. The school had to send his diploma to him. Speights was sent to Italy with the 36th Infantry where his duty was mule skinner on a mule train, transporting supplies through the mountains to the front and bringing the bodies of Allied soldiers back from the battlefield. Speights felt he could better serve his country on the battlefield, so he acquired a transfer to the front. Approximately 70 days later, Sergeant Speights had been awarded five Silver Stars, two Bronze Stars, the European Campaign Medal with five battle stars, a bronze arrowhead, unit citation, French Croix de Guerre with Palm, a good conduct medal and received a battlefield commission to 2nd Lieutenant. Speights served in the Invasion of Italy and the Invasion of Southern France. He was one of many PRCC-trained soldiers to receive special citations for their service.



Lieutenant Speights

The R.O.T.C. program was housed in Jacobs Hall (High School Building). According to the 1944-45 catalog, the ROTC armory and classroom was located on the ground floor, while a model ROTC Supply Room was located in a classroom on the first floor. The drill field was located behind White Hall, where the current building housing Mathematics and Science now stands. During this time, Huff Hall was known as the Cadet (high school) Barracks while Pearl River Hall was named the Freshman Barracks.

According to PRJC alumnus Ott Brockman, The ROTC program was discontinued in 1948 when the program was transferred to the Mississippi National Guard. The local unit, then the Ambulance Company of the 106th Medical Battalion, later saw action during the Korean conflict.

Pearl River College, first in Mississippi, has continued to maintain a record of being first in the educational arena, not only in Mississippi, but throughout the nation. Any Pearl River alumnus can be proud to be a part of this institution.

Board meets *(continued from page 1)*

been printed. The new booklet, adding the recent three school years, was reprinted in a magazine format with pictures. The Board voted to ask for a \$2 donation for the new booklet. The Board also approved the printing of 500 copies of a new 52-page book, "The Historic Buildings of Pearl River College" in the next several months and will be sold for \$15. All proceeds will be placed in the museum's general fund.

The Board voted to sell the DVD "The Pearl River College Story: a historical documentary" to non-patrons. The DVD had only been available to members of the Museum Patrons' Organization. "We have well over 1,000 DVDs left," Hague said, "and I feel that we should sell them to anybody who would like to learn about the history of the school." The DVDs will be sold for \$25 each.

Military Years *(continued from page 1)*

affected everything," Hague said, "even to the naming of the school's newspaper, *The Cadet*."

The exhibit will also honor the many heroes who went through the ROTC program and on into service in World War II. "We had some notable examples from that time period, including Shelby Speights who was the recipient of five silver stars and two bronze stars," Hague said.

Hague said that he is planning a 10-minute video feature of the school's military history, interviews of former students who served in the second world war and numerous photos from that time period.

"We would like to encourage PRCC alumni and children of alumni to contact us if they or their parents were a member of the war effort in World War II," Hague said. He explained that the school kept no records of the students who enlisted or were drafted during this time period, and that he would have to depend VFW and American Legion rolls and on people coming forward with names. "We will do other things like get in touch with local veterans' organizations to obtain this information, but even that is not conclusive," he added.

Other new exhibits planned during the expansion are a Hurricane Camille Exhibit, a Stennis Space Center Exhibit, National Championships Exhibit, A Pearl River County Agricultural High School Exhibit, and an exhibit featuring Pearl River's six supporting counties.

A Day in the Life of a PRC AHS Student

Stella Seals, a sophomore, wrote his experiences in a paper for the Dialectic Literary Society, one of two literary groups on campus in 1911. Seals' article was printed in the December 21, 1911 edition of the Free Press. This is a first hand account of what life was like on the PRC AHS campus during the second school session.

"When on a cold and frosty morning you are aroused from your deep slumber by the loud ringing of the breakfast bell, you immediately spring from your bed, land on the floor with a thud, splash cold water on your face, and in three minutes are flying down the stairs in the midst of the long line of fellow students toward the Dining Hall. You walk in briskly, take your place and congratulate yourself on being so quick. Once inside you do full justice to the occasion, then pushing back your plate and seating yourself comfortably in your chair, you survey those around you—notice the new dresses of the girls, and wonder why people eat so much. Suddenly the bell is tapped. Everything becomes still and hushed. A deep silence falls. Then a chair is heard to scrape across the floor and Prof. arises. He scrutinizes a piece of paper before him, then in a somber and solemn voice says:

'The following will please report to the office immediately after breakfast.' with much emphasis on the 'immediately' you clutch the table cloth in despair, as you hear your name called.

Then you remember—yes! You went to sleep last night during study hours, and already you see yourself pacing back and forth on the campus with a broomstick on your shoulder. You are walking your time 1 2 3 4.

You are awakened from your reverie, however, by your neighbor who is jogging you with his elbow and calls 'Come on.' Chairs are hastily pushed back, there is a general shuffle, and in the midst of the throng you make your way to the office—there you lean up against the mantle, look down into the burning coals and dream. You are startled again by hearing your name called. There is a pause, and you await your sentence—one hour.

Breathing a sigh of relief, you slip out and depart up the stairs taking the steps three at a time.

Once at the top you give a loud whoop—whirl around until you are dizzy, then ending up with an 'Indian war dance' you retreat hastily down the hall to your room. You open the door; books in confusion, ink bottle on the floor, no fire and an over amount of ashes in the grate. You immediately busy yourself taking these up, then hurry to your neighbor's room for kindling and after depositing the empty coal scuttle with your room-mate, who humbly hurries down stairs to fill it, then you soon have a roaring fire.

A few minutes more and with your room ready for inspection, you are seated at your study table applying yourself to the task in hand, that of

(See **A Day** on page 4)

The Pearl River Community College Museum depends solely on contributions for new exhibits, improvements, preservation supplies...the list is endless. We have no other funding source except you. Make your contribution to the museum today! Cut out this form and send it with a check payable to the PRCC Development Foundation (write "museum" in the for space on your check).

I would like to contribute \$ _____ to the (check one)

Dobie Holden and His Teams exhibit

Historical Marker for the College

General Fund

I would like to purchase _____ DVD (\$25 each)

I would like to purchase _____ timelines (\$2 each)

I would like to reserve _____ copies of the new book, *The Historic Buildings of Pearl River College* (\$15 each)

I would like to become a member or renew my membership. (\$25 per year single membership, \$35 per year for 2 members of the same household.)

Please fill in the following information:

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Ph. _____ - _____ - _____

Alumni? Yes No Years attended _____ to _____

Please allow 2 weeks delivery for items ordered. Please include \$3 for postage. Mail this order/donation to:

**Pearl River Community College Museum
101 Highway 11 North
Poplarville, MS 39470**

A day (continued from page 3)

getting your Algebra lesson. You tug and pull and work and tear your hair, your room-mate enters, shakes the table, mixes up your papers in his search for a book and slamming the door leaves you to your misery.

In a short while you are aroused by the bell for chapel, there is a scramble in the hall. Loud voices are heard over the transom, one asks for a History, another wonders if any body has seen his theme. Your room-mate dashes in, grabs up his tablet and quickly emerges, while dozens of feet clatter down the stairway. You glance uneasily at the clock, assure yourself that you have time to finish the last problem, and continue work.

Gradually everything in the hall becomes quiet. The silence brings you to your senses. You pick up your books and rush out, leaving the door wide open. You enter chapel just as the Scripture reading begins and slip into the back seat.

Chapel ends, the first class is called and you mechanically join the procession. Pupils hurry back and forth getting books from the desks and leaving others; the girls smile, teachers look anxious, the Prof. appears business-like, the doors are closed and the day's work is begun. Pupils ask questions, pupils answer questions. Some appear eager, some go to sleep. Teachers plead and teachers scold. One class follows another, and with an occasional study hour upstairs where you frantically attempt to get some difficult lesson, the class work closes. The last bell rings and once more you are free.

You rush upstairs to don your working clothes and thus spend several hours on the farm or perchance hunt your foot-ball suit and go out on the campus for a little practice. At any rate you hunt in every place imaginable. You find part of your apparel behind the wardrobe, a part on the floor, a part in your neighbor's room and a part on your room mate. So after much exertion, discussion, and loss of temper, you discover enough to complete your uniform and thus arrayed, you sally forth for the afternoon.

You look across the campus. There the boys are beginning the game and as others join them, the shouts increase. A few stragglers stand idly by, watching. Back of the building a song arises, interrupted by strokes of the axe, from the never lowering wood pile, and some of the boys in a body make their way to the farm.

To one side, paces the unfortunate, constantly counting his steps and carrying the inevitable broom stick over his shoulder. Farther away are the girls playing basket ball. A busy scene, you think, but then a dormitory is always a busy place.

Two hours later, you return to your room and dress for supper. Now is the time to receive visitors. Your friends come in, lounge on your bed, handle your books, try on your new hat and take possession of your room in general. You discuss athletics, and the latest foot-ball hero; you wonder which has the best team—Yale or Harvard? You talk of the next aeroplane

race and the best make of automobile; you mention politics; you discuss prospects for a greater school; you tell which teacher you like best and ask your neighbor if he has his history for tomorrow; you tell your friends about your great-Aunt who married a millionaire; you describe the clown you saw in the circus, and teach your friends the rabbit dance, much to the uneasiness of those below, until you are finally interrupted by the supper bell.

The Dining Hall is much livelier now than at either morning or noon. Every one seems wide awake and ready to tell the day's experience. You enjoy the meal, you enjoy the company, and good fellowship increases. When the meal is over and the orderlies appointed to keep watch, you repair to the parlor, or hall and there join in the conversation, or music, till the big bell announcing study hours, summons you to your room once more.

There you pour over your books; you dig out Math; you write Themes; you hold your head in your hands; you talk to your roommate and when he speaks, you command him to be quiet. You punch the fire and you go back to your lessons. You are getting sleepy, you want to ask your neighbor a question, so you open the door cautiously and peer out. But the orderly is looking. You close the door and go back to your work. You read your history again, and are almost asleep when suddenly there is a knock at the door, and you wake up just in time to see the orderly enter for inspection. You ask him what time it is, then you pack up your history again, you nod, you nod for a second time.

Your roommate calls out, 'Wake up,' and you get up and punch the fire again.

As you lay down the poker the bell rings, and at last study hour is over. You get a pitcher of water for morning, wind the clock, pat yourself on the head that the orderly has not caught you napping, and in five minutes you are asleep and dreaming of home."

This story was written in 1911 when the entire school was located in the first building. This building housed the students on the second and third floors (girls on the second, boys on the third) and classrooms and dining hall on the first floor.

The Museum News is a publication of the **Pearl River Community College Museum Patrons' Organization**. If you wish to receive a subscription to this publication, you must be a member of the Museum Patrons' Organization. Membership dues are \$25 annually. For more information, call Ronn Hague at (601) 403-1316.

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**Pearl River Community College Museum
Hancock Hall - South Wing
101 Highway 11 North
Poplarville, MS 39470**