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James White: mentor, teacher, friend

James White, professor of agricultural education, was a great teacher and so much more. He was a leader, a mentor. He was a student of life, a member of the Oklahoma State University family, a friend to the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources faculty, and of course, an inspiration and gift to his students.

"Dr. White wanted his students to know that he cared about them as people, as well as how they performed in his class," said Jim Key, professor emeritus of agricultural education. "He was interested in what they were accomplish-

ing as students at OSU, and he cared about the great success they would have once they graduated."

White dedicated a lifetime to teaching and would have retired June 30, 2003. He taught a variety of courses during his 32 years of teaching, but most noted was his work in developing the agricultural education leadership and service option. His university teaching career was devoted to guiding students who desired to pursue careers in the cooperative extension service or to become agricultural education teachers.

White experienced OSU as a student and as a faculty member, having graduated from OSU in 1969 with a bachelor's degree in animal science. However, he felt a calling to help others and became certified to teach agricultural education in 1970.

"Dr. White said OSU was the greatest place in the world to get an education," said Key. "He had outstanding teachers in terms of who they were and what they believed. It impressed him that faculty could have such an influence and have that spread to their students."

White served as a county extension agent in Texas

County before he began teaching vocational agriculture in Davenport, Okla., for five years. He then returned to OSU to receive his master's and doctoral degrees in agricultural education. He began his teaching career in the OSU agricultural education program in 1979.

Nearly 200 undergraduate students completed industry internships under White's mentorship. The students were able to capture evidence of their performance in their portfolio, and students say it was helpful to reflect on their career aspirations.

"Dr. White reveled in his students because of what he saw as their possibilities," said Wesley Holley, former OSU faculty member. "I marveled at his memory of each and every student he had contact with through the years. In most cases, he could tell the most intimate details of each student's accomplishments and challenges with their internship."

White taught International Programs in Agricultural and Extension Education for 10 years and brought his own international experience into the classroom. White was involved with international endeavors in Mexico, Honduras and Pakistan, and worked with participants in training programs in Ecuador, India and Ethiopia.

White received many honors and awards for both teaching and international agricultural development. A few of his most treasured included receiving the Honorary American FFA Degree in 1985 and being named the Oklahoma FFA VIP recipient in 2002. In the spring of 2003, he was recognized by the Agricultural Education Graduate Student Association with the Outstanding Graduate Faculty Award.

"Dr. White humbly viewed these
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News from the Department Head

The department has had a busy fall semester with the orientation and teaching of many new and continuing students; the development of new research proposals and projects; and preparation of papers for professional conferences. The students, staff and faculty were saddened by the death of our colleague and friend, Dr. James D. White, on Nov. 16. Dr. White was an inspiration to all, and a great teacher and mentor to students.

Some departmental highlights follow:

New M.S. Program in Agricultural Communications

A new Master of Science program in agricultural communications was approved and initiated in the fall. This graduate program emphasizes research and application of communications theory in the context of agriculture. Existing graduate courses in agricultural education will be integrated into this program, along with new graduate courses in the history and philosophy of agricultural communications and theory of agricultural communications.

Mathematics in CTE Research Project

OSU is collaborating with the National Center for Research in Career and Technology Education at the University of Minnesota in a research project to study how mathematics achievement of students can be increased using contextual learning. The Oklahoma site will involve 20 con-

trol and 20 treatment classrooms with teachers offering the agricultural power and technology curriculum. Dr. Craig Edwards is directing the Oklahoma project, along with doctoral student, Brian Parr.

Search Initiated for Two Faculty Positions

Two tenure-track faculty positions are being initiated by the department. One is an Assistant/Associate Professor in Agricultural Communications/Leadership, and the other position is Assistant Professor in Leadership/Teacher Education. In tight budget times, we are grateful for the support of the administration in assisting the department's growth with new faculty members.

AGED/COM/4-H Presents Research at NAERC

Faculty and graduate students in the department were honored to have 10 research papers selected, through blind peer review, for presentation at the National Agricultural Education Research Conference held Dec. 10-12, in Orlando, Fla. A total of 48 papers were selected for presentation at this conference from more than 180 papers submitted. Faculty members included M. Craig Edwards, William Weeks, Dwayne Cartmell, Kathleen Kelsey and James Leising. Former or current graduate students included Brian Parr, Javonne Mullins, Robin Peiter, Alan D'Souza, Seburn Pense, Jonathan Ulmer and Matthew Portillo.

Squires named Outstanding New Teacher

Jona Kay Squires, agricultural education teacher at Norman High School, recently received the Oklahoma Association of Career and Technology Education's Outstanding New Teacher Award during the 2003 Career and Tech-

nology Education Summer Conference.

"Norman is the only school that I have taught at, and the interesting story is that I began teaching at the same place my dad started some 26 years ago," said Squires. "My family has a strong technical education background. My mom teaches family and consumer science, and dad continues to teach agricultural education at Noble."

The Outstanding New Teacher Award, given by the Oklahoma ACTE, which is the professional organization for the state's career and technology education administrators, teachers and staff members, encourages new teachers to remain in the profession. Recipients must have made significant contribu-

tions toward innovative, unique and novel programs and must have shown a professional commitment in their career.

Building a new greenhouse, reopening the livestock facility and building a community garden are some of the things Squires has accomplished with the help of the community, administrators and tax payers.

Squires compares teaching to the act of looking through a kaleidoscope.

"Every time you look into it and turn it, you see a different pattern or color, and every day in the classroom you discover something new about your students and yourself. It's never boring," said Squires.

This award qualifies Squires to compete for the regional title. If she is chosen at the regional level, Squires will compete for the Association for Career and Technical Education's National Young Member Teacher of the Year Award in April.

"Teaching agricultural education is a great profession. I respect and love it, and I am lucky to be a part of such a great profession," said Squires.



Squires helps students use the digital camera to prepare their research reports for class.

Retired professor dons the harness again

Ninety-three-year-old Robert R. Price, professor emeritus, will not let retirement or age slow him down. For many years Price has been a leader in teaching and promoting adult education, especially in the fields of vocational and career education. He has touched many lives and has the distinction of being known as the Father of the Young Farmers Association.

His teaching career began in 1934, and he taught 13 years in the Oklahoma school system, including Westville, Stigler and Hitchcock High Schools. In 1947, Price came to Oklahoma A&M College and taught agricultural education for 27 years, which he served as department head for eight years before retiring. Although he was officially retired, Price taught courses in agricultural education, community education and vocational education for an additional nine years. His dedication to the department was evident as he continued to come to the office until 2001.

"I was in the way a lot of times," Price said with a laugh. "I liked the program. I liked what I was doing. I liked the students. I had some of the best students in the world."

Even though Price has moved his office out of Agricultural Hall, this has not stopped his involvement in the university. He enthusiastically granted a request by a doctoral student for assistance in gathering information and developing research for his thesis about instructional on-farm training programs in Oklahoma.

"Agricultural education has been

on my heart all the time," said Price.

His heart definitely has a place for his students too. He touched many lives throughout his career at OSU, and the students have done the same for him.

"I've had 1736 students, 38 of them being international students," Price said without hesitation. "Some of my students are the best friends I ever had."

Agricultural research is not the only item on Price's agenda; his family research is one of his priorities as well. He is working on the genealogy of his family and has traced family members back to 1633. In addition, he is writing a book about his life experiences titled *Robby Remembers*. His 42-chapter story tells an array of events from his childhood adventures, college experiences to his first-year teaching encounters. He plans to have it published so others can read about his life's journeys.

"I originally started writing the stories for my grandchildren," said Price. "A number of people began to read it and said, 'You've got to get this published.'"

Between writing chapters for his book and helping graduate

students with projects, Price participated in the OSU Homecoming Parade and studied his lines for his leading role as Charlie Brown for the Westhaven Nursing Home Christmas Play. In addition, he is the storyteller for other residents at Westhaven.

"I am telling my stories every week," said Price. "You don't read to these people, you tell them. I find some pleasant way of reaching someone even if it's only momentarily. I believe that's why I'm here."

Throughout all his experiences, Price says he has been blessed.

"I loved my job, and my school," said Price. "It's been a wonderful experience for an old man, and still is."



Dr. Price (right) discusses research with doctoral student Bruce Neimi. Price is working with Neimi to gather information for his dissertation.

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awards, not as things he earned, but awards his students had helped him to receive," said Jim Leising, agricultural education and communications department head.

White was dedicated to his students. He made an effort to meet all of his students to find out their names and hometowns. He motivated each of them by showing personal interest and genuine concern.

"Dr. White taught people, not curriculum," said Bruce Farquhar, former student and agricultural education instructor at Altus, Okla. "Through the

process, he passed along pieces of himself to all he met."

But there is not a course or degree program that could compare to the lessons White taught students during his battle with cancer. Although White was diagnosed with bone cancer in 2001, he continued to teach classes and mentor his students. He taught students some special life lessons that can't be learned from a textbook.

"Another course had been chosen for his life," said Key. "He hoped that his students learned from his illness. If something bad happens to them, it isn't

the end of the world. There is still life to live. They can either be like the rock that is polished by the friction of life or the rock that resists the friction and is ground to dust."

James David White, 61, died on Nov. 16, 2003, at his home in Stillwater, Okla., surrounded by his loved ones. A few months prior to his death he shared the following:

My advice to students is realize there is a whole world waiting for you. Don't ever give up on yourself or your goals. Look up. Put it all in the right perspective. Then, you will be a whole person.

Fall 2003 student teachers

<u>Student</u>	<u>Teaching Center</u>	<u>Hometown</u>
Kane Causemaker	Adair	Darnell, Ill.
Steve Clark	Drummond	Minco, Okla.
Brian Cunningham	McClave, Colo.	Yuma, Colo.
Kyle Dorton	Minco	Randlett, Okla.
Ada Harlow	Afton	Elkhart, Kan.
Josh Hargis	Grove	Yukon, Okla.
Kari Jinkens	Woodward	Muskogee, Okla.
Shena Parks	Central High	Lazbuddie, Texas.
J. Pye	Roland	Sylvania, Ga.
Jeremy Schmidt	Frontier	Coyle, Okla.
Amanda Seidl	Oologah	Garber, Okla.

AGEDucator goes online

This is the **last** printed issue of *AGEDucator*. You may still receive it electronically by sending your e-mail address to Bonnie Milby at bmilby@okstate.edu. Please send it by May 1 to receive your next issue.

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Do you have a story idea, announcement or award you would like your fellow alumni to know about? Send story ideas via e-mail to coxjk@okstate.edu.

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