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Centennial Alumni Celebration Caps Magazine's 100th Year

KNOXVILLE—Some of the most accomplished alumni in University of Tennessee history were celebrated Friday evening as part of an occasion marking the 100th anniversary of the system-wide alumni magazine.

UT President Joe DiPietro hosted the event noting the milestone for *Tennessee Alumnus*, the magazine covering alumni of all UT campuses.

“To have published continuously from 1917 to now is a milestone that puts this magazine in a small circle of alumni publications, nationally,” DiPietro said. “It’s my privilege and honor to help mark the occasion and to celebrate some of the trailblazers and history-makers who share UT alumni status with about 370,000 people across the country and around the world.”

A crowd of more than 150 included some of the most highly accomplished alumni in UT history, University leaders past and present, UT trustees and the team who create the magazine gathered to celebrate at Cherokee Country Club in Knoxville. Luminaries in attendance included Tennessee Supreme Court Justice Sharon Lee (UT Knoxville ’75, ’78), actor Dennis Haskins (UT Chattanooga ’15), author, “Elf on the Shelf” creator Carol Aebersold (UT Knoxville, ’70) and dual physician-attorney Paul Blaylock (UT Martin ’68, UT Health Science Center ’72).

“I am fortunate to have trained under professors that I consider the best in the field,” said Doug Owsley (UT Knoxville, ’75, ’78), head of the division of physical anthropology at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. “This opportunity has allowed me to assist families through identifications of missing persons, help solve criminal investigations, and even learn about the lives of our ancestors through research on human remains that can be hundreds or thousands of years old. I am deeply indebted to the training that I received at UT. If I could do it over again, I would.”

“I am a proud graduate of UT Martin, where I had the pleasure of meeting so many wonderful people,” said NFL New York Giants General Manager Jerry Reese (UT Martin ’87, ’88), who was unable to attend the celebration. “I am humbled to be selected among such a distinguished group of honorees, perhaps some of whom have been colleagues at one time or another, all of whom have made important contributions to our world.”

Alumni honorees cover the professional gamut—authors to astronauts, educators to entrepreneurs, judges to generals, actors to athletes—and graduated from one or more UT system campuses across the state.

The magazine’s 100th anniversary commemoration began more than a year ago, when UT graduates nominated “Centennial Alumni” from among all UT graduates of all campuses. Almost 500 nominations were received, and a 10-person committee of UT and alumni affairs leaders narrowed the field to 100. The magazine, which publishes three times a year, featured a bonus package of Centennial Alumni profiles in each 2017 issue.

Each of 2017’s three issues—winter, spring and fall—also were built around individual themes: past, present and future. The winter issue featured a timeline of milestones in UT history. The spring issue—focused on how the University influences present-day life—featured coverage of alumni impacted by and UT aid and expertise in responding to the 2016 Smoky Mountain wildfires. The fall issue, published in September, explored rising concerns about diminishing water resources and what the University is doing to address them.

“This magazine is both the signature publication of the UT system and of the University of Tennessee Alumni Association,” said Rickey McCurry, UT vice president for alumni and development, and president of the UT Foundation. “It’s a critical vehicle for engaging with our alumni and giving them the information they want for staying on top of what’s happening at their alma mater and for sharing news of its accomplishments with friends and colleagues.”

In 1917, the first issue of *Tennessee Alumnus* rolled off the press of Stublely Printing Company in Knoxville. When the university system was formed in 1968, the *Tennessee Alumnus* – and the national UT Alumni Association – became ventures of the system, not the Knoxville campus where they began. With the system-wide orientation, the magazine began offering feature stories on all segments of UT.

During its 100 years of publication, only six people have served as editor. 1907 graduate L.R. Neel was the first editor; 1927 graduate Harry M. Watson followed in 1928; and former alumni director John Smartt Sr., a 1942 UT College of Agriculture graduate and a 1948 UT College of Law graduate, oversaw the magazine

from 1948 to 1964. Neal O’Steen, a 1950 UT Knoxville graduate, was editor from 1964 to 1986, and oversaw the transition to a system-wide focus. The longest-serving editor, Diane Ballard, a 1969 UT Knoxville graduate, succeeded O’Steen and served until Ballard’s retirement in 2012, when 1996 UT Knoxville graduate Elizabeth Davis was named editor. Gina Stafford, a 2007 UT Knoxville graduate and assistant vice president and director of communications for the University system, served as interim editor upon Davis’ 2015 departure for an opportunity outside UT.

Alumnus chief staff writer Jennifer Sicking becomes the seventh designated editor when she takes the helm as managing editor in 2018.

“*Tennessee Alumnus* is something of a UT family album, where the University’s history comes to life. On the pages of the magazine, we can see how far UT has come and the momentous changes that made the University the great institution and resource that it is,” DiPietro said. “Here’s to our alumni across the state, the nation and around the world, and to the impact they allow the University to make every day in every corner of the globe.”

The University of Tennessee is a statewide system of higher education with campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Martin and Memphis; the UT Space Institute in Tullahoma; the UT Institute of Agriculture with a presence in every Tennessee county; and the statewide Institute for Public Service. The UT system manages Oak Ridge National Laboratory through its UT-Battelle partnership; enrolls about 50,000 students statewide; produces about 10,000 new graduates every year; and represents more than 370,000 alumni around the world.

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