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Ouachita to dedicate studio April 3 in memory of Gary & Matt Turner



By Trennis Henderson, OBU Vice President for Communications

March 19, 2014

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. -- Ouachita Baptist University's video production studio will be named in memory of Gary and Matt Turner, two noted communicators with ties to Ouachita and Arkadelphia. A dedication service for the Gary and Matt Turner Studio is set for Thursday, April 3, at 10:30 a.m. in Lile Hall on the Ouachita campus.

Rev. Gary Turner, who served 25 years as pastor of Third Street Baptist Church in Arkadelphia, died in 2005 at age 49 following a two-and-a-half year battle with leukemia. His son, Matt, a 2003 Ouachita graduate and a news anchor for THV-11 in Little Rock, died in a car accident in 2012 at age 32.

Both men are being honored through a generous gift from Sen. Percy Malone and his wife, Donna. Sen. Malone, an Arkadelphia pharmacist and businessman, served in the Arkansas Senate from 2001 to 2013 and previously served in the Arkansas House of Representatives. The Malones are longtime members of Third Street Baptist Church.

THV-11 and KNWA in Northwest Arkansas where Matt Turner worked for several years are both contributing financially to this project through technology upgrades for the studio.

The Ouachita campus community, members of Third Street Baptist Church and individuals throughout the area are invited to attend the April 3 dedication ceremony. Special guests at the ceremony include Rev. Turner's widow, Lisa, and their son, Andy, as well as Matt Turner's widow, Julee, and their daughter, Preslee.

"The dedication of the Turner Studio is exemplary in many ways," said Ouachita President Rex Horne. "We recognize the lives of two difference makers, one through pastoral ministry the other through broadcasting. Both men, father and son, lived exemplary Christian lives and influenced countless people.

"We also have the example of Sen. Malone who honors the lives of his two dear friends with a gift that will impact generations of students to come," Dr. Horne added. "We are grateful for the lives of Gary and Matt Turner and Sen. Malone."

Ouachita's current video production studio, part of the Rogers Department of Communications, was built during a major renovation of Lile Hall in 2012. A smaller studio previously was housed in Mabee Fine Arts Center.

"It will be a pleasure to see the name 'Turner' every day at work and tell new generations of students about Gary and Matt," said Dr. Jeff Root, dean of OBU's School of Humanities. "Matt's combination of talent, drive and concern for others will be a reminder for our students of the impact a Christian can make in the news media. He honed his talent through hard work, but Matt inherited certain gifts from his father. Gary Turner was a celebrated preacher and a beloved pastor. Both left us sooner than we expected but taught us life lessons and left us rich memories.

"Building a new studio in 2012 was a major step forward in all of our video work, and this gift will ensure that our students will always have the advantages of high quality video equipment," Dr. Root noted. "We have a growing number of students creating video productions for both television and the web. It is a vital part of the future of our department, and it is imperative the students have the proper tools. We are tremendously grateful for a gift that will benefit our current students and those coming in future generations."

Rev. Turner "was well known for his charisma, knowledge, humor and willingness to help people from all walks of life," according to GaryTurnerMinistries.net, a website that features hundreds of his sermons.

He was a recipient of the Arkadelphia Chamber of Commerce President's Award and was named a Paul Harris Fellow by Rotary International. Active in community service, he served as president of the Arkadelphia School Board and the Clark County American Heart Association and chairman of the board for Arkadelphia Kids' Club. He also was a board member for Courage House, Hospitality Care Center and Arkadelphia Little League and served as chaplain for the Arkadelphia Police Department and Clark County Sheriff's Department.

Matt Turner, a mass communications major at Ouachita, joined the staff of KNWA in Northwest Arkansas in 2003 before moving to THV-11 in 2012. He was voted best news anchor by several publications and also was named to *Arkansas Business*' "40 Under 40" for achievement in business. Ouachita's Rogers Department of Communications established the Matt Turner Outstanding Junior Mass Communications Major Award last year in memory of Turner.

For more information about the studio dedication service, contact the Ouachita Office of Development at (870) 245-5169. For information about the Rogers Department of Communications, contact Dr. Deborah Root, chair of the department, at (870) 245-5510.