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### **Pandemic Profiles: Chester Mitchell, Sr., and Coleman Rogers Facilities Management Carpentry Team**

Rachel Gaddis

*Ouachita Baptist University*

Ouachita News Bureau

*Ouachita Baptist University*

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**Pandemic Profiles: Chester Mitchell, Sr., and Coleman Rogers**

**Facilities Management Carpentry Team**



*By Rachel Gaddis*

March 09, 2021

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Chester Mitchell, Sr., and Coleman Rogers became work partners in Ouachita's Facilities Management office in 2006, and they've been working together ever since. With nicknames like "double trouble" and "salt and pepper," it's not surprising that if you see one, you see the other.

"I think sometimes people think we're nuts. We're riding around in the van just laughing at one another, but we keep things going between us and that makes us work well together, like glue and paper," Mitchell said.

"We work off each other's strengths – that's a must," he continued, smiling. "I don't know it all, he doesn't know it all, we don't know anything, and we put that all together ..."

"Yeah, put all that together and we figure something out!" Rogers finished, laughing.

With the work the duo had cut out for them last summer, any less than two sets of hands and a good sense of humor would have made overhauling campus with needed protective measures incredibly difficult. For one thing, Mitchell and Rogers led the crew that mounted 420 hand sanitizers all over campus and installed dozens of customized plexiglass barriers.

“The hand sanitizers were one of those things that, as soon as they came in, we dropped what we were doing and got to mounting hand sanitizers,” Rogers said.

The plexiglass barriers, on the other hand, would be an ongoing and time intensive project. After installing their first custom plexiglass barriers in Cone-Bottoms offices, Mitchell and Rogers responded to other requests across campus: classrooms, Evans Student Center, the Ouachita Commons and Academic Success Center, to name a few.

“Just about anywhere that they couldn’t maintain social distancing, there’s plexiglass,” Rogers said.

“We had to come up with the design, and how to hang them,” Mitchell said. “It wasn’t just coming up with the idea; we had to make it become a reality.”

When the handymen weren’t busy with these projects, they assembled new markerboards for new or adjusted classroom spaces around campus, and they also painted over 200,000 square feet of residence halls since none of the usual summer groups were present.

“Chester and Coleman are an institution at Ouachita. When they walk into an office, residence hall or classroom, their positive, fun loving spirit comes with them,” said Bill Phelps, assistant to the president for IT services and facilities management. “They encompass the best of Ouachita, that is, very competent at what they do, but they do it with a positive spirit that leaves you feeling good when their work is finished.”

How appropriate, then, when asked if the work got tiring or frustrating, Mitchell and Rogers just laughed. Working with a friend made it bearable, they said.

“We know each other so well, we just started picking with each other,” Mitchell said.

“But really, what kept us going is, ‘We’ve got to get students back in school,’” Rogers said. “The main focus was to get people back on campus and do it safely.”

Both mentioned how grateful and affirming Ouachita staff and students have been, even now, as they continue to respond to carpentry requests around campus.

“We might be working on a doorknob or piece of furniture and students will just say, ‘We appreciate what y’all are doing,’” Mitchell said. “Sometimes you get in a rut that nobody is paying attention, but when you hear something like that, it motivates you.”

“We were glad to see students back,” Mitchell continued. “When they got back on campus, it seemed like it had all worked out – the ideas we had were the right ideas.

“Some of the things we’ve done to make it work, people wouldn’t believe it,” he added, exchanging a laugh with Rogers, reminiscing. “We put our heads together.”

*Photo by Tyler Rosenthal*