

Abilene Living

WINTER 2011

MAGAZINE

*Sweeter as
the years
go by*

Candies by Vletas serves up fresh, handmade sweet treats made the old-fashioned way.

Fashions for the Cure

This yearly show is all about celebrating life and beating the odds.

A Promise Kept

Lanny Vinson's vision to help sick children is becoming a reality thanks to the Legends Dove Hunt and its generous participants.

Bee Shackelford

Taking Abilene "by storm," Bee's outgoing nature has impacted hundreds.

Bee Shackelford: Her Blessings Get Sweeter with Time



BLESSED BE THOSE WHO LIVE,
KNOWING THEY'VE MADE LIVES
BETTER.

They're greeted by hometown smiles, tearful hugs and heartfelt respect. Legendary Abilene coach and teacher Bee Shackelford has achieved this earthly beatitude. Every day matters with her. Every day, she gives back.

Beatrice "Bee" Agnew Shackelford turned a sprightly 92 on January 2. She's been an honored coach, teacher and shaper of young lives in Abilene for 73 years.

The day we met, I was handed a video showing me that Bee's story is still at an early chapter. More on that later.

"Health catches up with us after a few years," Bee said, putting me at ease. When I visited Bee the other day, I had to wear glasses to see. Had to use a recorder to remember. We laughed together. "My body parts are all wearing out, but I had a good time doing it," she shared, a gleam in her eye.

Bee's grandfather, her dad and three uncles owned Agnew & Sons Drilling Company in Pennsylvania and then West Virginia, where she was born. "We moved to Caddo (near Breckenridge), then to Texon (in Reagan County), drilling for the Big Lake Oil Company."

Parents Bill and Phema Agnew ended up with six kids. "Texon had one school, one church, one grocery store, one barber shop, one hospital with one doctor and one dentist, and one baseball field."

Bee's leaning forward in her chair. "The Agnews were good church people. They'd shut the oil wells down on Saturday at midnight, then start them back up at



Bee Shackelford turned 92 this year, but age hasn't slowed her down. Thankful for her blessings, Bee continues to share joy wherever she goes.



“We took Abilene by storm,” Bee says of her mother’s choice to move the family here.



One of Bee’s proudest accomplishments is her family. Here she shows off pictures of her grandchildren and great-grand children.

midnight on Sunday.” One night her dad went to check on a well. The rig began to collapse, the driller and tool dresser escaping out the front. “Daddy was on the boardwalk. The pulley broke loose, swung around and hit him on the head, at 1:30 on a Monday morning. He died about 8 o’clock the next morning.”

That was 1931. Eleven-year-old Bee and her twin Betty were left without a father.

Bee’s mother had a sister-in-law who lost her husband two years earlier. Between those two ladies were eleven children. The two mothers used to drive their combined eleven kids through Abilene on their way to Mineral Wells to visit grandparents. Bee tells me, “They loved Abilene – such a pretty, clean town. They could see the colleges and the schools.” The two mothers

decided to make it home.

“We took Abilene by storm,” Bee said.

Bee was in the sixth grade when the family arrived. She was in the Glee Club, Student Council, Players Club, Pep Squad and a Cheerleader her senior year at Abilene High. Her sophomore year, a coach asked her class what they wanted to do when they graduated.

“I wanted to be a PE teacher or a nurse – and I wanted to go to Hardin-Simmons University. In the summer of 1937, I walked on that campus, telling them ‘I really don’t have any money.’” They gave her a job helping at the gym for twenty-five cents an hour.

Bee majored in physical education with a speech minor. She made the famed Cowgirls Pep Squad her sophomore year.

There were fifty Cowgirls. They marched behind the all-male Cowboy Band. She was Cowgirls’ President her senior year in 1940 and was an inaugural member of the Six White Horses Team Riders. “That’s the year that Prexie J. D. Sandefer passed away. Dr. Sandefer had been president 31 years. He died at Easter time, so most of the kids had gone home for the holidays.”

“The Cowboy Band and Cowgirls stood honor guard at Prexie’s funeral, back behind the casket,” she remembers. The Cowgirls remained there all day in shifts, inside the old wooden Behren’s Chapel, that later burned down. “That was a moment of our lives that really meant something.”

The Cowgirls traveled to the Fort Worth Fat Stock Show and served as



hostesses to the visiting First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. “Our senior year we went to Tyler for the Rose Festival by train.” The Cowgirls sold drinks and candy in the aisles to raise money. “On the way home, Dean Collins walked through the cars about midnight and said, ‘Okay boys, come with me.’” Bee is laughing, “We called that segregation.”

“I loved my four years at Hardin-Simmons. You knew the teachers, and they knew you. When you needed help, they were right there to help.”

Bee met J. P. “Toby” Shackelford in her neighborhood, dating him through high school and college. “He never would propose because he was afraid I’d quit school and get married. Getting my diploma was an insurance policy to him.” He proposed when Bee graduated.

“I sure did say yes,” she says. “He asked when I wanted to get married, thinking I’d want to wait a year like women did back then. ‘I think I can be ready in two weeks,’ was my answer.” Bee graduated June 3 and married June 18.

They moved to a garage apartment they called “the dollhouse”. Toby worked for the Pender Company. Bee coached at Abilene High in the fall of 1941, making \$68 a month. “I was glad to have a job. It was the tail end of the Depression and things still weren’t great. Hamburgers were a nickel. A deluxe was a dime.”

“We lived together six months, then Pearl Harbor happened. Toby knew his draft number was low and he’d be



TOP Bee has many fond memories of life in West Texas including her years as a Cowgirl at Hardin Simmons University (center picture). **ABOVE** Bee’s Cowgirls still remain close. They now have a sewing club that gives them a chance to socialize.

called. He volunteered for the Air Force and was stationed at Lubbock Army Airfield (later Reece Air Force Base).

“At Abilene High, we started a female cadet corps. Moms made the uniforms. I called a Marine in town and he would come up and teach us the proper way to drill. One afternoon we had a practice outside, taking our jackets off. The boys in the stands all started clapping, and I thought, ‘Oh, Lord, what have I done?’”

War rationing prevented students from buying tennis shoes or PE clothes. “The girls would have to wear whatever they had back then.”

Bee taught two more years, then moved to Lubbock High School to be with Toby. Two years later, orders sent him to Italy. The day he arrived, the armistice was signed. He returned to Abilene and worked for Hal Pender 42 more years. When Toby came home, they started a family. Bee was a full time mom from 1945-1962.

Life changed direction again in 1962. Bee’s older daughter, Jill Shackelford Calder, decided she wanted to go to Baylor (sister Kathy Shackelford followed later). More sadly, Bee’s twin sister Betty died of a heart attack. Bee wanted to put both daughters through college and “I needed to do something. That was so hard, losing my twin sister.”

Bee taught and coached at Franklin Junior High two years. She then moved to Cooper High School at Principal Anthony’s invitation in 1963, staying for “eleven marvelous years.” Bee sponsored the pep squad, cheerleaders and became known as the “Spirit of Cooper.”

“I enjoyed it so much. Toward the end, I finally was beginning to get tired.

I would always borrow a station wagon from the Dodge people to take the cheerleaders to the basketball games, as far away as San Antonio and Houston.

Then coming home at 2 a.m. I would get so tired. I didn’t know how much longer I could do that.”

Bee retired in 1974. “I had 15 years of teaching. I was 55-years-old, received a small pension. And it was wonderful to have those last years with Toby.” He died in 1980 of emphysema. “We had a

LOVE this home. God has blessed me so many times. And it’s always such a thrill seeing the kids when they come home for reunions.”

Several ex-Cowgirls started the Abilene Sewing Club, many graduating HSU in the 1940s. Bee is their senior living member. “We don’t do much sewing.” Their main bond has been sharing their joys and sorrows through the years. “We’re like sisters. We had fifteen at one time. We’re down to five.”

Bee has two grandsons and their wives, and four great-grandchildren. She’s been a member of First Baptist Church since 1937.

Back to that video I told you about, made last fall. The Cowgirls officially ceased to exist at HSU in 1974, the year women’s social clubs began. I now believe that’s not completely true.

This video starts playing on my television. A lively posse of twelve ex-Cowgirls (the youngest 70, the oldest 92) lopes into a crowded banquet hall during HSU’s Freshman Orientation. They’re flipping white cowboy hats in the air, and let’s be honest, raising a rowdy ruckus that gets one’s attention. “The Old Gray Mare” begins playing in the background.

Your eyes would be tearing up, if you were seeing this.

Like every year since 1925, these ladies begin the Cowgirl Stomp, weathered voices singing, bright faces smiling – drawing their audience in with high-spirited enthusiasm and charm.

The Cowgirl Stomp is planned again for next year, too. And the year after that. And the year after that. “We’re all hams,” Bee laughs, shaking her head.

Her audience is ready.

Her blessing continues... ✠ALM



Bee performs the Cowgirl Stomp along with her ex-Cowgirls from Hardin Simmons.

neat marriage. We didn’t fuss and fight, and had two great girls.”

“It was amazing how I’d bonded with the Abilene High students, then with their children I later taught at Cooper.” Bee’s younger daughter Kathy told me, “We’ll go out in the community and these little 83 and 84-year-old ladies recognize her and come tell her, ‘Bee, you were my PE teacher.’”

Bee became serious toward the end of our visit, I think wanting to make sure I understood. “I love Cooper. I love Hardin-Simmons. I love my church. I

Family Matters



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Bee and Toby on their Wedding Day, June 18, 1941. The ex-Cowgirls of Hardin-Simmons University come together to perform the Cowboy Stomp. Bee with her daughter, Kathy. Bee's oldest daughter Jill with her family, (l + r), John, Carole, Kate, Ethan, Bryce, Lori, Mike, Bill and Jill. Bee came from a large family and had many siblings including Billy, Betty, Bee, John Burr, Burnace Ann and Burnell.



Friendship House

BRIDGING THE GAP

BY JEFF CLARK

When Patri Bailey's young family moved into Abilene's North Park neighborhood ten years ago, she found it quiet ...too quiet.

"There weren't any children living on our block," she remembers. The young mother spent hours daily shuttling her three children all over town to connect them with kids their own age.

Bailey's prayer became, "God, bring them friends."

North Park was an isolated neighborhood in the northern shadow of Hardin-Simmons University. It was an area in steep decline – abandoned cars, broken windows and high weeds. Crime lurked just beneath the surface.

Bailey's prayers began to be answered in 2004 when the original North Park Friendship House opened. HSU students, faculty and staff sought to bring "love your neighbor" to life for folks north of campus.

Retired HSU Dean of Students Linda Carleton serves on Connecting Caring Communities' board (www.wecareabilene.org), Friendship House's parent. Carleton remembers bringing the Friendship House idea back to HSU from her native Shreveport. "The University realized it was a great opportunity to teach 'love your neighbor as yourself,'" so they freed her up to help develop it.

Like many newcomers, Patri Bailey's nature was to keep to herself. "Linda Carleton and Danyel Rogers from Friendship House came around and got our family involved. My middle child, Tanner, has become such a 'people person.' Alone, I don't know if I would've been able to pass that on to him."

Many North Park residents are retired. "Tanner would go sit and talk with Mr. Butler before he passed away. He learned how the neighborhood was before, about how Abilene



PHOTO BY DEBBIE RIGGS, PURE PHOTOGRAPHY



LEFT North Park's Friendship House Coordinator Laura Herridge (far left) and her family: Will, Bart and Annie Herridge.



ONE OF THE TEACHERS OF THE LAW CAME AND HEARD THEM DEBATING. NOTICING THAT JESUS HAD GIVEN THEM A GOOD ANSWER, HE ASKED HIM, “OF ALL THE COMMANDMENTS, WHICH IS THE MOST IMPORTANT?”

“THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE,” ANSWERED JESUS, “IS THIS: ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE. LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’ THE SECOND IS THIS: ‘LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ THERE IS NO COMMANDMENT GREATER THAN THESE.” MARK 12:28-31 (NIV)



LEFT Lydia Vanderstoep, a Hardin-Simmons University senior majoring in Spanish and education, works on making slurry at the Friendship House construction project. The slurry is used for the earthen brick homes on the city block that makes up the Friendship House complex. Lydia has logged more than 200 hours of community service since she came to HSU three years ago. BELOW LEFT HSU student Shannon Rector, a junior elementary education major from Abilene, applies mud to the walls inside one of the earthen houses. Houses will be sold to low-income residents who qualify and will surround a park/playground when the complex is complete. OPPOSITE PAGE Volunteers and contributors have helped make the North Park Friendship House a success.



developed around North Park, even about the history of our home.”

Slowly but surely, kids trickled into North Park. “Friendship House gives children a place to come hang out, get to know each other – a neutral zone,” Patri says. “My kids know that friends come in all sizes, shapes and ages.”

Friendship House walks the walk. A highly-trained Community Coordinator makes each Friendship House their home twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The 3,000-square-foot home at 2701 Hickory Street houses the family’s living quarters, plus a sprawling community room and kitchen. The home was made possible through a grant from the Shelton Family Foundation. A sign outside paints the vision that this home and eight future families’ homes will someday surround a community park filling this block.

Current Coordinator Laura Herridge moved into North Park's Friendship House two months ago. "It's wonderful," she says, "living in a houseful of people." Herridge, her husband and two school-aged kids live here full time.

"My daughter loves to be with the elderly folks," Herridge says, "and my son enjoys being with the kids. My husband and I also work well as a team. The family's individual gifts speak to different neighbors in different ways."

Many of us take the "safety net" of friends, family, and church for granted. When adversity hits, that may not always be the case, especially if our neighbors remain strangers. Herridge sees herself as the "professional neighbor." Training to become a social worker, she's able to refer neighbors to community resources. And to listen.

Abilene's helping resources have the means to assist most adversities but may not be able to plug in to those who need their services. Friendship House helps bridge that gap.

"With Friendship House, the neighbor comes in and can tell their story," says Brad Carter, Director of Connecting Caring Communities. "We can verify it. Benefactors can feel, 'Hey, I'm really helping someone.' Then people will go the extra mile to help."

Hardin-Simmons has made a five-year commitment to the North Park Friendship House's operating expenses. HSU students have logged more than 3,000 hours of volunteer hours here in the last year.

HSU student volunteer Sara Darden says, "I've loved working at the Friendship House. Volunteers are able to find kids they have common ground with, connect with them, encourage them, and love on them. This tells these kids that they're loved and have things to offer the world. We want to keep them off the streets and in school."

During the filming of a CCC video, one teenager was asked what he'd be doing if there was no Friendship House. His unprompted reply – he'd probably be in a gang.

Darden remembers, "A 6th grade boy was struggling with his math homework. He was asking kids that were younger than him for help. One of our male volunteers happened to be a math major. The volunteer was able to help the 6th grader get his homework done correctly, and the 6th grader was still able to participate in the fun activities we had planned."

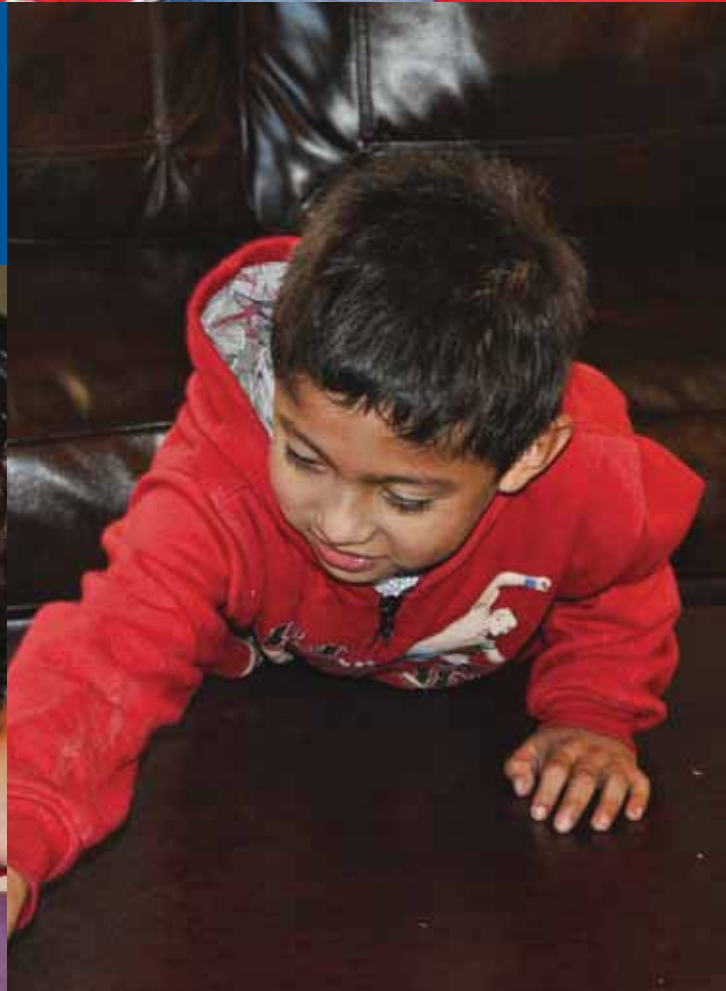
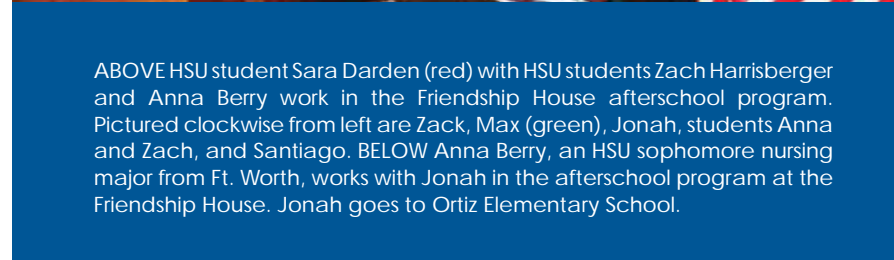
Now the Friendship House has begun sowing new neighbors. The first of four planned sustainable energy-efficient homes for low to moderate income (LMI) homeowners was recently completed. HSU students helped construct compressed earth blocks made from dirt excavated from the site to form the walls of the 1,300 square foot home.

Carleton remembers when they started the program, walking the neighborhood to see who lived there and to





ABOVE HSU student Sara Darden (red) with HSU students Zach Harrisberger and Anna Berry work in the Friendship House afterschool program. Pictured clockwise from left are Zack, Max (green), Jonah, students Anna and Zach, and Santiago. BELOW Anna Berry, an HSU sophomore nursing major from Ft. Worth, works with Jonah in the afterschool program at the Friendship House. Jonah goes to Ortiz Elementary School.



identify needs. About 220 families live in North Park, quite a few being senior adults. Sixty percent of households make \$25,000 or less.

One surprise was that most homes in North Park are owner-occupied. Baptist Student Ministries Director John Hunt says, "People were disconnected from each other, but still they stuck around."

The Friendship House doesn't give away money or pay people's bills. Staff and volunteers offer after school tutoring, physical therapy programs for seniors, and summer camps. They teach topics like "getting along with parents" or "bullying," when these needs are raised by parents or schools. Sports, picnics, providing free school supplies, twice monthly lunches and referrals to outside agency resources are among the helping hands originating from within its walls.

Hunt says there are consistently twenty HSU student volunteers plugged into the Friendship House at any one time, coming from the sociology department, the Baptist Student Ministry, counseling center, Gamma Beta Pi, from connections from NSO, as well as elementary education and ministry majors.

Then there's the "look" of the neighborhood. Carter reports that HSU students have helped neighbors remove 500,000 pounds of garbage from North Park over the last five years (including one boat fed through a shredder). During HSU's annual freshman orientation, twenty-six teams enter the Abilene community picking up trash, painting and serving their neighbors' needs. The City of Abilene's Solid Waste Services Division's support is key to the success of this event.

Carleton remembers that "One house just wasn't fit to live in," though it had been in the family over 100 years. "It was the kind of house you were afraid to go in because you didn't know who lived there. The neighbors helped

us know who was there. We'd go visit with them. If it rained, it would rain all the way to the first floor (of two stories). The City of Abilene has a great program for rehabilitating homes, but we helped these people find it." A nearby house is about to undergo similar rebirth.

You've got to ask yourself who's teaching whom. "I started at Hardin-Simmons in 1998," Hunt remembers. "There was student housing in North Park back then." Alumni from that time tell him how amazing the difference in the neighborhood is. Students now walk back and forth to class or ride their bikes. "You'd never do that when I went to school here."

Carleton tells the story about one home that was burglarized. Carleton asked the lady to let her talk to Danyel (the Coordinator then). Maybe one of the kids knew something. A neighbor had already called. Long story short, a mother and son walked over and visited the victim. As a result of their talk, she didn't file charges. The young man worked on the victim's remodeling project all summer to make things right. Again the roles of teacher and student blur.

The once victim asked the young

man, "You wouldn't have done this to someone you knew, would you?" He answered "No." The former victim told the young man, "I should've made it my business to know you."

Carleton says, "This isn't about how many yards you can rake or how many houses you can paint. Don't worry about getting on to the next place. It's about relationship."

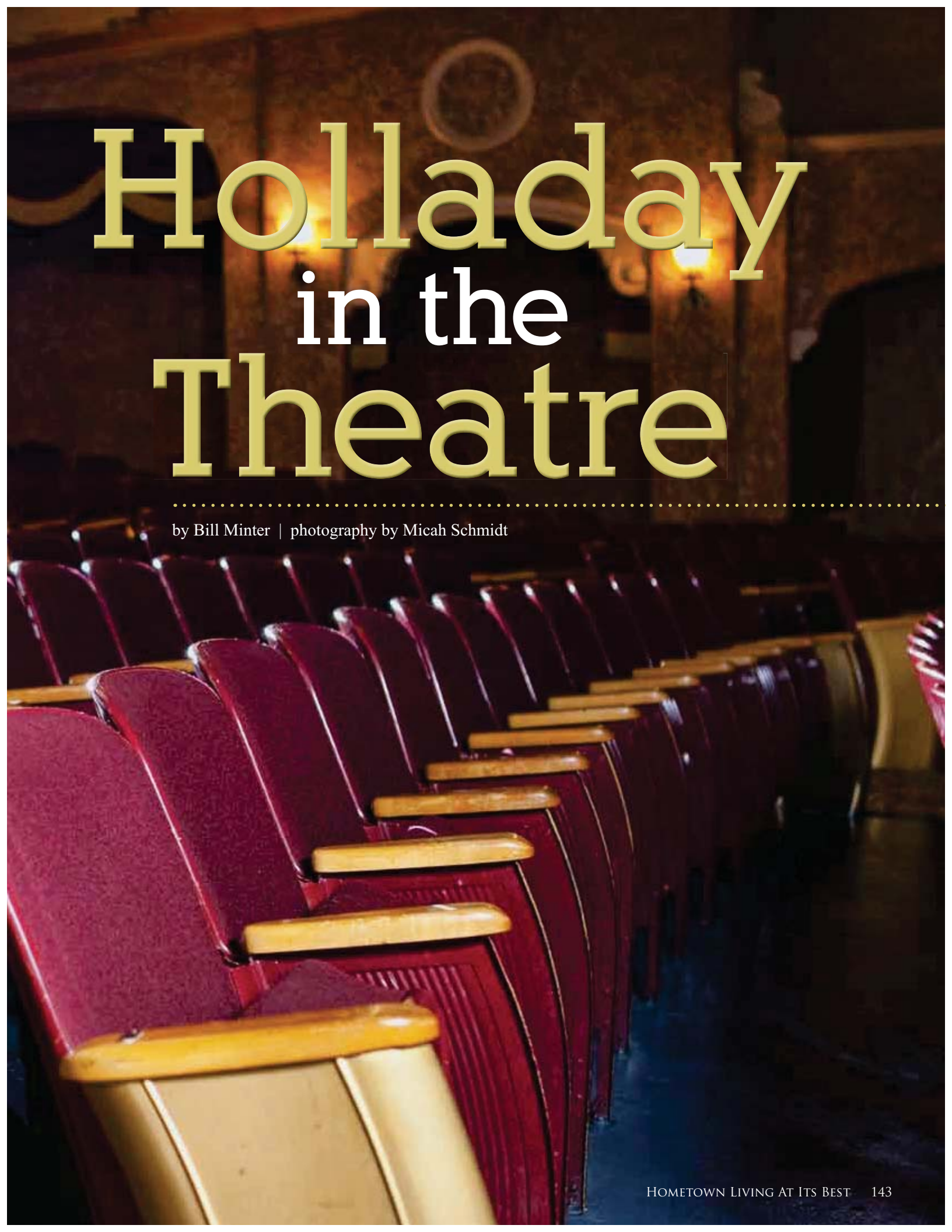
Resident Patri Bailey has risen to be president of the North Park Neighborhood Association, a CCC board member, a Big Country Master Gardener, and on and on. "North Park's not the fanciest place, but we're a pretty close-knit community," she says. "The Friendship House has brought out the best in all of us. We're proud of what we've done."

The afternoon I visited Friendship House, a senior citizen's luncheon had just broken up. School kids played in the yard, college students arrived to help children with homework, and down the street, neighbors sat talking on a porch, taking it all in. "I wouldn't trade the experience for anything," Patri shared as we were wrapping up. "The relationships we've developed in North Park are priceless." ✚ **ALM**



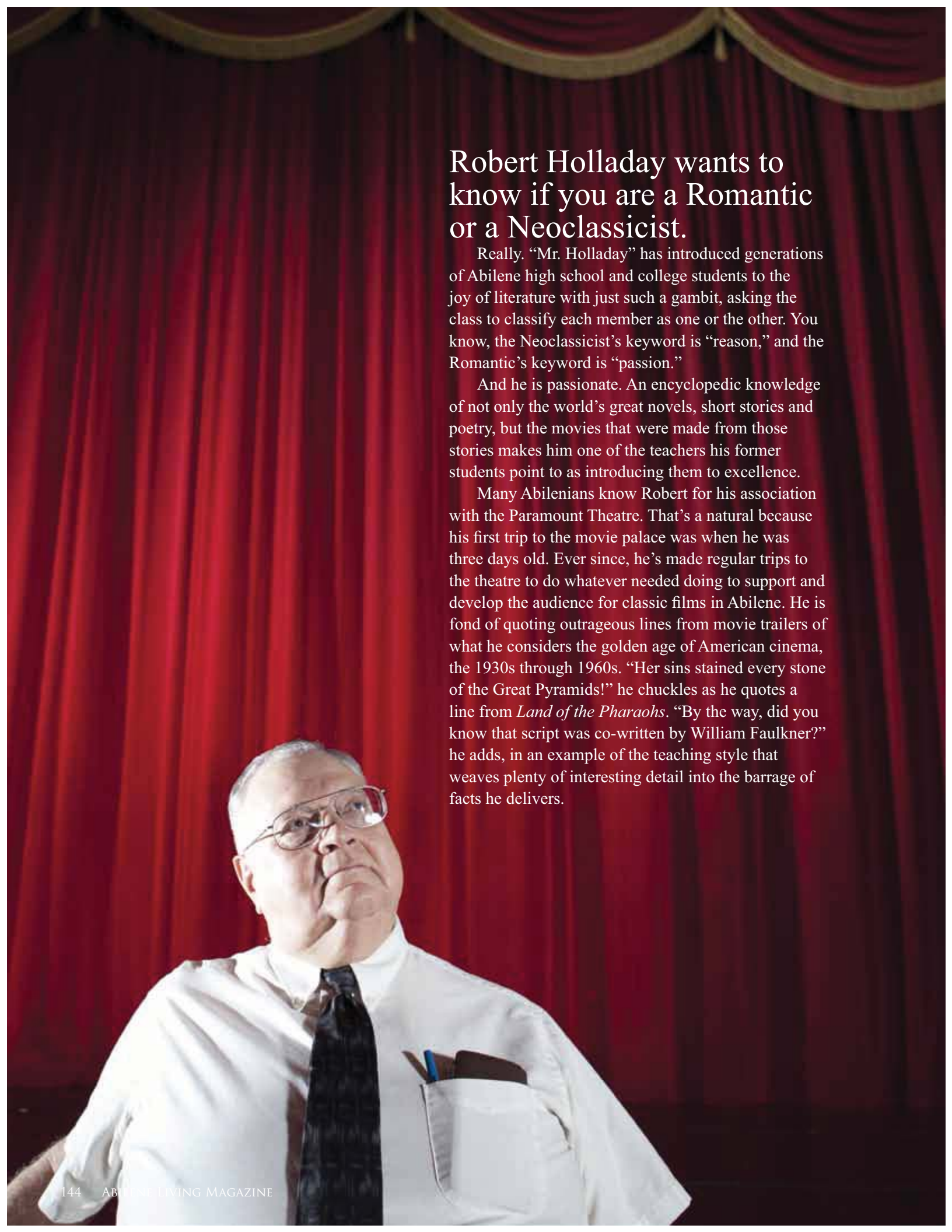
Kids' Club cookie decorating.





Holladay in the Theatre

.....
by Bill Minter | photography by Micah Schmidt



Robert Holladay wants to know if you are a Romantic or a Neoclassicist.

Really. “Mr. Holladay” has introduced generations of Abilene high school and college students to the joy of literature with just such a gambit, asking the class to classify each member as one or the other. You know, the Neoclassicist’s keyword is “reason,” and the Romantic’s keyword is “passion.”

And he is passionate. An encyclopedic knowledge of not only the world’s great novels, short stories and poetry, but the movies that were made from those stories makes him one of the teachers his former students point to as introducing them to excellence.

Many Abilenians know Robert for his association with the Paramount Theatre. That’s a natural because his first trip to the movie palace was when he was three days old. Ever since, he’s made regular trips to the theatre to do whatever needed doing to support and develop the audience for classic films in Abilene. He is fond of quoting outrageous lines from movie trailers of what he considers the golden age of American cinema, the 1930s through 1960s. “Her sins stained every stone of the Great Pyramids!” he chuckles as he quotes a line from *Land of the Pharaohs*. “By the way, did you know that script was co-written by William Faulkner?” he adds, in an example of the teaching style that weaves plenty of interesting detail into the barrage of facts he delivers.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Holladay's original film society purchased a quality projector to ensure the house was filled on Saturday nights. Holladay currently serves as Film Director for the Paramount Theatre in Abilene. A known fact to many, Holladay's favorite movie is *Raintree County*.

The current Paramount Film Series is an heir to the Cooper High Classical Film Society, started by Holladay and CHS students in the 1970s. When Interstate Theatres decided to refit the Westwood Theatre with two screens, Robert worked out a deal with Interstate manager Frank Sheffield to acquire the Westwood's original screen and install it in the Cooper auditorium. The high school all of a sudden had one of the biggest movie screens in the state of Texas. Always self-supporting, the film society grew, buying a quality projector and filling

the house on Saturday nights. They showed the just-restored 1927 silent movie *Napoleon*, lost until 1982. When the Cooper kids screened the film, they went all out, dressing as characters in costume from the film. Near the movie's end the students started playing the French anthem "La Marseillaise" and unfurled a giant French flag from the ceiling.

At his home near Abilene Christian University, Holladay is managing what has to be one of the largest collections of video and audio recordings outside the Library of Congress (only a slight

The Stats

> Robert Evans
Holladay

Born: Big Spring, Texas
Moved to Abilene as soon as he could.

Favorite Movie:
Raintree County

Greatest Movie:
Citizen Kane

Worst Movie:
Plan 9 from Outer Space
by Ed Wood (1959)

High School:
Abilene High

College:
Hardin-Simmons University
(B.A. English, History)
Southern Illinois University
(M.A. English and History)

Teaching:
Cooper High School for
42 years (1964-2006)
McMurry University for
30 years (1978-present)
Embry-Riddle
Aeronautical University
(2006-present)

Paramount:
Film Director for the
Paramount Theatre
(1973-present)

Name Your Favorite.

People are always asking Holladay to name his favorite movies. “I have a listing of what I consider to be my favorites and then a list of what I consider to be the greatest, and those two aren’t really the same thing. I’ve only added one movie to my top 10 list since 1990: Martin Scorsese’s movie of the Edith Wharton novel, *The Age of Innocence*.

exaggeration). For years, he scoured Texas for rare recordings, laser disks and videos, and they line the walls of room after room. He still hosts gatherings of friends and classic movie buffs, carrying on the tradition of presenting his own concise and highly entertaining introduction: a combination of facts about the movie’s production challenges and gossip about what the stars were doing at the time.

Among the thousands of students who are grateful to “Mr. Holladay” are many who were influenced to carry on his love of great stories and productions... and the Hollywood gossip too. Former student Jess Cagle is Managing Editor of *Entertainment Weekly*, and there aren’t many students who cannot tell you that Mr. Holladay’s favorite movie is *Raintree County*.

How about himself? Romanticism or Neoclassicism? “I’m an incurable Romantic, but I love Greek and Roman history,” Holladay used to tell his British and World Literature classes. “You can be a strange combination of both.” †ALM

Bill Minter is executive director of the Abilene Preservation League.

RIGHT Holladay has an extensive collection of video and audio recordings obtained from years of searching for rare finds.



