

HOOFBEATing Class of 1963

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Fall, 2006



**Carole Chase Harvey, second from right on second row
and her husband Jim in the red shirt**

Classmate Travels to Far East

Carole Chase Harvey and her husband Jim took what for many would be a once-in-a-lifetime trip to the Far East in July. Their church requested that the exact location not be published on the Internet, so for that reason, there is a certain vagueness in that area. Below is Carole's description of their experience with a few later notes at the end.

“Jim and I were part of a team of 12 people who went on a short term ministry trip to East Asia. We were in a town of 140,000 people, most [of whom lived] in poverty. It is primarily a Muslim town with few believers in Christ. We hoped to make connections with people, through our interpreters, and present the Gospel.

Everywhere we went we attracted a crowd; at open air markets 50 people would watch us eat! We split up in small groups and talked with people of all ages. Some people were won to Christ and others are now studying the Bible.

We ate noodles with lamb every day, and learned what it is like to live without paper products (we took our own) and refrigeration. Twelve of us could eat a meal of several courses and pay \$11.00 for the whole group! I ate a lot of fruit and bread along with the noodles and lamb, but not donkey meat or sheep intestines.

Our second goal was to establish a home for widows. Many times when her husband dies, his widow is turned out to beg on the streets. Along with a local believer, we were able to start a house that will accommodate 20 widows. We found four widows to move into the house, one

age 35 and another who is 93. It was a courageous move on their part since they fear being mistreated or kidnapped.

We talked to a policeman who spoke English and was aware of who we were. We were not hindered at all by the police. Our translators were the ones who put their lives at risk. They share Christ on a daily basis despite the danger of imprisonment.

My one regret about this trip is that I have had other opportunities, but I waited until I was 61 to go! Jim and I look forward to going back next year. It was one of the greatest experiences of our lives.

Addendum: We asked Carole if she and Jim had to make any special preparations:

“I'm glad you got the report and the photos. As far as getting ready for the trip, I just made sure I walked about 5 miles a day since we knew we would be walking a lot. Actually, we only walked once around the city, which was 7 miles, but each day we had to walk up four flights of steps to get to our rooms. We didn't take as many walks as the group that went last year because



Carole says that they saw goats being herded past their hotel on a busy street everyday. The goats were slaughtered and hung up by the restaurants.

we had so many appointments with people. We usually met in a park or restaurant close by, or even in our hotel rooms. Since they have almost no paper products, we were careful to take tissue with us at all times! The children there are "potty trained" by wearing pants [that are split] in front and back. They are helped by their mamas to relieve themselves on the side of the streets. This may be more than you wanted to know...!" Carole

Below is the interior of a local market; note the light bulbs hanging from the ceiling.



Children in the town marketplace



Bio Updates

After having worked in a north Madison County school last year, **Beverly “Chicki” Atwell** began July 24 at McLeod School here in Jackson. She is a counselor for grades K through 4, handling everything from classroom behavior, grades, separation anxiety for the really young ones, and anger management as “they” call it now. In addition, she teaches a 45-minute course as a roaming instructor to each of the classes on what is termed the Core Traits. There are ten of them in this set curriculum and include such things as honesty and responsibility. When not at school, Chicki and her Pomeranian enjoy their patio home in Madison. Her home backs up to woods where lately she has been seeing up to four deer at a time.

Bill Buckley volunteers with the Bold Mission Builders of the Stone Mountain Baptist Association (Georgia). The purpose of the Bold Mission Builders is to assist new missions, existing churches and other church related organizations in the construction of facilities, including sanctuaries, educational and fellowship facilities, dormitories, etc. He goes twice a year and does either trim or electrical work. He spent the last week of July at Loving Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Franklin, Kentucky. He built the cross for the church in Franklin as well as for a church in Cochran, Georgia. Bill also mentioned that Miss Breland (our Miss Sunshine) taught English to his mother at Central High School.

Be sure to check out **Jeannie (Johnson)** and **Bob Chunn**'s new website.

www.cedarwoodraymond.com

And remember when you visit Jackson and need a place to stay, the fact that the Natchez Trace has been completed (it no longer ends north of Jackson and picks up south of Jackson) makes Raymond very convenient to the Jackson metro area.

Jeannie (Johnson) and **Bob Chunn**'s daughter Cynthia presented them with a handsome grandson, Alexander Price Gibbs (Alex) on Monday, August 21, 2006. Alex is welcomed by sisters Hannah Grace and Emma Claire as well as proud father Chris.

Betty Claire Dees Stockwell sent us another health update. And while it isn't what we hoped for, it's not THAT bad. She was suspicious before she went to Italy that the brain tumors that had been radiated had started to grow again (memory problems, slight headaches). They had. The doctor told her that 10 to 15 years ago this was a sure-fire death knell, but now they refer to it as “chronic illness”. She said that she has to keep a close watch on it and “zap” the tumors from time to time. The doctor plans to give her 3 of the Boost treatments. She also had a bone scan, and that came back clear. Betty Claire thanks everyone for their prayers and asks that we keep them coming! But life is good: she is spending every spare minute in the swimming pool with her grandchildren and during the first week in August got in a four-day trip to Gulf Shores with daughter Stacey, her husband, and the grands.

Displaying an unbelievably positive attitude and determined perseverance, **Ben Duckworth** is making remarkable progress since his motorcycle accident in June. He is moving quickly from being wheelchair bound to wheelchair/walker to walking with a cane. An absolutely astonishing recovery is in progress!

We hope everyone got to see **Nancy Fleming** Sloan's brother Vic Fleming in the movie *WORDPLAY*, a documentary about crossword puzzles, Will Shortz the editor of the *New York Times* Crossword Puzzle, and the annual American Crossword Puzzle Tournament. Two thumbs up! (See article on page 18)

Martha Fondren Spisso writes that there is no big news from Macon, Georgia. Then in the very next line she says that she has just finished her first year of nursing school and that she plans to graduate in May 2007. She finishes by writing, "Exactly 40 years after I graduated from MSCW. Yahoo!!!!!!!!!"

John (**Johnny**) **Jones** underwent a very delicate and risky open-heart surgery Monday morning August 28 at Baptist Medical Center here in Jackson. He had had multiple heart and other procedures through the years and everyone was particularly worried about this surgery. He has come through the operation beautifully. He went home in less than a week. Recuperation is going ahead of schedule, and John hopes to make the Walker's Lunch Bunch in November. Y'all come!

The MacDowell Music Club of Jackson recently held its annual opera program at the Municipal Art Gallery. Guests from the Mississippi Lyric Theatre presented several different arias, accompanied by George Hicks on piano and **Tom Lowe** on violin. (See photo on page 17)

Jean Magee Cox is once again a grandmother. Her son John Neal and his wife Donna of Pearl are the proud parents of Katherine Elise (Kate), born August 24, 2006, 11:04 am, at Woman's Hospital in Jackson/Flowood. The baby's vital statistics were 8 lbs. 1 oz. and 20 ¼ in. Kate is welcomed home by big sister Jennifer. Jean also writes that her husband Charles is doing well after his surgery. He has 5 more radiation treatments as of late August and then will have a scan in November to make sure there is no more cancer. Also daughter Patty and her year-old son Spencer are much better. Patty is stronger now, and Spencer is a normal, very happy little boy. She thanks the many class members who have been praying for both Charles and Patty.

We received a great update from Tom (**Tommy**) **McWhirter** in late August:

We sold our company to Prudential Financial at the end of 2003 and part of the [condition for the] sale was that I commit to stay for three years, [a period] which ended 12-31-05. Starting in January of this year, I started working three days a week and liked it so much [that] I decided to retire at midyear. I had a great team in place, and I felt they were ready to take over. I have no trouble staying busy, which my wife likes. She is [suggesting] that I be responsible for dinner two nights a week. Retirement may be short lived.

My son is a sophomore at Auburn, and my daughter is a junior in high school. They are great young people, and I enjoy spending time with them. John likes to hunt, fish and play golf, which I enjoy. Ali is an elite runner, and I enjoy going to her races. She came in second in the state as a sophomore in AA in cross-country and the 3200-meter in track. She was favored to win state this year but got a stress fracture and is out for the cross-country season. She is only 8 seconds off the state record for the 3200, so we hope she will recover and be in form by spring. Before you ask, I don't know where she gets her running ability.

I am fortunate to still have my parents who are 88 and 86. They just moved into a retirement home and are in pretty good health. They are also in the Atlanta area, so it is good to have them close by.

I see Buddy Small and enjoy getting together with him. We keep each other up on the news. His son also attends my daughter's school. [Small world!] That's about it. I hope to get to Jackson for one of your lunches at Walkers. In the meantime, keep the news coming, and thank you for all you do.

Judy Rayner Bruce now has a fifth grandchild. Her son Trey and his wife Catherine (Sartelle from Yazoo City) are the proud parents of Mary Preston. The Rayners live in Charleston, South Carolina. Judy says "now that he's gotten the job he's been wanting for 2 years, I'm not sure when they'll be back [to Mississippi]. Trey is working for ATD - Automated Trading Desk - with computers - he loves it." As many of you know, Judy moved to Oxford, Mississippi, to be near her daughter Paige whose husband had died and their two children, Taylor (9) and Samantha (6). "I absolutely love being here and being able to spend so much time with little Samantha - I'll have to send you a picture of her in my wedding dress when I was the bride in the Tom Thumb wedding in the second grade. She loves it. (I'm the trainbearer.) Say hello from me to everyone at Walker's [Lunch Bunch]."

Gayle Smithson Poole's daughter Meta Smithson Poole married Micah Joseph Ginn at Gallo-way Memorial United Methodist Church on September 16, 2006.

Jan Storey Collins notified us that her email address had changed and that she had changed governmental jobs: she is now associated with the Department of Labor. When asked what she is doing there, she wrote the following:

I'm working for the Assistant Secretary of Labor, for Occupational Safety & Health. Actually, I worked here from 1984 to 1990, when I left to go to work at the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission for the then Chairman, who is now Assistant Secretary here! For the last three years I've been at Health & Human Services, in Intergovernmental Affairs, working on CMS (Medicare and Medicaid) issues with state government officials. I really enjoyed that and the issues were fascinating. However, it's nice to be back here, too.

John Tanner emailed us to say that the company he worked for was bought out, which prompted early retirement. John says, "I don't have a home computer and don't plan to buy one anytime soon, so the e-mail address you have for me will not be valid after Monday [July 31, 2006]. Please remove it. The home phone and address that you have will stay the same. 'Why doesn't he have a home computer?' I know the advantages of computers. They made it possible for my department's staffing level to remain static over the past 15 years while the workload increased ten fold. I prefer that my personal life move at a much slower pace. Should I decide to jump back into the rat race, I'm sure [that job, whatever it is] will utilize a computer, and I may even buy one for home. I'll let you know IF I come up with a new e-mail address."

On August 28 **Carson Whitsett's** daughter, Nicole, sent the following email update concerning his malignant brain tumor diagnosis:

Another great week in the Whitsett household. Dad has been feeling extremely well and has pretty much been doing whatever he pleases. He will go Friday for the next MRI and we will get the results on Tuesday. As long as everything looks good, he will also be getting his next dose of chemo on Tuesday. Fingers crossed-- we will have more shrinkage!

In mid-October we received word that Carson is very pleased with the results of an even later MRI, is still tolerating the chemo well, and is enjoying getting back to his music.

Address, Phone, and Email Changes

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601-605-4389

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HOOFBEATIng Memos

If you have an announcement, that you would like to have included in an upcoming issue of this quarterly newsletter, please contact estelle@ongulf.com.

About the Class Website:

www.ongulf.com/mhs

Be sure to check out the new user-friendly pop-up menu.

Remember too that you can access the current addresses and telephone numbers of all class members both alphabetically and geographically by state.

You can pull up any past issue of *HOOFBEATIng*.

You can check the "In Memoriam" listings.

You can reminisce by going to the past *Reunions*.

Margie Reed Gibson: Kaleidoscope Gallery for the World



Remember the kaleidoscope you had as a child and the wonder you found in it's changing images? Well, Murrah graduate Margie Reed [Mary Margaret Gibson] found a way to build a business and keep that childhood wonder.

After a long career as an entrepreneur and international sales & marketing consultant, Mary Margaret decided to create her own online gallery instead of helping large companies create theirs. She founded The Mirrors and Light Gallery, to sell artist-made kaleidoscopes on-line only, all around the world. Since January, 2004, the Gallery at www.mirrorsandlight.com has sold to collectors on every continent except the "articas."



"It's the most benign and uplifting collection a person can have," Mary Margaret says. "Sometimes we get a shipment from an artist and it's like Christmas around here!" The Gallery carries between 60 and 70 artists' work on a regular basis and recently added artist-made jewelry to the inventory.



If you've not seen a kaleidoscope in a number of years, you should look at what has happened since about 1985, when the contemporary art kaleidoscope movement began. "These 'scopes are interactive mixed media art these days and many have significant investment value," Mary Margaret says. She ought to know! She wrote *The Kaleidoscope Collector's Guide*, the first-ever price and artist guide to this market in 2005. The Guide, a 284 page book for collectors and would-be collectors, has over 1500 photographs.

Kaleidoscopes are now made from every type of medium from metal to emu eggs, like the one pictured at right by Frank Casciani, a California artist. The top photo is the interior of Orange Magneto, which uses a magnet to pick up objects from which the image is derived. The second is from Jubilation Rainbow Star, by David Sugich, an innovator in complex images.

Mary Margaret lives in Little Elm, Texas north of Dallas, and the gallery's offices are in the neighboring town of The Colony, Texas.



“Old” Downtown Library Is Slated for Renovation



Plans are underway for the former home (1954 to 1986) of Jackson’s main downtown library at the corner of North State and Yazoo Streets to be renovated. Ted Duckworth, who recently completed converting the Electric Building at the northeast corner of West and Pearl Streets into a mixed-use building housing apartments, offices, and restaurant space, has signed an agreement with the city to purchase the old main branch library building. He plans to turn it into offices.

“It will be a historic renovation as well,” he said. “We are working with the Department of Archives and History to restore it to its original architecture.” At this time work is wrapping up as far as the design, pricing, and tenant list are concerned with work slated to begin in late summer or early fall of this year.

Pauline Carter

High school counselor and student body sponsor while we were seniors at Murrah, Pauline Carter (far right) attended the Picnic for Democracy held on July 29, 2006, at the 930 Blues Café on North Congress Street in Jackson.



*Through the efforts of Jan Storey Collins, Judy (Storey) and Harry McMillin,
President George W. Bush sent the following letter to Miss Breland*



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

July 28, 2006

Miss Irene Breland
Jackson, Mississippi

Dear Miss Breland:

Laura and I wanted to send you a letter of encouragement. You are in our thoughts and prayers.

We hope the support of your family and friends is of great comfort to you during this difficult time. Your strength and determination demonstrate the American spirit. May God bless you and your family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "GWB", written over the printed name "George W. Bush".

George W. Bush

Miss Breland Update

According to her great niece, Kathy Hilburn, Miss Breland is at home. She has round-the-clock care as well as in-home physical therapy. Her mind is very alert. For example when Kathy tells her that I (Estelle) called, Miss Breland will immediately give her a run-down on me and my life and times at Murrah and post-Murrah. She loves receiving cards and letters. However, she is still requesting “no visitors” as it tires her out too much. See below for Miss Breland’s contact information:

Miss Irene Breland
1055 Meadowbrook Road
Jackson MS 39206

Miss Breland Funds Update

We received the following information concerning the healthcare fund from our contact in the Class of ‘61:

Tom Starling, Larry Lee, Paul Stockwell, and Jimmy Dossett are the Trustees of the fund for Miss Breland’s continued health care. Also, there now seems to be a post office box for those funds instead of just the street address. It is P.O. Box 291 with zip 39205. The trustees are suggesting a minimum donation of \$10.00. In addition, there is this statement:

Funds will be used for Miss Breland’s health care and expenses. More than just a contribution to Miss Breland, we hope the fund will grow and ultimately be used for charitable and anti-crime purposes. The community should consider this contribution as a statement against crime. While we publicize the effort, the exact amount of the fund’s balance will not be disclosed.

Classmates' or Teachers' Family-Deaths

Sandy Chustz Schreider's niece, Dr. Susan McLaren "Laren" Brooks, 38, died Monday, June 26, 2006, as the result of an automobile accident in Gore Springs, Mississippi. A native of Tupelo, Mississippi, she graduated from Tupelo High School, received her undergraduate degree from Millsaps College, her master's in education from Mississippi College, and her PhD from Ole Miss. A devoted teacher, Dr. Brooks taught in the public school system of Mississippi for 15 years and was currently on the teaching staff at Pecan Park School in Jackson. She was a member of Ridgecrest Baptist Church in Madison. Survivors include her mother Susan Chustz Brooks, her father Tommy Brooks and his wife Peggy, sisters Lyn Brooks Taylor and Lee Brooks Murphree, two nieces (Rebecca Brooks Brown and Rachel Elizabeth Wright), and three nephews (Gregory Brooks Murphree, Thomas Reeder Murphree, and Thomas Michael Taylor).

Doris Blackwell Smith's mother-in-law, Betty Sue Bourgeois Smith, died Monday, July 3, 2006, at the Granbury Care Center in Granbury, Texas. The first of five children, she was born in Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi. She attended elementary and high school at Mississippi School for the Deaf. It was here that she met her future husband, William Bankhead Smith. A homemaker, she raised two sons Ronald "Ron" Davis Smith (Doris' husband) and Richard Terry Smith who was killed in Viet Nam. Mrs. Smith was active in the deaf community, holding offices in both local and state organizations. She lived in Gulfport until 1985 when she moved to Mize to be with her son Ron and his wife Doris. She followed them when they moved first to Winona and then to Madison. In addition to her son, she is survived by her grandchild Michele Eubanks and three great grandchildren (Benjamin, Brandon, and Elizabeth Eubanks), all of Winona, and brothers Kenneth, Jack, and W.L. and their wives. She was preceded in death by her parents Daniel and Bonnie Stockstill Bourgeois, husband, son, and brother Bruce.

Mitch Ferrell's mother Frances Ferrell Walker, 87, died at Hospice Ministries in Ridgeland, Mississippi, on Friday, July 7, 2006. She was born near Potts Camp, Mississippi, and had lived in Oxford, Hattiesburg, and Jackson. Preceded in death by her husbands Baker Ferrell and Frank Walker as well as son Emuel Ferrell, she is survived by two sons: James Mitch Ferrell of Hazlehurst and Michael Wesley Ferrell of Jackson. In addition, she is survived by Mitch's children, Shanda Chrestman of Saltillo and David Ferrell of Pelham, Alabama, as well as Mitch's grandchildren: Jeremy and Joshua Chrestmen.

Gerald McCormick's mother, Zula Breazeale McCormick, 92, died Sunday, July 2, 2006, at Brandon Court Nursing Home. Born in Ethel, Mississippi, she graduated from high school there and then attended Holmes Junior College before moving with her family to Jackson in 1955. A member of First Baptist Church in Jackson, she was also active in the Truth Seekers Sunday school class as well as the Zelma Foster Circle of WMU. Mrs. McCormick served as secretary of the Mississippi High School Activities Association until her retirement in 1976. She was predeceased by her husband A. L. McCormick, who served as principal of Bailey Junior High School. She was also preceded in death by her four brothers (Everette, Edward, Grady, and Robert) and one of her five sisters, Lillian (Byrd). Mrs. McCormick is survived by sons Gerald and John, three grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and four sisters.

O'Lynda (**Lynda** at Murrah) **McLelland** Walker wrote on June 29, 2006, "I have some sad news. My fifth grandchild, Jullian Alexander, son of Kimberley and Micah Barron, was born and died on June 23, 2006. Kimberley is my daughter. Jullian leaves behind a sister, Mickayla Elise, and brother, Connor Joseph, all of Kannapolis, North Carolina. There were no warning signs that Jullian was in trouble. The labor was a classic one. He simply died. We are saddened. God's grace is truly for the asking and is proving sufficient."

Nancy Speetjens Weems' brother-in-law, Ralph H. Weems, Jr., 74, died on July 3, 2006. A native and life-long resident of West Point, Mississippi, he graduated from Ole Miss where he was a member of Sigma Chi Fraternity. He was a farmer who lived to promote farming as chairman of the USDA Farm Service Agency, president of the state Soybean Association, chairman of the board and national president of the American Soybean Association. He received the governor's Meritorious Service Award and the USDA-FSA administrator's award for Service to Agriculture. Mr. Weems served on the board of directors of the Chicago Board of Trade from 1984 to 2003. An active member of First United Methodist Church of West Point, he also served on the board of directors of the First National Bank of West Point, later serving as a member of the advisory board of the Cadence Bank. He is survived by his wife Mary Anne Paulk Weems, his brother John Ross Weems and wife Nancy, two children and nine grandchildren.

James (Jimmy) **Sullivan III**'s father James B. (Sully, also Jim) Sullivan, Jr., 86, died Wednesday, September 27, 2006, at his home in Jackson. A glider pilot for the Army Air Corps during World War II, Mr. Sullivan retired as a lieutenant colonel. A 32-year employee of South Central Bell Telephone Company, he was also active in the community, serving as a Boy Scout leader and coach of Little League baseball, Mr. Sullivan was an active member, Sunday school teacher, and deacon at Broadmoor Baptist Church. He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Bettie Sue, as well as two sons (Jimmy and Gordon Ray) and three daughters (Geri Lea, Sue Ann, and Tammy), six grandchildren, and eight great grandchildren.

Sons of Classmates Bear and Amacker



St. Andrews Episcopal School recently honored members of the intermediate band As shown in this photo from the August 2, 2006, issue of *The Northeast Ledger*, Matthew Bear (son of our class member Leslie Bear), far right, received the All-around Bandsman award.



Jackson Academy junior and son of classmate Thad, Drew Amacker (right) recently received the National "I Dare You Leadership" Award for exhibiting personal integrity, balanced living, and a potential for leadership.

Class of 1963 Photo Gallery



Top left: Jackie Ledbetter Cooper with son Mike and new grandson Cole.

Top right: Jackie with new grandson Cooper (son of daughter Melissa)

Bottom: Jackie, daughters Melissa, and Erin and in foreground daughter-in-law Jennifer (wife of son Mike).

Class of 1963 Photo Gallery



**Judy Rayner Bruce's grandchildren at Disney World:
Samantha, Andrew, Will, and Taylor**



**Judy Rayner Bruce's son Trey, holding
one-day-old Mary Preston**



**Jean Magee Cox's newest granddaughter
Kate, waking up from her nap**

Class of 1963 Photo Gallery



**Susanne Riley Brown with all the Brown grandchildren on the Fourth of July weekend:
Kice, Peyton, Gabe, and Hunter Cate**



**Sandy Chustz Schreiter's granddaughters:
one-year-old Corinne and
four-year-old Caroline**

Class of 1963 Photo Gallery



The MacDowell Music Club of Jackson recently held its annual opera program at the Municipal Art Gallery. Guests from the Mississippi Lyric Theatre presented several different arias, accompanied by George Hicks on piano and Tom Lowe on violin.

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Jean Gainey Yarbrough, an accomplished artist in both watercolor and pastel, is shown in the photo, center. She was attending the Miss. Watercolor Society reception where she received honorable mention for her entry. She paints under the name Jean Seymour. At right is an advertisement featuring one of her works.

Classmate's Brother Appears in Documentary

Nancy Fleming's brother Vic appears in a documentary released nationally in theaters. When it played here in Jackson, an interesting interview with Vic was printed in the August 10 edition of the Northside Sun. We reprint that article as well as the advertisement from the Parkway Place Theater.

A NORTHSIDE NATIVE HAS gotten a little taste of Hollywood, with a small part in the new documentary, "Wordplay," which chronicles the world of crossword puzzle fanatics, an annual crossword tournament in Connecticut, and legendary *New York Times* crossword editor Will Shortz.

Vic Fleming, a district court judge in Little Rock, Ark., arrived for the first time at the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament in Stamford, Conn., in March 2005, unaware that a film crew was preparing to create a documentary about the event and crosswords.

"The idea of a documentary about crosswords struck me, and a lot of other people, as one of those things where in six months we'll all get a chance to buy a VHS that's a couple hours long that is somebody's effort at chronicling the tournament."

"They were making no bones about the fact that this was their first ever full length documentary (they were making) as a team. That just solidified everyone's assumption that this documentary was not going to be much."

BUT THE MOVIE HAS become a hit, at least as far as a documentary film can be called so.

According to the Website www.boxofficemojo.com, the film has grossed a domestic total of over \$2.5 million since its release on June 16. The film's premiere was at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival.

"There were 16 documentaries, and the other 15 were about war, death,

dying, illness. And there was "Wordplay," and it was making people laugh."

Fleming attended a screening of the movie in Jackson on August 5 at the UA Parkway Theater in Flowood, and hosted a question and answer session after the movie for his hometown crowd.

Fleming was born in Jackson in 1951, and attended Power Elementary School.

At the age of nine, he moved from Jackson to Greenville with his family. He went on to attend Davidson College in North Carolina and law school in Little Rock in 1975, where he has lived ever since.

Fleming has been a fan of crossword puzzles since junior high school.

"(I) toyed with making puzzles a bit in law school, and found it to be really time consuming," he said. "I set aside the idea of making puzzles with the idea that I would someday come back to it."

It took until the end of 2003 before he finally took up the hobby of puzzle construction again.

"Through 2004 I was making puzzles and little by little having some accepted for publication."

Many of Fleming's creations have been published, including five that were accepted by Will Shortz and published in the *New York Times*. He estimates about 100 of his puzzles have been published in newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Times* and several different puzzle books.

WHEN FLEMING DECIDED

to attend the American Crossword Tournament, which was founded and is directed by Shortz, his only performance plans were for the tournament's talent show.

He performed an original song he wrote about crosswords entitled, "If You Don't Come Across."

"I actually solicited some people online who were going to be at the tournament to help me sing it," he said.

The filmmakers, Christine O'Malley and Patrick Creadon, loved his song.

"After the tournament was over, Christine, who was the producer, contacted me and said 'We love your song and we'd like to license it to use in the closing credits,'" he said.

Fleming also had a hand in casting one of the film's celebrities, all crossword puzzle fans, who were interviewed.

"(O'Malley) also knew that I was friends with Bill Clinton. They asked me my advice on how to make their best shot at getting Bill Clinton to say yes. So I spoke to friends of mine in the Clinton Foundation and told them about the movie and they said 'That's

a great idea and we'll recommend that to President Clinton.'"

Clinton appeared in an interview in the documentary along with Bob Dole, Jon Stewart, Mike Mussina and the Indigo Girls.

WHEN CREADON AND

O'Malley told him they were submitting the film to the Sundance film festival, they told him not to get his hopes up.

But the film was one of 16 documentaries screened at the festival.

Fleming and his wife, Susan, were able to attend the festival in Park City, Utah.

"My wife and I flew out to Utah in January and went to the world premiere," he said.

Tickets to the film at the festival were sold out the first day of the lottery, and the film went on to be sold, after a bidding war among several film companies, to the Independent Film Channel for \$1.2 million.

The next American Crossword Puzzle Tournament will be held in March of 2007. For more information visit www.crosswordtournament.com.

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YOU'LL SMILE ALL THE WAY HOME!
—MICHAEL SROTH, DENVER POST

"TWO THUMBS UP!"
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BILL CLINTON • JON STEWART • BOB DOLE
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