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## Alumnus Paul Whitfield Murrill Dies

Chemical engineering graduate was chancellor at Louisiana State University

APRIL 26, 2018 BY EDWIN B. SMITH

**FaTvLiErCcSMPrSt**



Paul W. Murrill, a University of Mississippi engineering alumnus who served as chancellor at Louisiana State University for several years, passed recently. Submitted photo

OXFORD, Miss. — Paul Whitfield Murrill, a **University of Mississippi** alumnus who served many years as chancellor at Louisiana State University, died April 2 at his home in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He was 83.

Murrill was fondly remembered by a UM alumnus who knew him.

“Dr. Murrill received numerous accolades for his academic and business proficiency, all of which are certainly well deserved,” said Norman Jones, a 1970 civil engineering graduate who met the deceased through the church both attended. “His sincere and genuine people skills, however, are more difficult to describe. Regardless of the occasion or who was present, he was able to put his audience at ease and explain things in a manner that not only showed his expertise of the subject matter, but which also demonstrated his innate ability to connect with people on a personal level.”

Murrill’s humility, generosity of time and resources, and his kindness and compassion for others are qualities that Jones said he will always cherish.

“He was truly a remarkable gentleman, and I am honored to have known him,” he said.

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, Murrill grew up in Hinds County, Mississippi, after his family moved there. A lifelong learner, his early education began in a one-room school in Pocahontas, then continued in the public schools of Clinton, from which he graduated in 1952. Receiving a Navy ROTC scholarship, he began his college education at UM, graduating magna cum laude with a degree in chemical engineering in 1956.

While at the university, Murrill met his wife, Nancy Hoover Williams, of Lexington. Upon graduation, he received his commission as an ensign in the U.S. Navy and spent the next three years as a naval officer aboard USS Valley Forge. Thus began a lifelong love for the Navy and the sea. He was initially machine division officer in charge of Valley Forge’s engine rooms, but always in search of a challenge, he requested and received permission from the captain to train for officer of the deck — underway, a position that was conferred upon him in 1958. He was later promoted from ensign to lieutenant (junior grade).

After discharge from the Navy, Murrill and Williams married in May 1959, and were married for 59 years. Murrill had a brief career as a chemical engineer at Columbia-Southern (PPG) in Lake Charles, Louisiana, but soon pursued higher education in chemical engineering. Encouraged by a mentor at UM, he attended LSU where he completed his master’s degree and then his Ph.D in 1963. Murrill was hired initially by LSU as an interim professor, but his natural leadership ability and intellect led to his being hired for a full-time position as professor in the chemical engineering department. He was named head of that department, then dean of academic affairs and provost of the university soon thereafter.

In 1974, at only age 39, Murrill was named chancellor of the Baton Rouge campus and served in that capacity until 1981. During that time, he was the 21st living American to be named a distinguished member of Phi Kappa Phi honor society, and in 1978, *Change* magazine named him one of the top 100 educators in the country. Under his leadership, LSU applied for and was granted a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa and became the 13th university to be named a Sea Grant institution.

Murrill oversaw the implementation of Title IX for women’s athletics at LSU and during the country’s bicentennial (1976) he launched a special project, “The Native Flora of Louisiana,” with botanical artist Margaret Stones executing the watercolor drawings. He was a member of 13 honorary and professional societies, including the LSU and Ole Miss alumni halls of fame. He wrote and edited many books, including seminal texts on process theory, which are still in use today.

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OXFORD, Miss. — Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates’

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OXFORD, Miss. — Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy’s new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying “thank you.” “It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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### Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK — The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to abate. The Federal Reserve’s

In 2003, the Instrument Society of America named him one of the 50 most influential people in history in the fields of automation, instrumentation and control technologies. Murrill retired from LSU in 1981 and began an accomplished career in the corporate world. As a testament to his abilities, he was asked to and served on the boards of 27 publicly traded corporations regulated by the SEC. He was chief executive officer of Gulf States Utilities and continued on that board after it was acquired by Entergy Corp. He served as lead director of the board of Tidewater Inc., which named an offshore supply ship the Paul W. Murrill in his honor.

His corporate career also included serving on the boards of Piccadilly Inc, Foxboro Corp. (Massachusetts), Zygo Corp. (Connecticut) and the Baton Rouge Water Co. From 1979 to 1997, he was an adviser to the U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Laboratory at Oak Ridge. He served on numerous nonprofit boards and foundations, including the Baton Rouge Food Bank and two years as chairman of the board of the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady.

Murrill was an ordained deacon at University Baptist Church, which he and his wife joined in 1960, and over the years he taught various ages in Sunday school. He had many and varying interests: early lighting, fishing and gardening, to name a few, but none so important to him as his family and religion. Of his many accomplishments, the most important was that he was humble, kind, ever-loving and compassionate. During his later years, he taught a Sunday school class of his peers (some older, some younger), and this was a most meaningful experience for him.

For six years, until January of this year, he wrote a newsletter he called "The Peep," which began with his class and expanded to include a wide range of devoted friends in various parts of the country, who he greeted weekly as "my fellow pilgrims."

Murrill was preceded in death by his parents, Horace and Grace Murrill, and a son Paul Whitfield Murrill Jr. He is survived by his wife, Nancy; son John (Elizabeth) of Baton Rouge; son Britt (Kasey) of Baton Rouge; daughter-in-law, Andrea, of Baton Rouge, and grandchildren, Parham, Baker, Paul, James Henry, Alexander, Boyd, Anna Grace, Gray and Mary Elizabeth Murrill, all of Baton Rouge, as well as two step-grandchildren, Ben Shea of Los Angeles and Ava Vasquez of Baton Rouge.

Information for this article came from Murrill's obituary published in The Advocate in Baton Rouge.

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