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Avent Legacy Honored at Ole Miss

Sons create scholarship endowment for first female accountancy grad

AUGUST 4, 2014 BY **TINA HAHN**

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The late Louise Avent

OXFORD, Miss. – Louise Avent was known by many descriptions: first female accountancy graduate of the University of Mississippi, successful leader of a family business, dedicated champion of the Oxford-University community and for Mississippi, and spirited ambassador for all aspects of Ole Miss.

The 1947 graduate also became the first woman inducted into the Hall of Fame at the university's **Patterson School of Accountancy**. Now her legacy will reach future generations of students through a scholarship bearing her name. Her sons, Tom Avent of Atlanta and Murray Avent of Oxford, have committed \$250,000 to establish an endowment that will fund four annual accountancy scholarships.

"My mother was born ahead of her time and might have had a very different career if she had been born today" said Tom Avent, Southeast partner in charge of mergers and acquisitions-tax at accounting firm **KPMG LLP**. "She ran the family business and took care of her three boys – my father, my brother and myself – but she was also a brilliant student.

"I remember asking her once why she didn't go to work for one of the Big Eight accounting firms after college. To my surprise, she explained that the Big Eight firms at that time didn't hire women, so she started her professional career keeping books for a large steamship company in New Orleans and served as a Spanish interpreter."

With the 10th anniversary of her passing approaching, the brothers wanted to do something to honor their mother's legacy and passion for Ole Miss.

"To have her name on an endowment for accountancy scholarships is something truly special for Murray and me, and we know it would also have meant a great deal to Mother," Tom Avent said. "Future scholarship recipients should know that she graduated in two-and-a-half years with a perfect grade-point average, taking as many as 24 hours in a semester, without ever making a B. We hope her scholarship recipients will emulate her work in the classroom and also give back to Ole Miss and to their communities as she did."

Mrs. Avent had a "missionary zeal" about Ole Miss and Oxford and wanted everyone to feel the same, said Murray Avent, an Oxford developer who worked more than two decades in Washington, D.C., as an aide and legislative director to U.S. congressmen Jamie L. Whitten and G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery.

"Mother believed that an education from Ole Miss was as good as any education you could find in this great nation," he said. "She truly believed that with an Ole Miss education and a work ethic you could accomplish anything you wanted in life. This endowment in her name and its future scholarship recipients will serve to validate that heartfelt belief on her part. Mother was truly exceptional and the School of Accountancy is exceptional, as evidenced by the national rankings."

Fortunately, she witnessed her sons earning five degrees from Ole Miss: Tom received undergraduate, graduate and juris doctor degrees, as well as a master's degree in law from New York University; and Murray earned undergraduate and graduate degrees.

The late Thomas Webb Avent and the former Louise Anderson Murray, members of two of the oldest families in Oxford and Lafayette County, began dating while she was working in New Orleans. After her husband's death, she became president of Avent Dairy. She was named Citizen of the Year in 1995 by the Oxford-Lafayette County Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Foundation, an honor paying tribute to her servant-leadership style.

Her longtime involvement included her service as a gubernatorial appointee to the Mississippi Institute of

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Civil Engineering Professor Receives Most-Cited Paper Award

OXFORD, Miss. – Peer recognition is a rewarding experience for anyone, but University of Mississippi researcher Amir Mehrara Molan was elated when an article he co-authored recently received the Most Cited Paper Award at the 102nd Transportation Research Board meeting in the nation's capital. The International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology presented the civil engineering

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

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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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

Arts Commission; chair of the Oxford Tourism Council, founding member and president of the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council; president of the Oxford-Lafayette County Chamber of Commerce, Ole Miss Business School Alumni, Fellowship of Christian Athletes and the Oxford Garden Club; vice president of the University High School Alumni Association; president of the House Corporation for Delta Delta Delta sorority; grand marshal of the Oxford-Lafayette County Fourth of July Parade; and tour guide for historical journeys through St. Peter's Cemetery in Oxford.

She served on the boards of the Mississippi Blood Services, United Way, Ole Miss Alumni Association, Baptist Memorial Hospital-North Mississippi, Agricultural Extension Service and Merchants & Farmers Bank, and devoted time to the Ole Miss Campus Improvement and Oxford Tour Bus committees, First Baptist Church, Friends of the Museum and Rotary Club.

Tom Avent said that although his father was the fourth generation of the family to attend Ole Miss – making Murray and him the fifth generation – Mrs. Avent added the most enthusiastic voice to the chorus supporting the university and its programs. The “Ole Miss fanatic,” as her sons call her, enjoyed membership in the Ole Miss Quarterback, Bullpen and Tip-Off clubs and the Lady Rebel Roundballers. An early member of the Quarterback Club, she rallied local professionals and everyone else to join.

“Mother raised Tommy and me to be Ole Miss fanatics, too. I actually feel sorry for anyone who sits in close proximity to us or is within our orbit at Ole Miss athletic events – we’re loud,” Murray Avent said, laughing. “If an Ole Miss team had a game, Mother was always there in her seat, giving her full support, whether it was football, basketball, baseball, volleyball – you name it.”

Mark Wilder, dean of the Patterson School of Accountancy, points to her as a role model.

“Louise Avent was an extraordinary individual and remarkable Ole Miss alumna,” Wilder said. “We are deeply grateful to Tom and Murray Avent for establishing this scholarship endowment, which will help our school recruit top students and continually strengthen our nationally ranked programs. Both of these achievements will be a fitting tribute to their mother, who was the consummate ambassador for this university. She believed in Ole Miss and its place in the national spotlight.”

Tonya Flesher, Arthur Andersen Professor of Accountancy and former dean of the school, said a scholarship fits this alumna and pioneer.

“Mrs. Avent was one of the first female accountancy graduates, and she was also a successful businesswoman,” Flesher said. “It is very appropriate for her sons to honor her pioneering role in Mississippi with a scholarship for Ole Miss accountancy students. ... The future recipients of the Louise Avent Scholarship in Accountancy will help pay tribute to the role that Mrs. Avent played in opening doors for women in accountancy.”

Individuals and organizations that wish to support the Louise M. Avent Memorial Scholarship Endowment in the Patterson School of Accountancy can send checks with the fund noted in the memo line to the University of Mississippi Foundation, P.O. Box 249, University, MS 38677; contact Brooke Barnes, development officer for accountancy, at bbarnes1@olemiss.edu or 662-915-1993; or visit online at <http://www.umfoundation.com/makeagift>.

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