

Newsroom

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Bobby Smith to chair 35th edition of A Day for Southern

AUGUST 12, 2008



Georgia Southern University alumnus W.R. 'Bobby' Smith has returned to Georgia Southern University several times, and this year he's coming back again. This time he will serve as the community chair of the University's 35th edition of A Day for Southern, scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 9.

'Bobby Smith's name is one of the most respected in Bulloch County,' said Frank Hook, senior director of Alumni Relations at Georgia Southern, 'and he's been a leader in local business, civic, church and community activities for many years. Georgia Southern is very fortunate to have his leadership in the 2008 A Day for Southern community campaign.'

Smith graduated from Georgia Teachers College in 1949 with a major in history and a minor in math, but his connection to the University began long before that: his mother attended when it was called Georgia Normal School.

Following graduation he joined the family business, Smith Hardware. Longtime Bulloch County residents will remember that the business began as E.A. Smith Grain, founded in 1920 on East Vine Street. The company sold hardware and a wide variety of building supplies, grain, fertilizer, and other needs of a growing agricultural community.

After working in the business for a number of years, he returned to the University now named Georgia Southern College to earn a master's degree. As a master's graduate, he was invited to teach one class, then two, then a full schedule. He discovered that he loved teaching, and he continued to teach in the Department of Finance and Economics both full-time and part-time at Georgia Southern from 1972 to 1995.

'I loved teaching, but I came to it by accident,' said Smith. 'I loved it so much, I told them, I'll teach home ec if you'll just let me teach!'" Apparently Smith's students had a mutual feeling about him and his teaching, because he received the University's Excellence in Teaching Award the second year it was presented.

Through the years, Smith's ties to Statesboro and Bulloch County have continued to strengthen. He is a member and past president of the Statesboro Rotary Club and a director emeritus of the Farmers and Merchants Bank. He has served on the boards of Ogeechee Area Hospice and Statesboro Regional Library, and he was a member of the Bulloch County Board of Education for nine years. He serves on the board of the Statesboro Housing Authority, and he is currently chairman of the Bethany Nursing Centers, a non-profit denominational organization that operates

nursing and assisted living facilities in the region. He is also chairman of the board of Statesboro Primitive Baptist Church, where he has served as a deacon and Bible study teacher for many years.

Eight years ago Smith decided he missed college, so once again he returned to Georgia Southern. He took two creative writing courses from the late Peter Christopher, a much-admired professor, and fell in love with Georgia Southern all over again.

‘Our community is fortunate to have the resources of a research university,’ says Smith, ‘not only the academics and great football, but the museum, the botanical garden, the wildlife education center, art galleries, the performing arts series, and lots of continuing education opportunities. A Day for Southern is a fitting way for all of us to show our gratitude for these benefits to our community.’

For more information or to take part in A Day for Southern, contact the Office of Annual Giving at 912-GSU-GIVE or e-mail wtopkins@georgiasouthern.edu. – See more at: <http://news.georgiasouthern.edu/pressrelease.phpid=1696#sthash.UDUQ2Q1z.dpuf>