

HSU's Hall reflects on three decades in Christian higher education

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As I approach retirement from my 45-year career in government and education, I do so with a thankful heart for the privilege to serve 30 years in Texas Baptist higher education.



Lanny HallI could not have imagined the rich blessings that would be in store for my wife, Carol, and me when I left the Teacher Retirement System of Texas in 1986 to accept the position of executive vice president of Howard Payne University. Immediately before that time, I had spent a decade in public service. Since that time, I have been blessed to be president of three Texas Baptist institutions—Wayland Baptist University, Hardin-Simmons University and Howard Payne University.

At each of these outstanding institutions, I have had enriching experiences with students, faculty, staff, alumni and trustees. Some come immediately to mind:

- An outstanding chapel address by Mabel Wayland Adams, 102-year-old daughter of Dr. James Henry Wayland, founder of the university that bears his name.

- A meaningful Bible study in a men's residence hall at Wayland in 1989.



- Listening to tremendous sermons during Wayland's Pastors' and Laymen's Conferences, delivered by the likes of Frank Pollard, Joel Gregory, James Semple and Jess Moody.
- A most memorable chapel time at HSU during which Christian harpist Greg Buchanan played "Amazing Grace" and the students began singing that great hymn.
- Campus revival meetings at HSU with the late Jon Randles preaching.
- The special 1996 HSU memorial service honoring the lives of three precious students—Jason Hale, Erin Greer and Kelli Marshall—killed in an auto accident near Hempstead.
- Wonderful times of worship in HPU's Mims Auditorium with Richard Jackson, Sara Baker, Cynthia Clawson and Mike Toby.
- Annual HPU campus Christmas lighting ceremonies, followed by cookies and hot chocolate at the president's home.
- Those heartfelt prayer times with HPU students who requested that we dedicate appointed times they called "Prayer with the President."

All of these experiences represent significant defining spiritual moments in my career. I would have missed them if it had not been for the support of Texas Baptists, which made these experiences possible. They are not out of the norm for Texas Baptist universities. Caring faculty and staff are intentional about structuring time so these defining spiritual moments may take place. And we, as Texas Baptists, must ensure this important work is

supported, nurtured and continued. The world cries out for what Texas Baptist universities deliver.

As I reflect on my own pilgrimage, Texas Baptists made it possible for me to enjoy the Royal Ambassador program during my boyhood, Baptist church camp experiences, wholesome campus life when I was a student at Hardin-Simmons University and the Baptist Student Union on the campus of North Texas State University, now the University of North Texas. I was blessed to receive a scholarship awarded by the Christian Education Committee of Birdville Baptist Church to help me attend HSU. Carol and I were blessed to adopt both our children through Bucker Baptist Benevolences. All of these activities were supported by Texas Baptists and enabled me to be positioned for service at three great universities, for which I thank God.

Having served as a president or chancellor for 27 years, I—and Carol—have been blessed richly. I am proud to have been part of expanding resources at all three institutions. We have helped in the planning and building of facilities. At HSU, it has been a privilege to work with the board of trustees and faculty to launch new programs, including physical therapy and physician assistant studies programs; an undergraduate minor in leadership, which now has a life of 23 years; a doctorate in education in leadership and a doctor of ministry program. The master of divinity program has graduated students across the last 20 years. In addition, at all three institutions, Carol and I have been blessed to work with students with the goal of having a positive impact on their individual lives.

As I close out my full-time work in Christian higher education, I would be remiss if I did not mention the deep gratitude I have for three individuals—Dwaine Greene, Don Newbury and the love of my life, Carol Hall.

Over the long haul and other than my parents, Pastor Dwaine Greene has been the most influential person in my life since my family and I joined

Birdville Baptist Church a half-century ago. He encouraged me to serve in government and taught me much about ethics as T.B. Maston had taught him during his Southwestern Seminary years. He mentored me in leadership and encouraged me to serve others.

Don Newbury, my dear friend, opened the door of service to Texas Baptist higher education when he offered the position of executive vice president of Howard Payne in his new administration in 1986. Working alongside him for three years taught me a great deal about administration in a faith-based university.

And, Carol, my darling wife whom I first discovered at an RA-GA camp at Camp Copass in 1962, has been my counselor, encourager and best friend since that summer camp. In addition, she has been a superb “First Lady” in Plainview, Brownwood and Abilene.

I thank God for Texas Baptists and for the wonderful three decades of service he has given me. In retirement, I will continue to serve as chancellor at HSU on a limited basis. More blessings are in store, for which I am thankful.

Lanny Hall retires this spring as president of Hardin-Simmons University, after three decades in Christian higher education.