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A Ouachita story comes full circle



By Jana Hardage

September 17, 2021

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – God is good all the time, and all the time, God is good. I was fortunate to grow up in a home where we were taught about Jesus and grew to love Him. My parents are both pillars of faith in the foundation of my life, and for that I am grateful.

After hearing about Ouachita at Welch Street Baptist Church, my mom fell in love with it and decided that was where she would get her degree to become an English teacher. My grandfather had encouraged her to begin training in a trade while she was still in high school at Fuller High in Little Rock, Ark. During her sophomore and junior years, she attended Charles House of Beauty on the weekends to become what was then called a “beauty operator.” Her plan was to finish her classes the summer after high school then work the required hours before taking her certification test so that she could start at Ouachita in the fall of 1966 and have a job to pay her tuition.

In the spring of 1965, mom visited Ouachita's campus over a weekend, stayed in Cone-Bottoms Hall and chose her first-semester classes. She was given a small charm of a tiger's head with “OBC” across the top, as at that time the name was still Ouachita Baptist College.



Shortly after high school graduation my grandfather's job transferred the family from Little Rock to Fort Smith. She wasn't derailed. She transferred to Mellie's Beauty School in their new city and continued working toward her certification with Ouachita on the near horizon. Then, one night at a revival, a young man stepped out and walked down the aisle to renew his dedication to the Lord, and over the course of a few months, things began to change. It wasn't long before they walked the aisle together and the Ouachita dream was set aside for another dream that came true through exchanged vows and a life of raising a family and serving the Lord.

Now, 52 years, 2 children, 5 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren later, my mother has been able to see her Ouachita dream come full circle through me. I had my own winding path to get here – up hills and through valleys, around curves and long, dry straight-stretches that tested my faith and resolve. I almost decided I was just too old to start again, but my advisor, Dr. Rob Hewell, gave me a great piece of advice that I have repeated often to other people. He told me that time would pass whether I finished my degree or not so I might as well do it.

Mom was thrilled when I told her that I was going to work at Ouachita in Cone-Bottoms Hall, the very building she had visited. But she was nearly brought to tears a few years later when I told her I would be starting classes. In December, when I finished my last class, my dad stood a little taller and stuck out his chest as he spoke a realization into the air, "Both of my kids are college graduates."

I carefully threaded that little tiger charm onto a chain and wore it to commencement on May 8, 2021. Mom and dad stood proudly and watched from the stands. I walked across that stage carrying a little part of her dream with mine, and under my breath I repeated, "God is good, all the time, and all the time, God is good."