

During This Year's House Medics, the HSC Lost a Longtime Volunteer

By Pamela Lewis, Public Affairs

Clemons is a last name that is well-known on the UT Health Science Center at Houston campus — W. “Dennie” Clemons is the 2005-06 chair of the University Classified Staff Council and maintains the automated speech recognition directory system in telecommunications.

But she's not the only member of the Clemons family at the health science center. Her sisters are staff members as well. Krysti Suarez provides administrative support for the health science center's chief information officer and Maria Hillman is the assistant director of Accounting. Their brother, Tim Clemons, is the only Clemons' sibling not employed at UT. He's a supervisor for BP.

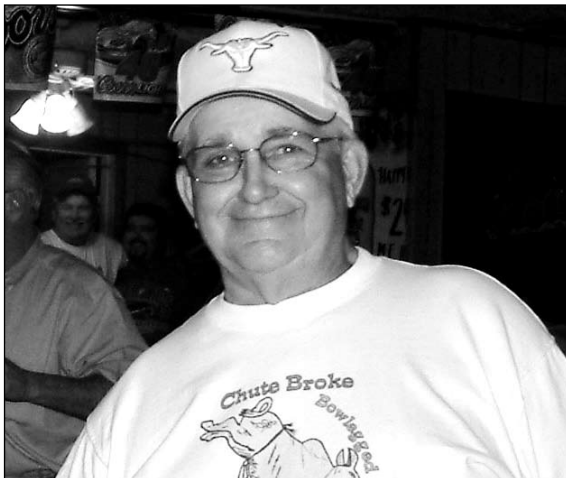
But there was one more Clemons who loomed large in the health science center's volunteer efforts. Luther Clemons, the siblings' father, consistently supported Dennie and Krysti's efforts as co-chairs of the annual UT House Medics' effort. He spent hours of volunteer time as a member of the “roving” team. Maria Hillman and her husband, Ralph, also have been active supporters of House Medics.

During this year's House Medics efforts, on April 29 as Luther Clemons was doing repair work with his usual intensity, he had a heart attack. UT volunteers on-site provided CPR until emergency medical technicians arrived. Unfortunately, Luther Clemons died several days later.

In some ways, it seems appropriate that Luther died doing what he loved, since the gift of hospitality and volunteerism appears to be bred into the Clemons family.

Luther retired from the Air Force after 22 years of serving his country. He followed that by working for three different sheriff's departments. He went on to enjoy the remainder of his life helping others.

“Our family was military and our folks were always bringing home the single guys with no



Luther Clemons

family near at the holidays,” the three sisters reminisced during a recent interview.

“Mom started out as a volunteer at a nursing home and ended up as a nursing administrator,” recalled Maria. “While Dad was in the Air Force, Mom and his mom, who lived with us, were both involved in Family Services. That's what we grew up with — always helping out others.”

From 1996 on, Luther Clemons helped the UT House Medics team assess the houses they were scheduled to work on each year, Dennie said. “He'd always find something extra that he thought the Roving Crew needed to do on the houses to make each homeowner feel special.”

He really got to know the homeowners as work went on at the houses. Another of the things that their dad loved doing at House Medics was working with the children who

“I called Mr. Clemons ‘Dad.’ He was very special to me and my family. He was an inspiration to everyone who knew him and was always loyal to the cause of helping people. He was a wonderful friend and teacher. His dedication was truly a blessing. I will miss him, always.”

— Sandra “Sandy” Hernandez, House Medics volunteer

were volunteering with their parents. Gregory Katsaros, the son of IT employee Liz Katsaros, was one of those kids who took to Luther Clemons right away.

Gregory's been doing House Medics for quite a few years. The first year, said Dennie, “he just scraped and painted. Then he started working with Dad, because he wanted to learn what the ‘big guys’ were doing. Dad taught him how to saw. Anything that Dad was doing, Gregory had to be right there with him.

“He was sitting right in front of Daddy the last day. Dad was showing him how to smooth the concrete at the bottom of the wheelchair ramp, so the homeowner, who couldn't lift her feet very high, wouldn't trip,” she explained.

Anyone who showed an interest in learning, Luther Clemons was willing to teach them — how to use the electric saw, how to caulk, glazing windows, building wheelchair ramps, replacing siding...

“Luther truly will be missed. He enjoyed working with his hands and it showed in his no-nonsense, let's-get-the-job-done work ethic. When he decided to do a job a certain way you just got out of his way and came back when it was finished. I always knew he would have the tools that I forgot to bring. It was great to work with him.”

— Bret Wandel, House Medics volunteer

He worked with a female college student who had taken a shop class, last year, Maria said. “She ran the table saw and they had a great time. Her fiancé was with her. He kept giving her ‘what-for’ because she was running the table saw.”

Luther Clemons also helped at the finish line for the Eeyore's Fun Run, Dennie said. “Anytime we volunteered for anything, he'd be right here with us.”

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Luther Clemons, front left, shows young volunteer Gregory Katsaros how to assemble sawhorses, as Clemons' middle daughter, Krysti Suarez, looks on. Photos by Liz Katsaros.

UCSC Awards Scholarships to Children of Classified Staff Members



Left of piano, back to front: Michael McKinney, M.D., senior executive vice president and chief operating officer; Patty Jimenez, widow of the late Michael Jimenez, and Jimenez scholarship winner Jenet Ardoin. Right from back to front: Scholarship winner Justin Henderson, UCSC chair Dennie Clemons and scholarship winner Lynissa Hayes.

UT Health Science Center classified staff took a break from “freeing themselves” at the University Classified Staff Workshop to celebrate awards to staff children. Five college-bound high school seniors, each the child of a classified staff employee, were awarded scholarships from the University Classified Staff Council during the lunch hour.

This year's winners were:

First place: Jenet Ardoin, daughter of Beth Ardoin-Watson of General Administration — \$1,200

Second place: Daniel Nham, son of Hwa Sue Lam Nham, Dental Branch — \$1,100

Third place: Bradley Shaw, son of Mark Shaw, School of Public Health — \$900

Fourth place: Lynissa Hayes, daughter of Joyce Hayes, Medical School — \$700

Fifth place: L. Justin Henderson, son of Debra Samuels, General Administration — \$600

Jenet Ardoin also was the winner of the newly established Michael Jimenez UCSC Scholarship Award for \$500. The award was established in memory of the late associate vice president for Human Resources, who practiced the principles of mentoring and employee recognition each day he served at the health science center.

Sarofim Building Opens; Occupants Move In

The culmination of more than five years of fund-raising and more than a decade of planning for a home for the Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine for the Prevention of Human Diseases (IMM) was celebrated with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Faye S. Sarofim Building May 16.

“We could not have accomplished this without one of the best development boards in the city and the wonderful generosity of our supporters,” James T. Willerson, M.D., UT Health Science Center president, said.

Willerson introduced two new scientists

who will lead cutting-edge research projects at the IMM. Mauro Ferrari, Ph.D., is a professor of nanotechnology and president of the Alliance for NanoHealth, a collaboration of seven Houston-area research institutions focused on medical applications on a nanometer (one billionth of a meter) scale. Paul Simmons, Ph.D., recently joined the IMM and will lead the stem cell research efforts at the facility.

Administrators, faculty and staff began moving equipment and files into offices and labs a few days after the ribbon cutting. ★



Ruby McFarland, left, and Beverly Head, administrative support staff, set up an office in the new Faye S. Sarofim Building of the Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine for the Prevention of Human Diseases. Photo by Wendy Mohon