

# Vice President's Letter



During the past few weeks, I have had the opportunity to visit more than half of our 82 county Extension offices and plan to make it to the rest during the weeks ahead.

The facilities that house Extension personnel are as diverse as the communities they serve. I have been in four former hospitals, the annex of a jail, county agricenters and livestock arenas, a former bank complete with its own vault, and a unique office occupying two FEMA trailers.

During one county visit, I learned about the county director's love of the unique grape salad served at a local eatery. More importantly, I learned about the work he is doing with a group of award-winning young farmers in his county. I've seen quilt making in progress, and at more than one location, I saw vegetable gardens and flower beds planted and maintained by Master Gardener volunteers.

A recent visit was to a county office that has developed a handicapped-accessible garden with flowers, vegetables, and wildlife plantings and beds mulched with materials grown on the grounds. It was even complete with a wild kid goat wearing a red collar that had escaped from the local fair-ground.

The most gratifying experiences have been meeting our county staffs and finding them doing those things Extension does best—helping people help themselves.

In my travels, I have learned some important Mississippi history and interesting trivia. I have been in the county where root beer was invented, another where shoes were first sold in pairs in boxes (right and left foot), and a town once featured in Life magazine for sending proportionally more men (38 percent) of its population to World War II than any other town of its size.

I've also learned that Mississippi

- had the first standard gauge railroad;
- was the home of the inventor of the soft toilet seat;
- has the nation's largest Bible-binding plant;
- was where stickball, the oldest game in the nation, was invented;
- was where rayon (the first real synthetic fiber) was invented;
- was home to the plant that first canned Borden's condensed milk;
- has world's largest cactus plantation, with more than 3,000 varieties;
- is home to the International Checkers Hall of Fame;
- has a town that claims the first football player to be on a box of Wheaties.

These are just some of the accomplishments that have occurred in Mississippi or have been accomplished by our sons and daughters. There are hundreds more, and still more will be added to the list in years to come.

Vance H. Watson

## MISSISSIPPI LANDMARKS

Research, Education and Outreach in the Division of  
Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine

*Landmarks is published quarterly by the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University*

<b>Robert Foglesong</b>	<b>President</b>
<b>Vance Watson</b>	<b>Vice President</b> Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Director, Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station Director, University Extension and Outreach
<b>George Hopper</b>	<b>Dean, College of Forest Resources</b> Director, Forest and Wildlife Research Center
<b>Kent Hoblet</b>	<b>Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine</b>
Landmarks is produced by the Office of Agricultural Communications.	
<b>Bob Ratliff</b>	<b>Editor</b>
<b>Robyn Hearn</b>	<b>Assistant Editor</b>
<b>Annette Woods</b>	<b>Graphic Designer</b>
<b>Linda Breazeale</b> <b>Bonnie Coblentz</b> <b>Keryn Page</b>	<b>Writers</b>
<b>Jim Lytle</b> <b>Marco Nicovich</b> <b>Tom Thompson</b>	<b>Photo Editors</b>

For a subscription to Landmarks, address change or letter to the editor, write to

**LANDMARKS**  
Office of Agricultural Communications  
P.O. Box 9625  
Mississippi State, MS 39762-9625

Discrimination based upon race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran's status is a violation of federal and state law and MSU policy and will not be tolerated. Discrimination based upon sexual orientation or group affiliation is a violation of MSU policy and will not be tolerated.

Available on the World Wide Web  
[www.dafvm.msstate.edu/landmarks](http://www.dafvm.msstate.edu/landmarks)