

Gordon Tatum, Class of 1958 (deceased: 8 August 1940-2 December 2006)

Like our other inductees, Gordon was a busy student while at Murphy. He was a member of numerous service clubs: Key Club, Junior Red Cross, Psychology Club, and FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America). He was also very active in the arts; he belonged to The Four Arts Club, participated in plays, and sang in the Special Chorus and Madrigals. His senior year Gordon was elected by his classmates to be a senior speaker.

He studied drama and music at Birmingham-Southern College, where he was in the BSC College Choir and Touring Choir, as well as the BSC Theatre. While there, he again got involved in music outside the school, participating in the Birmingham Pops Orchestra and working as a soloist at numerous Birmingham churches. He moved his studies to Southwest State and left there to start a 34-year-long career with the Mobile Press Register in 1961. He began as a copy clerk and joined the staff full-time as a copy editor after 9 months. During this time he continued his studies at the University of South Alabama. In 1969 he moved into the Sunday department as Fine Arts editor and was made Sunday Editor in 1973. After his time at MPR, Gordon worked for the Mobile Convention and Visitors Center, often greeting visitors in full jester costume at the Fort Conde Welcome Center. This earned him the nomination and award as one of Alabama's Unforgettable Faces in 2000-2001. He later joined the Mobile Carnival Association and served as the first curator (2003-2006) of the Mobile Carnival Museum located on Government Street. The "Changing Gallery" at the MCM is named for him. He was also an occasional guest reviewer for Opera News, a publication of the Metropolitan Opera

Gordon was active outside work, too. He supported and participated in the arts wherever he was: the Birmingham Symphony Pops, Mobile Symphony, Mobile Opera, Mobile Opera Workshop, Mobile Theatre Guild, Joe Jefferson Players, and St. Paul's Choral Society. He was a member of the Rotary Club, and a two-term vestryman at his church. He loved Mobile and its history, and was active in the Mobile Historical Preservation Society, worked at the Oakleigh Mansion, and served as President of the Oakleigh Garden District. He sat on the board of the Mobile Mental Health Association, Historic Mobile Preservation Society, the USA Saenger Theatre Advisory Board, the Mobile Symphonic Board, and the Cathedral Square Arts District Advisory Board.

In a telephone interview with Mrs. Kathy Tatum, she named the Governor's Arts Achievement Award given to Gordon in 1982 as his most outstanding achievement. This award recognized what had been a life-long effort in promoting the musical arts in Mobile, something that began in high school with Mrs. Fitzsimmons (Lois Jean Delaney), continued through college, and shaped his professional career. She also pointed out that Gordon was on both sides of the Arts: he participated in them and reviewed and promoted them through his work.

The Mobile music and arts scenes, historical areas, and Carnival season are all publicized as major attractions the city has to offer visitors and Gordon promoted them through all three of his jobs. His education in the arts at Murphy was the foundation upon which Gordon built his career. He was an advocate for the arts and through that, an advocate for Murphy High School.