

Dr. and Mrs. Cook along with Dr. Jim Denison, pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas, and his wife, Janet. The Cooks are members of Park Cities, and Janet is Sheila's Sunday School teacher.



# A TRIBUTE TO SHEILA COOK

by Dr. Gail Linam,  
DBU Provost

Her laughter brightens any room and her love touches countless lives! DBU's first lady, Sheila Cook, has enriched Dallas Baptist University in many incredible ways over the last fifteen years.

Sheila invests her life in what counts! Reflecting what it means to be a godly wife to Gary and mother to David and Mark, Sheila emulates the Proverbs 31 woman well. Concern for children with learning disabilities led Sheila to teach for 18 years in the public school system. Devotion to Christ and His church is also seen as she teaches a weekly ladies Bible study at Park Cities Baptist Church.

Sheila's unparalleled gift of hospitality has touched thousands of students, faculty, staff and friends of the University who have been welcomed to events in the President's home. And DBU's first lady possesses the rare and treasured qualities of a compassionate, generous friend who is a tireless servant for Dallas Baptist University.

In 1988, as Gary Cook sought God's will regarding his becoming President of DBU, Sheila earnestly prayed. Drawing upon her rich heritage of faith, she sought the Lord's leading in light of the daunting obstacles which had to be

overcome if the University's mission was to endure and prosper.

Prayer led Sheila and Gary to envision the extraordinary potential on University Hill. God gave this incredible couple the ability to see DBU through His eyes.

Sheila supported Gary and DBU through all of the sacrifices necessary for the Lord's transformation of the University to appear. Throughout their 15 years here, this first lady's faith matched Gary's as the two led with an unswerving resolve to provide the best learning and living environment possible for the thousands of students God would lead to DBU.

Sheila Cook embodies the heartfelt love and commitment found in the Old Testament heroine, Ruth. While the average tenure of college presidents is seldom over ten years, DBU celebrates the fifteen years in which the Cooks have chosen to deeply invest their lives in God's work at DBU. Sheila's openness, humor and remarkable grace have been instrumental in helping the University family view our beautiful campus as a second home!

In closing, this first lady possesses a grateful heart. Sheila is grateful for the presence of God which sustains her day by

day and thanks Him for the opportunity to serve alongside Gary at DBU. She praises the Lord for bringing their family safely through the very serious automobile accident involving their son, David, in May. Finally, Sheila Cook rejoices over the DBU family and friends who share the Cooks' dedication to Christ-centered, quality higher education, a ministry which reaches into eternity.



Dr. and Mrs. Cook are pictured here along with their sons David (center left) and Mark on vacation in Alaska.

# FROM: THE DBU FAMILY TO: SHEILA COOK

**A**s part of a special luncheon given in honor of Dr. and Mrs. Cook's fifteen years of service at Dallas Baptist University, a book of letters from the DBU family was given to the Cooks. These letters, composed by various members of the DBU faculty and staff, expressed gratitude for the Cooks' ministry at DBU and also reflected on many special memories shared over the years. Below, you will find excerpts from some of these letters.

Sheila, it has been so rewarding to serve on committees with you, especially the Hospitality Committee. You are one of the most gracious and caring people I have met, and God's light shines through you. You are also an example to us with the loving way you care for your family. You and Dr. Cook are a tremendous team!

*-Barbara Sleeper, assistant professor of business (at DBU since 1995)*

Sheila, I feel especially blessed to work alongside you and share a little bit in helping you with your ministry here too. You are an exceptional First Lady! I so enjoy our chats and times together and the special friendship that has grown over the years. You have always shown great concern for my family and truly have been a friend that I can count on to listen and pray with me about the ones I love so dearly. I am so thankful for the special times that we have shared. Thank you, too, for all the extra-special things you have done for me over the years. Your special touch to each occasion is a wonderful treasure and memory! You are very special to me and to my family, and I count myself blessed to have such a dear friend!

*-Kathy Knight, director of intercessory prayer ministry (at DBU since 1990)*

Mrs. Cook, I have always appreciated your humility. You have told me more than once to just call you Sheila—after I had called you Mrs. Cook. Although it is still hard for me to call you Sheila, I really respect your efforts to not be considered special or receive special favors because you are the President's wife. You make everyone feel so comfortable around you.

*-Jill Upton, professor of kinesiology (at DBU since 1986)*

Mrs. Cook, I want to thank you for your kind words over the years. It amazes me how you are always "up" on what is going on in my life, the life of my wife and children. Your contributions to the DBU family are immeasurable. With a delicate balance you have raised two great kids and provided leadership and support to the DBU family as well. Thank you for your dedicated service to your family, both immediate and extended.

*-Mark Hale, associate vice president for student affairs (at DBU since 1996)*



Mrs. Sheila Cook (center) along with Carla Robinson, current president of the DBU Women's Auxiliary Board, and her husband, Scott, who currently serves on the DBU Board of Trustees.

During my years as a student at DBU, you and your family treated me with overwhelming kindness. I still remember one particular semester, when I was very ill. Everybody had left for the winter break. Mrs. Cook made me a big bowl of beef stew that I couldn't finish until I got well!

*-Vu Le, director of transfer admissions (at DBU since 1998)*

Mrs. Cook, I will always cherish the memories of the day you opened your lovely house to Shanna and Craig to celebrate their approaching wedding. You had just returned from a doctor's appointment concerning your knee. I am sure you would have liked to just sit down and rest, but you remained the ever-gracious hostess as you welcomed everyone to your home. This was such a special day in the lives of Shanna and Craig to be "showered" with blessings from so many of their co-workers and friends.

*-Linda Roney, registrar (at DBU since 1994)*

# A TRIBUTE TO DR. GARY COOK

by Dr. J. Blair Blackburn,  
DBU Executive Vice President

**F**aith, Character, Integrity, Vision, Service...Christ-like traits which have been consistently reflected in the model of servant leadership exemplified by DBU President Dr. Gary Cook. This year, the DBU family celebrates the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. Gary Cook's leadership as president and honors the tireless commitment and dedicated service of Dr. Cook and his lovely wife, Sheila. In so doing, we also give glory to our Heavenly Father, knowing full well that the abundant blessings we have received as an institution under the godly servant leadership of Dr. Cook come from His provision and His guiding hand.

Fifteen years ago, God ordained a new beginning for Dallas Baptist University by anointing and equipping a leader to move the institution forward and out of the shadows of its past. In April of 1988, the baton of leadership was placed in the hands of the individual who would help build the identity and foundation for today's DBU as a distinctively committed Christ-centered institution of higher education. As Dr. Cook took the reins, DBU's enrollment stood at 1,859 students, and the University

had endured a past of financial hardship.

As Dr. Cook accepted God's call, he recognized that the university's successful future could only come through the Lord's provision. Mike Arnold, Chairman of the DBU Board of Trustees recently commented on Dr. Cook's heart for prayerful petition for God's blessings on DBU, "We are again reminded of what one person can accomplish through prayer and faithful service to our Lord Jesus Christ."

Under Dr. Cook's leadership, DBU has achieved phenomenal enrollment growth (an increase of 144%), sound financial stability, increased endowment (an increase of 107%), extensive facility enhancements and expansions, as well as significant improvements and increases in academic quality and programs. He also fervently worked for the development and implementation of our mission statement to integrate academic learning and Christian faith in order to develop servant leaders to impact the world for God's kingdom. Dr. Cook has diligently engineered this God-ordained vision to build DBU into one of our nation's leading Christ-centered universities.

Dr. Cook's faithful service is also reflected in his love and devotion to our students. Gary Cook is not recognized as the DBU president over the students, rather he is acknowledged as the students' president. It is not uncommon to see Dr. Cook in the Dining Hall having lunch with a couple



Dr. Gary Cook shares a special moment with Mrs. Pauline Strickland at a birthday party held in her honor. Mrs. Strickland was the widow of Dr. Otis Strickland, who served as president of Decatur Baptist College from 1950-64 and DBU from 1965-66. She passed away in 2001.

of eager students, in a servant leadership seminar challenging a group of students to follow Christ's example, on a late afternoon jog with a young man who is searching for God's direction, or in the stands cheering one of the Patriot athletic teams on to victory.

Dr. Cook certainly has earned the title of president along with the respect and honor that comes with this position. Many college chief executive officers are called president. Yet few rise to be called advocate, encourager, supporter, defender, mentor, discipler, teacher, counselor, and friend. These names embody Gary Cook...they exemplify his life...they personify him in one word...that is *Servant*.

As a University family, we extend our sincere and heartfelt appreciation to Dr. Cook for his faithfulness and perseverance to mold DBU into an institution centered on Jesus Christ. We give thanks and praise to our Lord for Gary Cook's remarkable visionary leadership as DBU President over these last 15 years. And, we fervently pray for God's continued blessings of abundance on the servant leadership of Dr. Gary Cook.



While at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center in New Mexico, Dr. Cook and his sons, Mark (center) and David, sit down by the pond to feed some hungry ducks and geese.

# FROM: THE DBU FAMILY TO: DR. COOK

*Below are more excerpts from letters that DBU faculty and staff members submitted as a part of Dr. Cook's 15th anniversary celebration.*

We all work very hard at this university, but I don't think anyone can match the energy and attention to detail that are characteristic of our president. And the changes and transformations that have taken place over the past fifteen years are truly amazing, especially considering the fact that we do not have state funds to draw from. The sacrifices that Dr. Cook has made to further this institution are indicative of a true servant leader, and I have seen how his selflessness has inspired others to do more than they probably ever thought they could. At every turn Dr. Cook has given thanks to the Lord for answering his prayer requests for this school, and prayer has become the natural part of our daily walk with Christ as we go about our duties.

*-Richard Baca, professor of music and 2003-2004 president of faculty council (at DBU since 1983)*

I greatly appreciate all that you have led us to accomplish over these 15 years. We are stronger in every way now—academically, financially, and spiritually. The campus is scarcely recognizable to those who haven't been here in some years. The morale is high on campus—both among students and faculty. That was not always so. Our enrollment continues to set new records. DBU is simply a much better place now than it was 15 years ago. We give credit to the Lord for all of it, of course, but the Lord normally uses people to accomplish His purposes, and He has greatly used the two of you on this campus.

*-William Bell, senior professor of Biblical studies (at DBU since 1967)*

You have made the goal of this campus "servant leadership," and have set us all an example of just how that concept works. The night of the tornado when you came to my evening class in the International Building to tell us to evacuate to a safer location on the steps of Spence Hall, you especially modeled that concept. To honor the students' safety more than your decorum, you were in your running shorts, holding a giant umbrella.

*-Sylvia Artmann, professor of education (at DBU since 1976)*

As I think back over the fifteen years since I met you at your home in Waco, the first thought that comes to mind is "consistent." You both have been "consistent" in honoring each other and "consistent" in nurturing David and Mark. You have been "consistent" in thoughtfulness toward the staff, faculty, and students. And I believe Dr. Cook has been most "consistent" for fifteen years in staying true to his vision for Dallas Baptist University. All the many wonderful accomplishments—new buildings, landscaping improvements, new graduate programs, student enrollment growth—are very important and remarkable achievements. However, I believe your "consistent" commitment to honor our Lord and faithful commitment to each other are your most important accomplishments during the last fifteen years."

*-John Clem, director of development (at DBU since 1981)*



At a special fifteenth anniversary luncheon held in honor of Dr. and Mrs. Gary Cook, DBU vice president for external affairs Dennis Linam reads excerpts to Dr. and Mrs. Cook of cards which children in the Lab School wrote for this occasion.

I recall many precious memories with your son in my class. I will always remember that when it came time for him to write his book on the most courageous person he knew, he chose to write about his dad. That speaks volumes, I think. Obviously, you took the time to be a father. Lots of men who have big jobs to do relegate fatherhood to lower importance or to another person. You found the time that so many say they do not have. You will leave a wonderful legacy here at DBU, but the legacy that you have given your sons will far outweigh anything here.

*-Judy Abercrombie, principal of the DBU Lab School (at DBU since 1996)*

God has chosen you, and you have been a faithful, devoted servant leader for all of us. You have blessed me both personally and professionally time and time again by your leadership and friendship. Your faithfulness to His call is clear and must be rooted deeply in your daily walk in prayer and study of His Word. I thank you for uncountable blessings to me personally and to the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. We are loved by you, and you are loved by us.

*-Beverly Giltner, dean of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (at DBU since 1969)*

# Thank You, Servant Leaders!



*First Row:* Gayla Crain, Ann Vo, Gary Cook, Mike Arnold, Buena Stevenson, Sally Nation, Erma Barnett. *Second Row:* Julie Turner, Darold Morgan, Karl Fickling, Nita Ford, Bobbie Pinson. *Third Row:* Charles Ku, Sonny Williams, Noble Hurley, Bill White, Dale Lucus, Steve Davis. *Fourth Row:* Harold Sadler, Gary Singleton, Jim Denison, Harold Norris, Dan Griffin. *Fifth Row:* Scott Robinson, Charles Frazier, Jr., Nobuo Togami, Charles Lee Taylor. *Not Pictured:* Scott Baird, Edith Bond, Bob Dean, David Hardesty, Richard Keathley, Willard Murrey, Charles Shellenberger, Jack Shelton, W. E. Thorn, and Betty Whiteaker.



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