

## Sewell, Vaughan lead honorees for 2010 Service Awards



Loy Vaughan, left, and Jerry Sewell each have their own UAB story. They were here when UAB transformed from an extension center of the University of Alabama to an autonomous campus. They have seen the changes and watched the growth. Now they will be honored for their dedication at the Service Awards luncheon Friday, Feb. 12.

STEVE WOOD

**J**erry Sewell has constructed hardware that has been flown into space and dropped into the sea. **Loy Vaughan, Ph.D.**, has educated thousands of students across all disciplines in mathematics.

Together the duo have logged 85 years of service to UAB — 45 years for Sewell, shop administrator in physics, and 40 years for Vaughan, associate professor of mathematics.

Sewell and Vaughan will join more than 200 people at UAB to be honored during the annual Service Awards Program Friday, Feb. 12 that will include a luncheon for employees with 20 or more years of service in the DoubleTree Hotel Heritage Room.

A drop-in reception for more than 1,000 employees who will be recognized for five or more years of service will be held at 3 p.m. in the Heritage Room.

“I’ve been pretty fortunate for a craftsman,” Sewell says of his time at UAB. “If I didn’t enjoy what I do, I wouldn’t be here.”

Sewell came to UAB in 1964 after hearing about an opportunity to make parts for machines. The Cherokee County native worked on the cutting-edge of discovery with doctors in the heart program, including Tinsley Harrison, Champ Lyons and John Kirklin, constructing parts and machines the doctors needed developed to care for their patients.

“When I started here they were just beginning the open-heart-surgery program,” Sewell says. “At the time, blood pumps and

oxygenators were not on the market. We had to make them.”

Sewell, who was named November’s Employee of the Month in 1994 and Employee of the Year for 1994-95, continues to build and repair parts and machines. Much of his work today is for the Center for Nanoscale Materials and Biointegration (CNMB), where he repairs and builds materials for **Yogesh Vohra’s** diamond laboratory. Professors working with optics, lasers, biology, physics and mathematics also keep Sewell busy.

“There’s a saying: ‘The impossible we’ll do today, and the complicated we’ll do tomorrow,’” he says. “I’ve tried to stick with that.”

### Growing together

Vaughan grew up in West End and attended Florida State University, following Bobby Bowden who left Samford for an assistant coaching position at FSU.

Vaughan played football only one year, but remained at FSU, where he received his undergraduate degree. He completed graduate school at the University of Alabama before returning to Birmingham in 1969 to work at UAB.

“It was just an extension center of the University of Alabama when I was hired,” Vaughan says. “It became an autonomous university during my first year. I served on many committees and groups that helped develop the university in the early years. We were pioneers, I guess you could say.”

See **SERVICE AWARDS** p5

## 2010 season starts with new home field, date with Alabama

**O**ld habits are hard to break. So forgive **Marla Townsend** for driving past the new on-campus UAB softball field Jan. 11, the first day of practice. The softball coach was headed to George Ward Park — the place where the Blazers had held every practice and played every game during its first 10 years of existence.

“I was quite embarrassed that I did that,” Townsend says. “I had in my head that I was headed to practice. I wasn’t thinking about it being at the new field.”

Townsend and her team made it to practice in the place they can now call their own — a newly constructed field with full-sized dugouts, a state-of-the-art scoreboard and 350 spectator seats.

“When the girls walked in and stepped in that dugout — they were just so excited,” Townsend says. “There was an enormous sense of ownership and pride.”

The Blazers are practicing at the new field on 11th Street South adjacent to the UAB baseball field almost daily as they prepare for this season — the 11th in school history. Their season opener is Feb. 12 at the Mississippi State Bulldog Classic, and anticipation already is building for the Tuesday, Feb. 23 home-opener against second-ranked national power and rival Alabama at 6:30 p.m.

UAB opened the Crimson Tide’s softball stadium in 2000 and recorded the first hit, RBI and run. Several years later, Townsend told Alabama coach Patrick Murphy that she wanted the Crimson Tide to return the favor when UAB constructed its own field, and he agreed to do it.

“I’m glad we were able to make it happen,” Townsend says.

UAB’s first 10 years at George Ward Park are filled with memories — both good and bad.

But Townsend says her teams always appreciated the opportunity to play at the facil-

See **SOFTBALL** p4



STEVE WOOD

An agreement struck in several years ago in Tuscaloosa will bring the University of Alabama to UAB for the women’s softball home-opener Tuesday, Feb. 23.

# SOFTBALL

CONTINUED from page 1

ity and did everything they could to help maintain it.

“The neat thing about these ladies — and it’s been this way since day one — they took pride in George Ward Park,” Townsend says. “They took care of the field, and they worked on it. They picked up trash, they raked and they worked. I think that’s why there’s a tremendous sense of ownership now with the new field. They have something they can call their own.”

Townsend saw one of the benefits of the new field the first day of practice — a scene she long has dreamed of witnessing. Midway into practice, several players from the baseball team made their way over to the field to watch.

“I just had this wonderful feeling come over me when I saw that because that’s what we want,” Townsend says. “We want to be side-by-side with baseball and soccer — all of us right there together where we can support each other.”

## Program rewarded

The new facility has recessed dugouts, bullpens for each team, storage facilities and a scorer’s platform with a public-address system.

The spacious dugouts have restrooms, a training area, power outlets and phone lines. There also are racks and additional space to hang equipment bags, and the large scoreboard in right field features a state-of-the-art LED video screen.

The playing surface also is impressive. The outfield has an elaborate draining system that will enable the field to dry quickly and enhances player safety.

UAB Athletics Director **Brian Mackin** says the field is a reflection of years of dedication by Townsend, her coaches and players



STEVE WOOD

Coach Marla Townsend, left, readies her team for their 2010 season that begins Feb. 11 at the Mississippi State Bulldog Classic.

to build a quality program.

“It’s a reward to Marla Townsend and all her hard work for more than a decade, and it’s a showcase for our current and former student athletes,” Mackin says. “They’ve all been part of building a program, and now they have an on-campus stadium to show for their work.”

The softball field is part of the Phase II facility plan for athletics, which involves bringing all sports on to campus. The construction also includes new hitting facilities for the softball and baseball programs. A

field house with locker rooms and offices for baseball and softball coaches will be added if private funding is secured.

## Many accomplishments

Townsend not only is excited about the new stadium and the possibilities it brings, she also has a great sense of pride in her team for their accomplishments on and off the field.

UAB sophomore shortstop Catherine Douglass and fifth-year senior outfielder Martina Landrum were selected to the Conference USA 2010 Preseason All-

Conference Team, marking the first time two Blazers have been selected.

Off the field, 13 of the team’s 20 members are academic scholarship recipients with four named to the President’s List and seven named to the Dean’s List. Ten Blazers were selected to the Conference USA Honor Roll (3.0 GPA) in 2009 and seven were Conference USA Academic Medal winners (3.75 GPA) — the most of any sport at UAB.

That’s one reason Townsend is hesitant to say the field is the sole reason UAB now may be more attractive to future recruits.

“The academic tradition and reputation that UAB has is the way we get the talented athletes we get,” Townsend says. “Will the field help? Yes, it’s a plus. But the academic structure that’s in place here is why they choose UAB. I am proud of the student athletes because they focus on their academics first and understand the order of their priorities.”

Townsend is working to keep her priorities in order, and she doesn’t want her team looking past the first two weeks of games before the home-opener.

Still, she’s excited about the possibilities for the Feb. 23 game.

“The environment for that first game is going to be awesome,” Townsend says. “We want to play the top teams in the country. For our athletes, it’s going to be a chance to show what we’re made of in front of a large crowd. We want to show them we’re competitive. It’s our job to bring them in here and keep it a low-scoring game and come out on top. That’s what we want to do.”

Visit [uabsports.cstv.com/tickets](http://uabsports.cstv.com/tickets) for ticket prices and packages, call 975-UAB1 or e-mail [tickets@uab.edu](mailto:tickets@uab.edu).