

Forensic research institute marks formal launch

by Lisa L. Rollins

Dr. William M. Bass, an internationally recognized expert in the field of forensic anthropology who has gained prominence through his research facility, the UT "Body Farm," delivered a guest lecture March 27 in the State Farm Lecture Hall of MTSU's Business and Aerospace Building.

Sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts, the visit by Bass marked the formal kickoff for the Forensic Institute for Research and Education, which is led by Dr. Hugh Berryman, and served as the inaugural talk in the university's newly established William M. Bass Legends in Forensic Science Lectureship.

A professor of sociology and anthropology, Berryman is the director of FIRE, which was approved by the Tennessee Board of Regents during fall 2006.

In addition to serving as the debut speaker for the lectureship named in his honor, Bass will serve as a member of FIRE's external board of advisers, a panel that also includes:

- Richard L. Lambert and My Harrison, FBI agents in charge of Tennessee;
- Tennessee State Medical Examiner Bruce Levy;
- MTSU alumnus Mark Gwyn, director of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation;
- longtime state archaeologist Nick Fielder, now with the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency;
- odontologist Michael Tabor;
- Mike Bottoms, 22nd Judicial District attorney general; and
- Harry Sommers, a special agent for the Drug Enforcement Agency who oversees Tennessee and northern Georgia.

Aside from its external board, the institute also has a 14-member internal board of directors composed of MTSU faculty and administrators.

"We are honored to have William Bass not only be our inaugural speaker, but also serve as a member of our external board for the institute," Berryman said of the renowned doctor's involvement in the MTSU-led forensics emphasis.

According to its mission, the institute, using an interdisciplinary approach, will focus on training and continuing education for law enforcement and forensic specialists, bringing a forensic focus to campus education, as well as working to obtain external funding for research.

By using such an approach and incorporating experts from MTSU's biology, chemistry and anthropology programs, among others, Berryman said his goal is for FIRE to form cooperatives directed toward a number of different initiatives in forensic science, homeland security, education, child abuse, and gangs and hate crimes, among others.

"In all of these areas, FIRE will initiate and cultivate partnering with industry, forensic laboratories, and local, state and federal law enforcement

agencies," he said.

Additionally, Berryman said, a 10-member volunteer student team, the Forensic Anthropology Search and Recovery Team, will be "a service arm of FIRE ... (and) is experienced in processing forensic crime scenes involving skeletal remains."

Under Berryman's direction, the team of undergraduate and graduate students assists law enforcement in skeletal crime scene location, documentation and recovery. To date, the team has helped process at least two crime scenes in Rutherford and Robertson counties and received requests from law enforcement to take part in other investigations.

Volunteering their weekend time and weekday evenings, the student team members "do a great job and I'm really proud of them," noted Berryman, who continues to do skeletal identifications for the state.

"This is great experience for the students and they are, in a sense, like ambassadors for MTSU. ... They let people know we have talent here."

Berryman said the William M. Bass Legends in Forensic Science Lectureship will be held once each spring and fall semester and feature prominent experts from within the forensics field. Each lecture will be open to the public and free of charge. This year's speaker, Bass—along with his co-author Jon Jefferson—has written the best-selling "Death's Acre: Inside the Body Farm" and also has become a successful fiction writer. His Body Farm has been featured in fiction and nonfiction books as well as on television programs such as "The Dead Zone" and "CSI."

Honored as National Professor of the Year in 1985-86 by The Council for Advancement and Support of Education, Bass received his bachelor's degree at the University of Virginia, his master's degree from the University of Kentucky and his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania.



Bass

Welcome, sir



LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE—Cadets in MTSU's Army Reserve Officer Training Corps pose for a photo with Maj. Gen. James R. Myles (standing, center, in camouflage fatigues), commander of the U.S. Army's Aviation and Missile Command, or AMCOM, at Redstone Arsenal, Ala. Myles visited the MTSU cadre in March to discuss equipment readiness and preparation for the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Students shown standing with the major general in Forrest Hall are, standing, left to right, Alex Treneff, Jason Overstreet, Tyler Garrett, Stephen Bonney, Kenny Pospisil, John Watson and Nick Gregory. Hunkered down in the front row are Cory Hammock, Joseph Brannock, John Durden and Jason Shaffer.

photo by News & Public Affairs

Spring Dance Concert takes flight April 19-21

by Lisa L. Rollins

MTSU Dance Theatre will present its annual Spring Dance Concert at 7:30 nightly April 19-21 at MTSU's Tucker Theatre.

"This semester's concert features work by international guest artists and has dances from several dance genres," Kim Neal Nofsinger, director of the dance company, said. "Seven company members will perform guest artist Zelma Badu-Young's 'Crash,' a humorous work showing a

unique group of individuals whose lives intertwine on the street."

Nofsinger said Badu-Young is a specialist in West African dance who incorporates traditional movement in a contemporary framework.

The spring concert also will feature "Ash Wind" by Chung-Fu Chang, a native of Taiwan.

"This lush, beautiful work provides an insight into the frailty of life and is influenced by an Asian aesthetic in its visual poetry," Nofsinger remarked.

Tap, jazz and modern works cho-

reographed by faculty members Elaine Husted, Nancy Ammerman and Nofsinger will complete the concert.

"These dances range from traditional to contemporary artistic viewpoints and incorporate the 40 members of MTSU Dance Theatre," Nofsinger said of the company, whose members represent a variety of majors from across campus. Students selected for this ensemble are required to enroll in technique classes, attend Saturday-morning classes and rehearse a minimum of three

hours per week for each piece they are dancing.

"The dedication of these students is evident within the quality of the concert that will be presented," the director observed.

Tickets for the Spring Dance Concert may be purchased at the door on the evening of the performance. Ticket prices range from \$4 to \$8. MTSU students will be admitted free with a valid ID.

For more information, please call 615-494-8810 or visit the department's Web site at www.mtsu.edu/~theatre.