UTM’s Wildlife Society named chapter of the year

The UTM Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society was named the Southeastern Section of the Wildlife Society’s Student Chapter of the Year earlier this month at the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies annual conference in Oklahoma City.

UT Martin was one of 30 student chapters competing for the honor. UT Martin received a plaque and a cash prize.

“I am honored to be associated with these young professionals. UT Martin has never had a more hard-working Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society,” said Dr. Eric Pelren, the chapter’s advisor.

“The future of our profession is bright,” he said.

Also at the conference, two students, David Ferrell, of Huntingdon, and Tanner Romsdal, of Lawrence County, presented their manuscripts which have been conditionally accepted for publication in the peer reviewed Journal of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Ferrell spoke on “diurnal habitat associations of raccoons in an agricultural landscape.”

UT Martin professors Dr. Brad Ray and Pelren also helped author the manuscripts.

UT Martin student, Ryan Jerrolds spoke on “A survey to estimate population distribution of and damage caused by feral swine in Tennessee.” Co-authors were Dr. Barb Darroch and Pelren.
Army postpones closure of UTM ROTC program

The U.S. Army announced Wednesday that it has suspended the closure of 13 student Reserve Officers’ Training Corps programs, which includes the ROTC program at UTM. Members of Congress were notified along with officials at the affected universities.

According to the notification, the Army will now review the criteria used for the recommended closures. Once this review is complete, the Army will reassess all student ROTC programs nationwide and “develop a formal 24-month probationary program for schools failing to meet the evaluation criteria.”

Programs demonstrating “no improvement in achieving performance goals or meeting criteria by the end of the first year will receive one year’s notice of intent to close the unit.”

Programs that show improvement or meet evaluation criteria will receive a second year of probation, and at the end of 24 months, schools retained for a second year will be re-evaluated. “At that time, they (the schools) will either receive one year’s notice of intent to close the unit or be retained,” the notification stated.

UTM announced in October that its program was among 13 in the nation scheduled for closure in 2015. Other Tennessee universities facing ROTC closures were East Tennessee State University in Johnson City and Tennessee Tech University in Cookeville.

“We’re grateful to our elected officials and the Army for suspending the closure of UTM’s ROTC program,” said Dr. Tom Rakes, university chancellor. “We will work hard to meet the Army’s criteria for keeping the program open.”

Dr. Todd Winters, dean of the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences where the ROTC program resides, is also pleased with the Army’s decision and thanked those who have worked on behalf of the program. “However, this allows us to just take a breath. The game isn’t over,” Winters said. “We’ll continue to make adjustments to the program to render it more economical and efficient.”

An ROTC unit was first established at the university in 1952, followed by the start of a four-year ROTC program in 1964. Since the program’s beginnings, 651 cadets have been commissioned as second lieutenants in the regular Army, the U.S. Army Reserve and the Tennessee Army National Guard.

The university’s military science program, of which ROTC is a part, includes Jackson State Community College, Lane College, Freed-Hardeman University, Bethel University and Union University. Enrollment for fall semester 2013 is 85 basic course cadets and 26 advanced course cadets.

CAAS wishes everyone a safe and happy Thanksgiving!
By: Gina Locke

Asking a group of college students to come back early from Christmas break to stand out in the cold for hours and evaluate livestock is not the typical expectation of a college professor, but that was the first requirement to get a spot on the University of Tennessee at Martin livestock judging team.

Our judging adventures began traveling west in a university van so packed full that our luggage and us would barely fit. Right out of the gate we judged at Griswold Cattle Company in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

This was very much the “get your feet wet” contest, but the experience was well worth it. It was on this trip that the team got down the basics of true livestock evaluation.

We learned to evaluate structure, balance, muscle, and many more criteria on multiple species, including cattle, sheep, swine, and goats.

After long practices, late nights, a lot of sweat, and even a few tears, UT Martin was left with seven members that judged on the floor at least once at a national contest.

Those members included: Mary Wortham, Brandon Stewart, Gina Locke, Brandon Fletcher, Jacque Vaughn, Dakota Brasher, and Jacki Buchanan. Animal Science professor, Jason Duggin, coached the team.

Throughout our year, we competed in many national contests, including the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in Texas, Dixie Nationals in Starkville, Mississippi, and even the National Western Stock Show in Denver, Colorado.

The team finished at their highest at Dixie Nationals, where they placed in the top five teams overall, with team members being highlighted in the Brahman-Influenced cattle divisions. UT Martin was also 13th in the carload contest — a placing’s only contest — at National Western.

While the competitions were a huge part of the experience, we were also privileged to visit some of the most elite livestock operations in the United States, including Express Ranches in Yukon, Oklahoma. This is the top seed stock cattle operation in the nation. To be able to see such valuable and impressive livestock was an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Many people will say that if something is easy, it’s not worth doing. Through the experiences on the livestock team, I can honestly say that statement is true.

Nothing about livestock judging was easy, the classes never seemed to shake out exactly right, nor did our oral reasons ever flow like we had planned for them to, but putting our hearts into something that we are all so passionate about — the livestock industry — was well worth it, but one thing is for sure, it’s not for the faint of heart.
East Tennessean finds home in western part of state

Richard Shadden was born on a small farm in the little community of Mt. Harmony in East Tennessee. The farm consisted of beef cattle, hogs, and tobacco. Sometime in the 1940s a Grade A dairy was added along with a herd of registered Ayrshire dairy cattle. Shadden remembers getting electricity in the barn before there was any in the main house. As with most farmers during that era, your livelihood came from farming and that was more important than the comforts in your home.

He said the day electricity was put in the barn, he was riding his tricycle up and down the concrete alleyway as a 4 year old. He ran to tell his mother when the lights came on and smacked his head on the barn door latch. That memory is “burned in his brain” he laughs.

Shadden attended the University of Tennessee and studied Agricultural Engineering. He also received his masters in that study from UT. He started his Ph.D. but never finished.

While he was studying to get his doctorate, his car completely died. He bought a new one but after his father paid the bills on it, he decided it was best for him to get a job.

This led him to West Tennessee where he worked for the UT Experiment Station in Jackson for two years. His plan was to return to Knoxville and complete his Ph.D. after his two-year contract as up. In the fall of 1970 he received a call about a teaching position at UTM. After driving up to Martin to interview, he was hired one week before the winter quarter started in 1971.

Again, he planned to be here a few quarters and return to school in Knoxville. When Shadden moved to Martin he was living in University Courts and slept in a sleeping bag until he could buy a bed. A few months later he married his wife of over 40 years, Jeri, who he met in Jackson the year before. They have four children and seven grandchildren.

While he was teaching UTM, he and a business partner bought a tool and dye company in Kenton, TN. He was going to continue teaching but the business required more work than originally planned. He quit teaching and for two years worked full time at his business. He eventually sold out and returned to UTM, where he was tenured a second time.

While at UTM, Shadden taught subjects in agricultural engineering such as power and machinery, waste management, structure and utilities, surveying, and many more courses. In fact, he was the only one who taught these subjects until Dr. Mehlhorn arrived. At one time, he says he taught close to 95% of the students who came through the UTM ag department because Ag 110 was required for just about everyone.

Shadden is also a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the National Guard. He retired in 1995 after 28 years of service as a Communications Officer in the Signal Corp Branch of Service. He planned and supervised the instillation of telephone, teletype, and other communication devices that were available.

Even in retirement, Shadden is keeping himself busy. He is still teaching one course this fall in power and machinery. Although he still loves teaching, he says he does not plan on teaching any more after this semester. He visits with his grandchildren and also plays a little golf with Dr. Gresham, former Dean. He and his wife are planning their first winter in Florida.

“We’re going to be snow birds and fly south for the winter,” he laughs.