UTM is celebrating 150 years of the Morrill Act with a display honoring agricultural progress and research at the Paul Meek Library on Oct. 4-5.

The outdoor display features agricultural equipment in 50-year increments, demonstrating how far agricultural methods and research have come in the past 150 years. The display also includes a look at the future of land grant research, featuring the Living Light House display inside the Paul Meek Library.

Dr. Jerry Gresham, interim dean of the UTM College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences, said the exhibit will show “where we’ve been in the last 150 years and where we could go in the next 150 years.” He stressed the influence of agricultural research on daily life and emphasized that “new research is not always directly related to the farm.”

The Morrill Act, signed into law in 1862 by President Abraham Lincoln, provided each state with 30,000 acres of federal land for each congressional delegate. The land was to be sold and the proceeds used to

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Lt. Col. Michael W. Johnson: Military Science professor

Lt. Col. Michael W. Johnson is currently serving as a professor of Military Science at UTM.

Johnson is from Hyden, Ky., and completed the Reserve Officers Training Corps at Eastern Kentucky University. He was commissioned in May 1995 as an Adjutant General Corps Officer. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Corrections and Juvenile Services, and a Master of Arts degree in Human Resource Management.

Johnson’s military schooling includes the Command and General Staff College, the Adjutant General Officer Basic Course, the Adjutant General Captains Career Course, the Combined Arms and Services Staff School, the Human Resource Management Course, the Postal Operations and Supervisors Course, and Airborne.

His awards include the Bronze Star (2 Oak Leaf Cluster), the Meritorious Service Medal (4 Oak Leaf Cluster), the Army Commendation Medal (1 Oak Leaf Cluster), the Army Achievement Medal (2 Oak Leaf Cluster), the National Defense Service Medal (1 Bronze Service Star), the Armed Forces Expeditionary and Service Medals, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary and Service Medals, the Iraqi Campaign Medal, Overseas Service Ribbon, and the NATO Medal.

Unit awards include the Presidential Unit Citation Award, the Meritorious Unit Award, and the Army Superior Unit Award (1 Oak Leaf Cluster).

Johnson’s previous assignments include two stations in Bad Kreuznach, Germany; G1 Plans and Operations Officer, 1st Armored Division; Chief, Officer Management Division, 1st Armored Division; Battalion Adjutant for both Sacramento and Atlanta Recruiting Battalions; Chief, G1 Plans and Operations Officer, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga.; Company Commander, Company A, U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Stewart, Ga.; Company Commander, Bravo Company, 3d Soldier Support Battalion, Fort Stewart, Ga.; Battalion Executive Officer, 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry Regiment, Fort Jackson, S.C.; Deputy G1, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga.; and most recently Officer and Enlisted Strength Manager for U.S. Army Central “Patton’s Own” Third Army, Shaw Air Force Base, Sumter, S.C.

Scott Watson: Farm manager

Many would argue that herding cattle might be a lot like managing a room full of high school students. But for Scott Watson, it was the change of scenery that drew him to the farm manager position at UTM.

Originally from Jackson, Tn., Watson grew up on a cattle and cotton farm. He was actively involved in FFA and agricultural classes in high school. He attended Middle Tennessee State University earning a double major in Animal Science and Agricultural Education. Teaching was always something he thought he would enjoy doing. In 2000, Watson began his career as a high school agricultural educator in Paragould, Arkansas. Twelve years later, he and his wife Carrie, along with their four-year-old daughter Emma, made the move to Martin to be closer to Watson’s home.

As manager, Watson is overseer of the 600+ acre farm here on campus. He is in charge of the daily operations of the contract stocker cattle and the 215 acres of soybeans and corn. “It’s something different every day, but I’m glad I’m here,” he says. Watson is also responsible for the student workers on the farm. Each day, there are about three or four workers on hand. He says the students come and go on different days of the week, depending on their class schedules. Job training usually depends on the students and what kind of background they have. “Anybody is teachable,” Watson says, “but you have to be willing to work, and work hard.”
Students in the Agricultural Engineering Technology program at UTM have been working on several projects that will help them gain valuable field experience.

Two of the most notable projects are the quarter-scale tractor and the comparative erosion research project, both of which are overseen by Dr. Sandy Mehlhorn, professor of Agriculture and coordinator of Land Surveying and Geomatics Certification Program.

The tractor project is only in its third year at UTM. However, it is quickly taking root as a foundation stone upon which an undergraduate student can build experience. This project consists of team members working to design, build and demonstrate a fully functional quarter-scale tractor that they will later enter into an ASABE (American Society of Agricultural & Biological Engineers) sanctioned competition.

In order to make the tractor contest-ready, the team must design it to meet the safety and operational requirements expected of every school that enters the competition. Some of these requirements include: emergency cut-off switches under the seat and on the clutch, shielding on all moving mechanical parts, exhaust noise reduction, and being able to efficiently brake over 1,500 pound of ballasted weight.

Dr. Mehlhorn hopes the project will gain more interest and involvement by undergraduate students, eventually developing into a two-tractor project.

The comparative erosion control research project is a specialized project being undertaken by a UTM graduate student working with Dr. Mehlhorn. The student has taken a north-facing slope and has dug multiple test plots that align with the grade of the slope.

Several types of erosion control mediums have been placed in the test plots, with one of the plots left bare to act as the control unit to compare to the effectiveness of the other plots. Some of the mediums used are geotextile cloth paired with rip-rap, grass sod, and gumballs in netting. The gumballs in netting are a unique medium that Dr. Mehlhorn specifically designed for this experiment.

She explained that she had never heard of anyone using gumballs before, but thought it would be interesting to see what kind of results they would produce compared to accepted mediums like grass sod and rip-rap.

Upon concluding the experiment, Dr. Mehlhorn hopes that they will be able to present the findings of the experiment to an ASABE committee, and that others will find their research intriguing.
Retired prof has seen many changes

By Jesi Ogg

Tom McCutchen had never heard of the University of Tennessee at Martin when he sent in his resume. After a visit and an interview, though, he moved to Martin and ended up teaching geology at UTM for 36 years.

McCutchen earned his bachelor’s degree at Berea College in Berea, Ky., and his master’s degree from Florida State University. He began his teaching career in 1961 at Miami-Dade Junior College. While there, McCutchen knew he wanted to find teaching position at a four-year university.

At that time, UTM was UTMB, the University of Tennessee-Martin Branch. McCutchen sent several applications to several universities and his expectations for UTM were not high. However, after getting a call to come visit and interview, he knew this is where he wanted to be.

A self-proclaimed “small-town boy” who grew up in Scottsboro, Ala., McCutchen loved the small-town feel and country life of Martin. Now, McCutchen talks about how UTM has changed tremendously.

“I remember my first registration day. It was in the EPS building in room 204. The students would come to the room and receive a card to be admitted to the class. There was a lot of bargaining with the professors,” he laughs.

McCutchen recalls having legendary basketball coach Pat Head Summit and former UTM Chancellor Nick Dunagan as students in his classes.

“I taught freshman geology and for many it was a way to avoid biology and chemistry,” he says.

He also remembers parking his John Deere tractor in the EPS parking lot, something few can say they have done.

After teaching classes all day, McCutchen would bale hay about a mile from campus for several hours. He said it just made sense to drive the tractor to school, stop at the hayfield for a few hours, and then drive the tractor home at dark.

McCutchen retired from UTM in 2000 after 39 years of teaching overall and 36 of them at UTM.

Being retired, however, doesn’t mean being bored for McCutchen. In fact, he stays quite busy working with his hands, a hobby that can be traced back to his early college years at Berea College. While at Berea, each student was given a job for 10 hours a week. McCutchen was placed in the woodworking shop where he built puzzles that the college sold.

With a few renovations and adjustments, McCutchen turned an old cabin (which he built) behind his house into a workshop for his woodworking. He built the bed he sleeps in, two tables in his house, an entertainment center, and a sewing cabinet for his wife, all in his shop. He has also made several flower stands that he has given as gifts to family members.

“I don’t want a business. I do it because I love it,” he says.

Display, From Cover

create affordable colleges that would teach applied sciences, such as agriculture, engineering and home economics, in addition to the classical arts.

These institutions, also known as “land grant institutions,” made widespread instruction on mass food and fiber production possible. The proper education of farmers allowed future generations to move away from the farm and aspire to non-agricultural careers. The University of Tennessee system was founded by land grants from the Morrill Act. In 1870, 70–80 percent of the United States’ population was employed in agriculture; today that number has dropped to less than 1 percent.

The celebration officially began Monday, Oct. 1, with a lecture from James Rose, architecture professor at the University of Tennessee.

Rose will discuss the display prototype of the “Living Light” house, the 2011 Solar Decathlon, and the solar and sustainable energy concepts currently present in the House of Representatives.

For more information about the Morrill Act celebration, contact Gresham at 731-881-7251 or by email at jgresham@utm.edu.