Permanent women’s hall to open

By Matthew Zabel
Staff Writer

For 18 years, a ceremony and a collection of documents has made up the Texas Women’s Hall of Fame. On Thursday, a permanent museum opens at Texas Woman’s University to honor the 114 women in the hall.


Ann Williams, a graduate of TWU and member of the university’s board of regents, said being included with that group might be the highlight of her career. She was inducted into the hall in 2002.

“I’m really excited about it opening, and I’m really thrilled they chose my university for it,” said Ms. Williams, who founded the Dallas Black Dance Theater Company 26 years ago.

The hall will open Thursday with an invitation-only ceremony at TWU featuring Texas first lady Anita Perry.

The Governor’s Commission for Women manages the hall and has kept its archives at TWU’s Blagg-Huey Library. TWU has maintained those records in its Women’s Collection and posted many of them on its Web site, http://www.twu.edu/twhf. That Web

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One hundred fourteen plaques line the wall of the Texas Women’s Hall of Fame at Hubbard Hall at Texas Woman’s University. The Governor’s Commission for Women exhibit will open Thursday.

Huey a shining example of honorees

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Staff Writer

Dr. Mary Evelyn Blagg Huey retired from Texas Woman’s University 16 years ago, but people who know her well have a hard time believing it.

Staying active with First Presbyterian Church, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the National Academy of Public Administration, the Native Plant Society and the Nature Conservatory keep the 81-year-old Denton resident busy.

“She says she wants to cut back, but I don’t see that happening,” said Dr. Steven Nilmeier, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, where Dr. Huey is a ruling elder.

“Mary Evelyn is one of those women that, wherever Dr. Huey goes, she is going to provide insightful leadership. For her

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site contains history about the hall of fame, biographies of all 114 honorees, and links to other Web sites honoring women and women's history.

Lesley Guthrie, the commission's director, said a permanent home for the hall of fame was overdue.

"This commission felt it should set up a permanent hall," Ms. Guthrie said. "TWU has been very enthusiastic about this project from the beginning, and that was just the best fit."

A plaque honoring each of the 114 women hangs on the wall, and other exhibits will be on display inside the room.

Dr. Mary Evelyn Blagg Huey, one of the first inductees into the hall of fame, a former president of TWU and a Denton resident, said she believes the new exhibit will complement the Daughters of the American Revolution's "Gowns of the First Ladies of Texas," which also is on display at TWU. That exhibit includes inaugural gowns worn by the first ladies of Texas, the Republic of Texas and the United States.

"It’s altogether fitting and appropriate that it be at the women's college, and I'm glad it is," Dr. Huey said. "It promotes the tradition that this is the home of what women have accomplished in Texas and in the United States."

TWU also is home to the Little Chapel-in-the-Woods, a small chapel that has become a popular local wedding spot.

Kim Dillon, vice president of the Denton Convention and Visitor's Bureau, said the new hall gives Denton a new attraction to offer visitors.

"It's a unique type of attraction, and coupled with the fact that it's on the campus of Texas Woman's University, I have no doubt it will boost what Denton has to offer," Ms. Dillon said.

The Governor's Commission for Women began in 1967 in order to improve the status of women. The Texas Women's Hall of Fame began in 1984 to recognize Texas women who have attained significant achievements, including former first ladies, teachers, athletes and astronauts. Women are inducted every two years.

Ms. Williams said she hopes the extra visitors to the campus will translate into more students for TWU.

"One of the advantages to having that museum is that it will continue to help the university be recognized as a nationally significant university. And the citizens of Denton will appreciate the honor in that."

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age, she remains extremely active and effective.”

In addition, Dr. Huey still enjoys traveling internationally, recently to the Matterhorn in the Swiss Alps.

“I have seen every continent and I've seen every sea. I haven't climbed every mountain, but mountain climbing isn't really my thing anyway,” said Dr. Huey, who became TWU's first female president in 1976 and who in 1984 was among the first 12 women inducted into the Texas Women's Hall of Fame. Former first lady Lady Bird Johnson, the late former Congresswoman Barbara Jordan and the late U.S. District Judge Sara T. Hughes also were in that class of inductees.

“That was a wonderful surprise and a great thrill,” Dr. Huey said. “I was so pleased and honored to be in the company of great women.”

Dr. Huey looks forward to reliving that honor Thursday, when an exhibit opens inside TWU's Hubbard Hall to honor her and the other 113 members of the Texas Women's Hall of Fame.

She laughs when she remembers the frustration of figuring out what to wear to the induction ceremony in Austin.

“The rule was that Mrs. Johnson would decide what everyone would wear, whether we would wear evening dresses or day dresses,” Dr. Huey said. “At first she said we would all wear day dresses. Then she came back and said she wanted to wear an evening dress.”

So, Dr. Huey said, after the women had scrambled around to get their evening dresses, Mrs. Johnson arrived in an afternoon-style dress.

“Dr. Huey spent 39 years in academia, 24 of those at North Texas State University, now the University of North Texas. In 1971, she left NTSU to become dean of TWU’s graduate school, and she spent the next 15 years at TWU, her alma mater.

During her five years as dean, she admitted the first men into the graduate school.

When TWU President Dr. John A. Guinn became ill in 1976, Dr. Huey was appointed interim and then permanent president, a position she held for 10 years.

“When I took the post as president, I promised the regents I’d stay five to 10 years,” she said. “If I had any idea I was going to live as long as I have and be as healthy as I am, I may have stayed a few more years.”

— Mary Evelyn Blagg Huey, former TWU president and Texas Women's Hall of Fame member

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Former Texas Woman's University President Mary Evelyn Blagg Huey, seen here outside her Denton home, is one of 114 honorees in Texas Women's Hall of Fame.
1870. That native prairie has never been tilled, she said, and the group honored her with the title “land steward.”

But she spends the bulk of her work on church projects at First Presbyterian Church.

Dr. Nilmier said that as a ruling elder in the church, Dr. Huey is “a shaper of the history and direction for the church.”

For example, he said, Dr. Huey had questioned the necessity of the church’s current building campaign. He said she sought information, then changed her mind and wrote a letter to the congregation explaining why.

“She’s not given to sentimentality, but she is not a person who is so rigid that she can’t come to terms with reason and logic and change her mind when the facts dictate that she should,” Dr. Nilmier said. “She really is, in the final analysis, a first-rate leader in every way.”

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