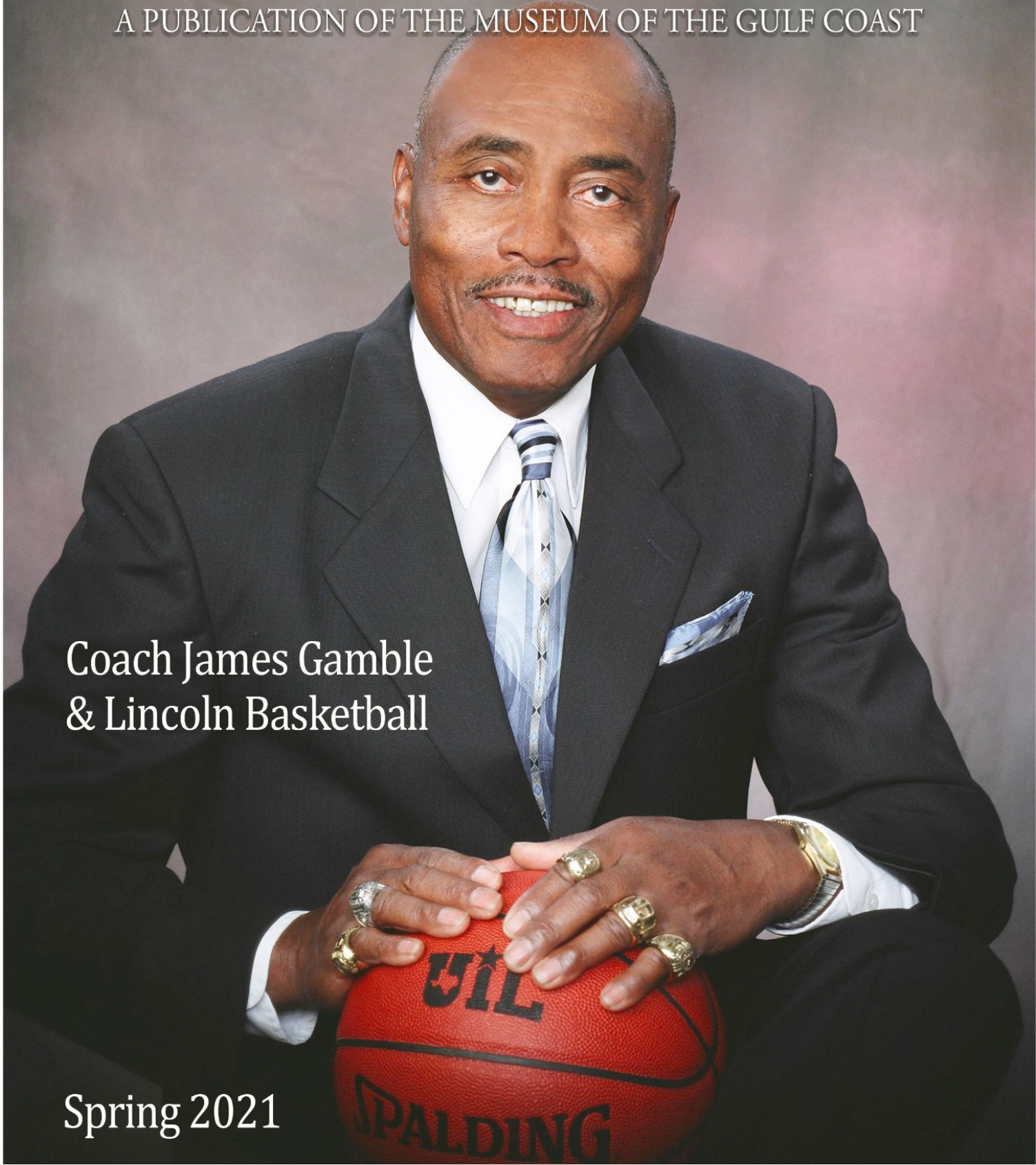


THE LIGHTHOUSE

A PUBLICATION OF THE MUSEUM OF THE GULF COAST

A portrait of Coach James Gamble, a middle-aged Black man with a mustache, smiling. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a blue and white striped tie. He is holding a red Spalding basketball with both hands. He is wearing several gold rings on his fingers and a gold watch on his left wrist. The background is a soft, out-of-focus gradient of grey and blue.

Coach James Gamble
& Lincoln Basketball

Spring 2021

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Staff

Tom Neal
Director
Mogc.director@gmail.com
Work - 409-999-6281
Cell - 409-720-9912

Robert Fong
Curator/Archivist
Mogc.curator@gmail.com
409-999-6283

Brittany Delagarza
Education/Tour Coordinator
Mogc.educator@gmail.com
409-999-6284

Becky Guidry
Administrative Assistant/
Museum Store
MuseumoftheGulfCoast@gmail.com
409-999-6282

Charles Robertson
Security Officer

Spring 2021

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Betty Brownlee

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Editor and Layout *Robert Fong*

Contributor *Dr. Sam Monroe*

Distribution *Becky Guidry, Brittany
Delagarza*

Cover Photo *Bart Bragg Photography*

Additional Photography *Bart Bragg, Robert Fong*



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ON THE WEB

about **The Director**

Museum of the Gulf Coast director Tom Neal is the 2021 recipient of the Arthur Stilwell award, given out by the Port Arthur Chamber of Commerce, to the person who most exhibits the vision and dedication of city founder Arthur Stilwell. On January 28, Tom was presented the award in a virtual ceremony. This issue of "The Lighthouse" begins with a message about Tom (instead of from him) from Port Arthur Historical Society President, Dr. Sam Monroe.

In my opinion, Tom Neal is very deserving of the recognition given him by the Greater Port Arthur Chamber of Commerce through the Arthur Stilwell Award. Tom first came to my attention back in the 1970s when I was serving as President of Port Arthur College. (the forerunner of the Lamar State College-Port Arthur) which owned and operated KPAC AM-FM. Tom was working as an announcer/salesman at



Verna Rutherford presents the Arthur Stilwell Award

the time. The station's office manager called me and said, "Have you heard the Ford Motors spot Tom had recorded?" I said I had, and it was great. She said he was up all night recording it. That experience with him revealed his positive outlook, commitment to excellence, and his desire to get the job done no matter how long it took. I observed these attributes in him at Lamar Port Arthur and now at the Museum of the Gulf Coast. He has brought these same skills to the job of promoting Port Arthur and the entire area. Calling on members of the Texas Legislature, doing radio and T.V. interviews, and magazine interviews. He is a super salesman and is always pushing the assets and attractions of the Golden Triangle, Southeast Texas, and Southwest Louisiana. Congratulations, Tom, on this well-deserved honor!

Tom Neal



OUR COLLECTIONS

This 1904 Model 45 Cash Register was manufactured by the National Cash Register Company in Dayton, Ohio, and is part of our collections at The Museum of the Gulf Coast. When the cashier made a sale, the amount was written in the top slot. The three previous sales would be displayed under glass in the larger section below it. When the lever was pulled, the paper would roll down one slot, a bell would ring, and the cash register drawer would open. At the end of the day, the lid was unlocked, and the bottom roll would be retrieved with all of the day's transactions handwritten on the roll. The circular brass lid (top right) contained an inkwell.



Museum T-Shirts

Be the leader of your roller skating pack with this stylish Museum of the Gulf Coast Shirt! Come by the gift shop or order online at MuseumoftheGulfCoast.org Modeled and performed by MOGC member Jasmine Lopez.





Threadgill's Shutters Its Doors

In February 2020 after a gathering of family and friends in Austin, we found ourselves at Threadgill's Restaurant. Unknown to anyone, one of Janis Joplin's last Texas haunts would eventually fall victim to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 1968 fresh off a summer catting around in California, Janis blew into Austin, having transferred from Lamar to the University of Texas. Like her hometown, Austin wasn't yet ready for her freewheeling ways. Threadgill's was the exception. Janis had not yet developed her bluesy style of singing, but it was at Threadgill's that she discovered her incredible voice. With her harpsichord and the encouragement of Kenneth Threadgill, she was soon packing in the crowds. Before long, she headed out to San Francisco, and the next time she sang at Threadgills, she would be world-famous. On March 22, 2021, Threadgill's closed its doors. The memorabilia on the walls seen here was taken down and put up for auction. - Robert Fong

Janis Joplin and Kenneth Threadgill



Janis and her harpsichord became a familiar sight to Threadgill's regulars.

How Coach Gamble Changed Southeast Texas Basketball

Dr. Sam Monroe visited with Coach James Gamble about his storied career as the basketball coach of Lincoln High School in the Museum's Sports Hall of Fame.

We're happy today to welcome coach James Gamble to the Museum of the Gulf Coast, and our purpose is to talk with him about his life and his career. He is a new member of the Hall of Fame here at the Museum. Coach Gamble is arguably the most honored man in Port Arthur. He's had a street named for him. A bust of him is on display at the school where he coached. He has had recognition from his alma mater, Prairie View A&M University. He's done so many things in the community. He's actually in half a dozen Halls of Fame or Halls of Honor. So we're very happy to welcome such a distinguished person who represents Port Arthur and Southeast Texas in such an admirable way. Coach, thanks for taking the time.

Thank you, Dr. Monroe, for having me.



Where did you grow up as a young person?

I grew up in South Central Los Angeles, Watts. I went to David Starr Jordan High School and spent a year at East Los Angeles junior college, and after that, I moved to Texas to Prairie View A&M University. I wanted to go to UCLA and play basketball, but everybody thought that my potential was in track. I was a long jumper, but I did run a bit on relays and things of that nature.

At Prairie View, did you continue with your track and field?

Yes, I did. I was second in the NCAA in 1957 in the long jump. The Olympic champion defeated me. He was way out of my range. I was a 25 ft long jumper, and he was a 26 ft long jumper. He won the Olympics in 56. A young man by the name of Greg Bell. I had a stellar track year and super basketball career at Prairie View. I graduated

and worked at Prairie View for a year. I had offers from several major high schools, and I decided to choose Port Arthur because it was one of the two that offered my wife and myself a job. So, I came here.

We were in that era of the segregation laws where those laws were struck down, and the schools were integrated here in about 1970.

I believe it was a little earlier than that. What that actually did, I think for the whole state of Texas, it gave everyone a look at competition involving everybody. Instead of being segregated in your way over here, it gave you the opportunity to compete against the best—not the best black players or the best white players, the best players. In Los Angeles, I competed against all kinds of players: white, black, Hispanic, Japanese, you know, so that was

no problem with me. My High School basketball coach was a white guy, my football coach was a Hispanic man, so I had no problem competing or matching wits with the coaches when integration came here in Texas.

You were prepared.

Yes, I got that from my father. I came up in a broken home—four boys and the old man. He told us, any success you have in life is going to depend largely on how well you work with and get along with other people. That was one of the things he told us, and he reminded us of that yearly—then, he said go to school every day.

Coach Gamble was a nine-time District Coach of the Year and was once named the Greater Houston Coach of the Year.

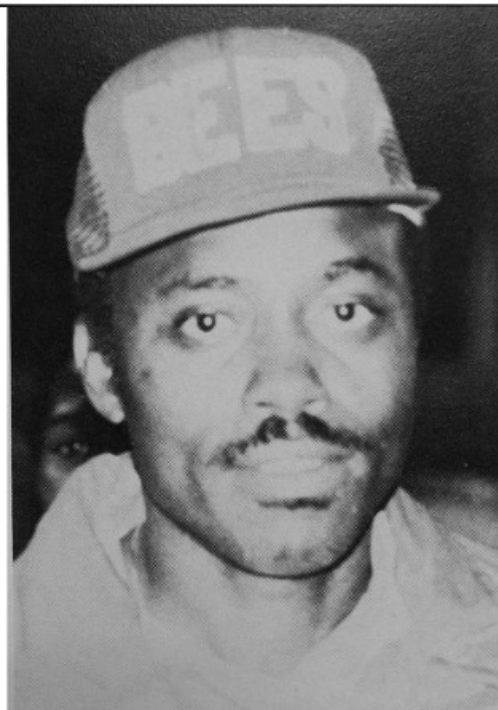
Lincoln's 1981 5A State Championship Team



He also said, always be prepared to do the best you can. Always be prepared to do the best that you can. [sic] Those things stayed with me from the time I was a little kid.

You made that happen as an adult. We're so proud of you and all your successes. Talk about basketball at Lincoln, how you started to build that program. This would have been in the middle 1960s.

At the very beginning, everybody played football, and you actually could not be in competition with anybody until the football season was over. I had difficulty in scheduling practice games and things of that nature. So finally, I talked with a successful coach in Houston named Jackie Carr, and I told him what my problem was. He said, "I'm not going to play you because your team is on the football field, and I need to play some competition." He said, "I'll tell you what you need to do. Go over to the Middle School. Pick you some boys that the football coaches didn't pick. Run 'em, phut them in the weight room. Do drills and stuff all year. Talk to them, let them know why you are selecting them." We did that, and we started playing UIL basketball, and we got a lot of fouls called on us, so I had to go in the direction of playing more kids. I had to really develop kids and work them so that I could play ten every game. After we started the weight program, we would go to the coaching clinics. I would talk to college coaches who were there doing presentations and ask them questions about their programs and different offseason drills. I collected a lot of information. I made cards on the kids. I measured them, and after a while, they started looking as good as the football players-good looking athletes. And when I was recruiting those kids out of middle school, they told me, "Look at their feet,"



Coach Gamble in 1981

and you look at kids' big feet, skinny, and tall. A lot of them were scared to play football anyway. So you get those kids, and you know they start to become great looking after we developed that. The kids they really worked hard. The officiating was biased, but that didn't bother me so much because I thought it was biased in the old Prairie View League. One thing about it, the white officials did not want the black officials in the association with them and didn't want them calling games. But there were three of us in the area: James White over in Beaumont and Billy Brown in Orange. We all got together and made a decision, then we met with the officials association and let them know we would not play a game unless there was a black official in the game-simple as that. They came to an agreement. That group came together as one organization, and there was great competition. I'm going to be honest with you, most of the programs at that time had football coaches that were more or less babysitting basketball at most of the schools. But I consider myself a basketball coach. So after I got the program going and we started

playing those schools, we were beating them by large margins, I mean beating them bad. Some parents and fans or whatever put a little pressure on the administration or head coaches to hire basketball coaches, and that's when basketball really got good all-around in the area, when they started bringing guys in who were really good basketball coaches.

Your players come and go, and they're in high school for such a brief time. What you had built up was a solid foundation that kept producing great players.

The first two kids I had to go to a camp were Anthony Allen and Ronnie Haliburton. I took them over to McNeese to a big man's camp at that time when Ronnie was about

six foot four and Anthony Allen was about 6 foot 6, but they were like 10th graders. My goal from the very beginning was to build a solid program, and that's what we did over there because I also had great assistant coaches, and we had great fan support, parents, and everybody. It was just good all around.

And we're mighty proud of you as Port Arthurans and Texans as well.

Thank you.

It's a great honor to have you here today.

From 1966 to 1988, and in 1999, Lincoln won 16 District titles, 13 Bi-District titles, 5 Regional Championships and 4 State Championships with Gamble as head coach.

It is with deep sadness that we note the passing of Charles Bond. After his retirement from Sandoz Chemical Plant as an Instrumentation Technician, Mr. Bond for many years came by almost daily to donate his considerable carpentry talents to the Museum. It would be difficult to measure the full worth of his enormous contributions of time and talent. We will miss his ready humor and the twinkle in his eye. He was one of a kind.



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The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been historic and has touched all of our lives in ways we will never forget. For everyone that works and volunteers at the Museum, the tragic loss of Betty Brownlee has been significant. Mrs. Brownlee donated her time as a front desk volunteer, and was a wonderful and enthusiastic part of our Museum family. We will remember her for her avid love of her family, interest in genealogy, and generous support of so many local organizations.

Thank you

The Museum of the Gulf Coast wishes to thank our steadfast supporters of the Port Arthur Historical Society. Your generous contributions are a vital part of our effort to preserve the storied history of this region. Those members and non-members who wish to contribute a memorial in the name of a loved one, or make a donation, call (409) 999-6282, email us at MuseumoftheGulfCoast@gmail.com, or go to MuseumoftheGulfCoast.org



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