



Eastern Connecticut State University

NEWS

3/12/2007

For Immediate Release

Contact: Dwight Bachman

Public Relations Officer

(860) 465-5114 or Bachman@easternct.edu

Edward Osborn, Director of University Relations

(860) 465-5043 or Osborne@easternct.edu

Tim Talley, Public Relations Assistant

(860) 465-0686 or talleyt@stu.easternct.edu

Matthews Documentary Gets Top Billing in Vegas and Mississippi

Picture captions: Henry Frank Harrison Sr, and Sallie Ann Harrison

Willimantic, Conn. -- Denise Matthews, associate professor of communication at Eastern Connecticut State University, has hit the jackpot in Las Vegas, NV. Matthews' award-winning film, "Ask J. Edgar Hoover," will be shown at the 52nd Annual Convention and Exhibition of the Broadcast Education Association (BEA). This year's convention will be held April 18-21 at the Las Vegas Convention Center. Matthews will be presented the Best in Festival award on April 20.

"Ask J. Edgar Hoover" won the prestigious Ron Tibbett Excellence in Film Award at the 10th Annual Magnolia Independent Film Festival in Starkville, MS, in February. Festival director Charlotte Magnussen praised the documentary: "This award was always given by Ron Tibbett to a film maker whose work he admired and felt contributed to the advancement of independent film. "Ask J Edgar Hoover" tells a story which very much needs to be told. The history of the South, and especially the history of Mississippi, is complicated and controversial. It is refreshing to see a film which captures this time period from a different perspective."

The film depicts a white liberal family, the Harrisons, living in Greenwood, MS, during the 1960s. Sallie Ann Harrison's father, Henry Frank Harrison Sr., was

mysteriously killed on Aug. 2, 1966. Police called Harrison and told him that his store was being robbed. Harrison went to the store to open the door for police. As he made his way to the back of the store, the policeman on the scene said he thought Harrison was a burglar, and shot and killed him. In her film, Matthews reveals Harrison's support for African Americans in Greenwood. She believes this led to his death.

Matthews says she got her inspiration to create the documentary from Bennett Miller, director of the documentary "Cruise." After seeing the craftsmanship, passion, and thoroughness that Miller poured into his documentary, she said she wanted to create a piece that was equally stimulating. "During an interview with Ms. Harrison, I recognized that she was a 'verbal virtuoso,' having not only the knowledge and commitment to solve the mystery, but the gift to verbally explain what had happened as well."

"Ask J. Edgar Hoover" was shown at Eastern in fall 2005, and in Gainesville, FL, Sallie Ann Harrison's hometown, in August 2006. Matthews' hard work and dedication paid off, winning top honors in her first film festival competition. Matthews thanks Jeff Arias '06, for editing the documentary. Jamie Gomez, chair of Eastern's Department of Communication, said, "This is a great honor for our department and Eastern, and it also reflects Denise's commitment to staff and students."

###

Eastern Connecticut State University is part of the Connecticut State University (CSU) system and is the state's public liberal arts university. ECSU serves more than 5,000 students each year on its Willimantic campus.

It is the policy of Eastern Connecticut State University to ensure equal access to its events. If you are an individual with a disability and will need accommodations for this event, please contact the Office of University Relations at (860) 465-5735.

#