

# *Distinguished Alumni*

AWARDS

*6:30 p.m.*

*Friday, April 4, 2025*

*Live Oak Ballroom*  
*Dr. Richard W. Setzer Student Center*



*Lamar University  
Alma Mater*

**Lamar, to thee we're singing,  
Voices raised on high.**

**We will forever love thee,  
Laud thee to the sky.**

**We will ever need thee  
As our guiding star.**

**To us, you'll always be  
Our glorious Lamar.**

*Gilbert Rhodes Smartt, professor of mathematics  
at Lamar College from 1945 until 1951,  
wrote the words and composed the music  
to the alma mater in 1951 to celebrate  
Lamar College becoming a senior college.*

*Lamar University  
Distinguished Alumni Awards  
Friday, April 4, 2025*

***Reception***

*Blake Hickman, Pianist*

***Special Performance by The Tenor and His Baris  
Lamar University Barbershop Quartet***

*Thomas Doyle (baritone), Isaiah Jackson (countertenor), Christopher Roland  
(baritone), and Seth Thibodeau (baritone) under the direction of Dr. Serdar Ilban,  
Associate Professor of Voice and Opera, Voice Area Coordinator,  
and Director of Lamar University Opera Theatre*

***Presentation of 2025 Distinguished Alumni Awards***

Carolyn (Johnson) Keating '67

Stephen J. Lee '89

J. David Montagne '74

Rolando X. Rodriguez '74

Herman T. Wilson, Jr. '63

Closing Remarks ..... Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02,'03,'07  
*Director of Alumni Affairs*

Alma Mater ..... Peyton Meeks  
*Soprano, Voice of Lamar Scholar*

# Recipient Biographies



## Carolyn (Johnson) Keating

Carolyn “Carole” (Johnson) Keating was born in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, in 1945. She met her late husband, Thomas “Tom” Keating, at Lamar University when they sat across the aisle from each other in freshman English class. They married on Sept. 8, 1966, and both graduated magna cum laude from LU in 1967. Keating earned a Bachelor of Arts in English, while Tom received a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering.

In 1971, Tom became the Ford automobile dealer in Tomball, Texas. While he built a successful business and planted a pecan orchard, Keating was active in civic life and raising their growing family. Together, they moved and restored a historic Texas home, their beloved “Keatingrove.” They had three children: Ben, born in 1971; Laura, in 1974; and Elizabeth, in 1982. Keating now has seven grandchildren—Carter, Kate, Will, Jack, Mary, Anne, and William—whom she considers perfect.

After Tom’s passing in 2003, Keating entered a new phase of life. She founded Keatingrove Farms, the only certified vegetable farm in Harris County, and pursued a passion for ballroom dancing. In May 2019, she became the World Champion Senior American Smooth dancer.

A longtime supporter of the International Rescue Committee, Keating partnered with the IRC, Children’s Television Workshop, and the LEGO Foundation in 2021 to create Ahlan Simsim, an Arabic-language adaptation of Sesame Street. The program, which received international acclaim, became the largest early childhood intervention in the history of humanitarian response.

Her love for Houston’s theater scene led her to establish the Houston Theater Training Coalition (HTTC) in 2019. HTTC fosters collaboration, resource sharing, and mentorship for young theater makers, helping them build careers in Houston. The initiative has transformed the local theater community and become a national model.

At the heart of Keating’s philanthropic work is Lamar University. In December 2023, she endowed the Carolyn J. Keating Center for Academic and Career Success in the College of Engineering, blending Tom’s passion for engineering with her commitment to creating opportunities for young people. She has also endowed several scholarships at LU, including the Carolyn J. Keating Scholarship in English, the Dr. David G. Gates Scholarship in Industrial Engineering, and the Thomas Joseph “Tom” Keating Memorial Scholarship in Industrial Engineering. She is a member of the Lamar University Spindletop Society and President’s Circle.

Most recently, Keating partnered with Houston’s Hermann Park Conservancy to create Keating Cove, a natural shoreline space in the heart of the city. Dedicated in May 2024, it has quickly become a favorite family destination.

Carole Keating is an expert in joy and gratitude.

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## *Stephen J. Lee*

Stephen Lee graduated from Lamar University in 1989 with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance. While at LU, he earned four letters playing football, including 33 consecutive starts at center. He was ultimately recognized by the Associated Press as a Division I-AA All-American.

Lee began his career in banking with North Park National Bank in Dallas before returning to Southeast Texas in 1993. Over the next decade, he held leadership roles at three regional banks. During this time, he earned a graduate degree from the Southwest Graduate School

of Banking at Southern Methodist University, where he was recognized with the Bracewell and Patterson Outstanding Graduate Award in 1999.

In 2004, Lee briefly transitioned out of banking to work with Pulte Homes in Orlando, Florida, as vice president of field operations. He later returned to Southeast Texas to become CEO and president of Orange Savings Bank in 2008. Under his leadership, the bank expanded into Jefferson County before merging with First Financial Bank in 2013. In 2018, he was recognized by First Financial Bank as the eighth recipient of the Walter F. Johnson Award for his leadership in recovery efforts following the devastation of Hurricane Harvey in Southeast Texas.

In April 2024, Lee was named president and CEO of the First National Bank of Bastrop, becoming the ninth CEO in its 135-year history serving Bastrop County.

Lee and his wife, Jami, who also graduated from Lamar University in 1995, live in Bastrop and have two sons, Mitchell and Michael. Mitchell graduated from Lamar University in 2021 with a Bachelor of Business Administration, and Michael graduated from Texas State University in 2023.

For more than 25 years, Lee has been actively involved in supporting the greater Southeast Texas region. He has served as a director of the Lamar State College-Orange Foundation, chairman of the Lutchter Theater Inc. board, director of Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas Foundation, and director of the 100 Club of Southeast Texas. He is a member of the Lamar University President's Circle and a past member of the Lamar University Alumni Advisory Board and Cardinal Club Board. He also served as a host of Lamar University's Dinner and Conversation.

Lee was appointed to the TSUS Board of Regents in 2021 and now serves as vice chairman.



## *J. David Montagne*

J. David Montagne is the executive vice president and general manager of the Sabine River Authority of Texas, where he has worked for more than 38 years. He previously served as assistant general manager, controller, and authority general office manager. He also represents Texas as project administrator for the Toledo Bend Project Joint Operation.

In 2004, Montagne was appointed to the Texas Ethics Commission by Gov. Rick Perry, serving for five years. In 2009, Perry appointed him to the Texas State University System (TSUS) Board of Regents, and in 2015, he was reappointed for a six-year term by Gov. Greg Abbott. In 1992, Gov. Ann Richards appointed him to the Western States Water Council, and he continued to serve under Gov. George W. Bush until 2003.

Montagne is a member of the Texas Water Association, a statewide organization of water, wastewater, and related entities. He was elected to the TWA Risk Management Fund Board of Trustees and served as the association's president in 2019. In March 2023, he received the Leroy Goodson Leadership in Water Award.

The Montagne family has a long history of service to Lamar University. Montagne served 12 years on the TSUS Board of Regents, while his father, A.H. "Bob" Montagne, served more than 20 years on the Lamar University System Board of Regents. He is a former member of the Cardinal Club and a longtime Lamar University athletics season ticket holder. He is also a member of the Lamar University President's Circle.

Montagne, a 1974 graduate of Lamar University, earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting. His wife, Janet, is the CEO of Texas Healthcare Management and River City Hospice. They reside in Beaumont and have four children and six grandchildren.





## *Rolando X. Rodriguez*

Roland Rodriguez built a distinguished 35-year career in business, beginning with a decade at KPMG, one of the Big Four accounting firms. In 1988, he co-founded MFR, a CPA firm, alongside two former colleagues from KPMG, collectively bringing 40 years of experience.

In 2003, Rodriguez took on the role of managing principal, guiding the MFR Group of Companies through significant growth. Under his leadership, the firm expanded to more than 300 employees, offering accounting, tax, financial, consulting, and outsourcing services to clients across the commercial, international, government, and nonprofit sectors.

What started in 1988 as a small firm with just five employees grew to become one of the largest accounting firms in the Houston region, according to the Houston Business Journal, and one of the largest Hispanic-owned CPA firms in the country.

Over the years, Rodriguez worked with clients in real estate, technology, manufacturing, finance, and service industries. As a board member of a publicly traded company, he played a key role in the sale of a financial institution in a transaction exceeding \$1 billion.

Rodriguez has served on numerous commercial and nonprofit boards and received several accolades, including the Savvy Award for community volunteerism. He was named to the Bay City High School Hall of Fame, recognized among Leadership Houston's 25 Distinguished Alumni, and honored with the Houston Minority Business Council's E-10 Award as one of Houston's top minority entrepreneurs.

A proud Lamar University alumnus, Rodriguez earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting in 1974. He later completed an executive management program in corporate governance at Harvard University and a professional certification in management leadership from Northwestern University. A licensed CPA from 1977 to 2015, he remained deeply committed to advancing education and professional development.

Rodriguez has been a passionate supporter of Lamar University, creating both the Roland Rodriguez Endowment and the Roland Rodriguez Six-Semester Scholarship Program. He and his wife are members of the Lamar University President's Circle and once hosted a luncheon at their home in Costa Rica for 10 Lamar University students participating in a study abroad program. His commitment to service continued in Costa Rica, where he helped fund the construction of a Christian-based preschool for the children of migrant coffee harvesters.

Since retiring to Costa Rica in 2015, Rodriguez and his wife, Linda, have traveled to more than 70 countries. Their experiences abroad have given them a deep appreciation for history, culture, and cuisine while allowing them to explore diverse ecosystems around the world.

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## *Herman T. Wilson, Jr.*

Herman Wilson is president of Pioneer Equipment Co., a retail distributor of Kubota and other farm and industrial equipment brands with two locations in California. From 1988 to 1995, he owned Western Farm Service Inc., which distributed chemicals and fertilizers from 72 locations across five western states. The company was acquired by Agrium Inc. (now Nutrien) in 1995, and Wilson served as executive vice president of Agrium from 1995 to 1996, overseeing its distribution operations, now known as Nutrien Ag Solutions.

Wilson's background in both public and private companies includes experience in mergers and acquisitions, food processing, offshore catering, cement manufacturing, oil and gas production, and oilfield equipment manufacturing.

A Warren High School valedictorian, Wilson was student council president, captain of the football, baseball and basketball teams, and a letterman in track. He attended Lamar University on a football scholarship, where he also lettered in football. He graduated in 1963 with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting and currently serves as a member of the Board of Advisors to the College of Business. He recently completed a term on the Lamar University Foundation Board of Trustees.

Wilson previously served on the Case IH Dealer Advisory Board and was a director of Woolf Farming, a 28,000-acre grower of cotton, tomatoes and tree crops in California's San Joaquin Valley. He was also a director of Mycotech Corp. (which merged with Emerald BioAgriculture) and held leadership roles with CropLife America, RAPID Inc., and the Western Crop Protection Association, where he was chairman of the board. Additionally, he was a member of the Sponsor's Board of the National FFA Foundation and continues to support projects with both the National FFA Foundation and the Texas FFA Foundation.

Wilson and his wife, Bobbie, have been married for more than 61 years and live in Houston. Their son, Dale, manages the California business.

The Wilsons are members of the Lamar University President's Circle and have established the Bobbie and Herman Wilson Student Retention and Success Fund for the College of Business, as well as the Herman T. Wilson Jr. Innovation Fund in Business.

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## *Past Recipients*

Gilbert T. Adams, Sr.	M. Bonner Denton	Nicholas V. Lampson	Jorge Quijano
Patricia A. Adams	Joseph D. Deshotel	Bob Q. Lanier	Charles C. Ramsey
Mike Aldredge	George A. Dishman, Jr.	Larry W. Lawson	Wayne A. Reaud
John E. Alexander	Joseph F. Domino	Alvin L. LeBlanc	Jerry Reese III
Shannon Pier Allen	Phillip M. Drayer	W. S. "Bud" Leonard	Anita L. Riddle
Orlando A. Alvarez	Myrna Pirnack Dunnam	Joan A. LeTulle	Ellen Walker Rienstra
Christopher L. Bates	Vernon G. Durden	John H. Long	Clarence L. Ross, Jr.
Larry Beaulieu	Byron F. Dyer, Jr.	Allen J. Louviere	Lawrence L. Schkade
David J. Beck	Grace Davis England	Don M. Lyle	Charles L. Schmucker
Hester Briscoe Bell	Wilford Flowers	William "Bill" F. Macatee	William "Bill" F. Scott
James E. Bell, Jr.	Mary Jo Lampson Ford	Debra S. Maffett	Don S. Shaver
Norman J. Bellard	Paul D. Fregia	Becky Dickson Mason	Elaine Norman Shellenberger
David E. Bernsen	Charles L. Garrett	Charles "Chuck" E. Mason, Jr.	Mary Frances Sherlock
E. Randolph "Randy" Best	Anthony D. George	Elvis L. Mason	J. "Bart" Simmons
J. Angela Blanchard	Keith F. Giblin	Douglas W. Matthews	Hyattye O. Simmons
Brent W. Bost	Jack M. Gill	Susan Conn McCurry	Susan Williams Simmons
Merlin P. Breaux	Jim Gilligan	Robert "Bob" L. McDill	James P. Singletary
Charles E. Breithaupt	H. Stephen Grace, Jr.	Frank G. Messina	Dan F. Smith
Jack B. Brooks	John E. Gray	William "Bill" B. Mitchell	Michele Yennie Smith
Keith D. Carter	Mary Honea Gray	Jack W. Moncrief	Bette A. Stead
Gilbert A. Castro	Andrew Green	Ray M. Moore	Robert A. Swerdlow
Tamerla D. Chavis	Carl R. Griffith, Jr.	Stephen "Steve" F. Moore	Joseph V. Tortorice, Jr.
William "Bill" C. Childs	Dan S. Hallmark	Glen W. Morgan	Billy D. Tubbs
Rena F. Clark	Ann Die Hasselmo	Dewey F. Mosby	Edwin E. Vallery
Sandra French Clark	Marvin E. Hayes	Sina K. Nejad	Fred R. Vernon II
M. Herring Coe	Stephen C. Head	Larry D. Norwood	Homer L. Walles
C. W. Conn	George J. Hirasaki	Thomas H. Odiorne	J. Donald Warren, Jr.
Yolanda Lee Conyers	Madelyn Davis Hunt	Paula Tate O'Neal	William "Pat" P. Weber
Clara Brown Cooper	Robert "Bob" S. Jones	J. Pat Parsons	Julie M. Wenah
Carolyn Honea Crawford	Carmen Angelle Jordan	Roosevelt Petry, Jr.	Milton S. Wing
Charles R. Cutler	Sarah Pickens Joseph	J. Pike Powers, Jr.	Robert "Bob" J. Wortham
Will D. Davis	M. Celeste Kitchen	Don Pumphrey	F. Randolph Yost



**LAMAR UNIVERSITY**

MEMBER THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM™