

Former Secret Service Agent to give SWOSU-Sayre Commencement Address

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A man who would have taken a bullet for six American presidents will address Southwestern Oklahoma State University-Sayre graduates on Friday, May 7.

Hobart resident Louis B. Sims, a 20-year veteran of the Secret Service-the organization assigned to protect the president of the United States-will deliver the 2010 SWOSU-Sayre commencement address at 7 p.m. at the Sayre High School auditorium.

Born and raised in Hobart, Sims once attended SWOSU in Weatherford on a partial athletic scholarship.

After spending three years as a special agent for Army Intelligence, Sims joined the Secret Service in 1961 where he served six U.S. Presidents-John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan.

Some of Sims' most vivid memories include President Kennedy's assassination in 1963, Secret Service protection beginning for presidential candidates immediately after Robert Kennedy's assassination in 1968, three trips to Vietnam during the war to set up security for the vice president and others, and the Watergate scandal that forced President Nixon's resignation in 1974.

During the Nixon years, Sims oversaw the White House taping system. This led to his testifying before Judge John J. Sirica-the U.S. District Court chief judge who presided over the Watergate trials-regarding the method of recording and storage of the infamous Watergate tapes.

"Watergate did not affect me one way or the other," Sims said. "I was in no way embarrassed. I simply testified in Federal Court of what I knew, and that was it. Emotion was very seldom involved in my work or my decisions."

Shortly after Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford, was sworn into office, Sims was promoted to Chief of International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) for the United States where he spent 4 ½ years. Sims was later transferred to the Office of Inspection of Secret Service, where he remained until his retirement in 1981.

Sims came out of retirement to serve as director of corporate security and vice president of corporate services for the Pennzoil Company until he retired again in 1996 and returned home to Hobart with his wife, Gwen. This retirement was brief, because Sims accepted a post with the EEX Corporation, where he remained until his permanent retirement in 2002.

Sims serves on the Hobart Economic Development Authority, the Kiowa County Industrial Authority and the Hobart Main Street Board. He also serves as a member of the Oklahoma Space Authority Board and is the chairman of the General Tommy Franks Leadership Institute and Museum Board. Sims is also a member of the Kiowa County Hall of Fame.

A proud western Oklahoman, Sims never considered his small-town background an obstacle. After so many years away, Sims is glad to be back home in Hobart.

"For me, I never thought twice about it, just went with a very positive attitude that I could go anywhere or do anything that anyone else could," Sims said. "After you've spent your career doing all of those things and being in all of those places, it's absolutely wonderful to return to your roots and give back to your community."