

Teacher Leaves Legacy

Donated art set to display in library serves as reminder

Page and Story by: Nate Carr

The gold borders and silver seals of shields intricately carved with the family crests of Spanish royalty reflect the overhead lighting in the library. Professionally framed replicas of famous paintings hang on the corresponding walls. Picasso, Velázquez and Dalí add character to the otherwise blank canvases. Landscapes, still-lives and abstract pieces provide variety, representing the Spanish culture well. In addition to these pieces, long-time Spanish teacher, Terry Stewart plans to donate others that he wishes to pass on in order to influence future students.

Over the course of Stewart's academic career in Decatur, he acquired and donated several different art pieces, including replica swords and shields, a maleta used in an actual bullfight in Madrid and reprints of famous Spanish paintings. Much like paint drying on a canvas, Stewart begins to feel the path he laid out for himself at DHS finally finished.

Last year, Stewart announced his upcoming retirement for May 2019, and he wants all of the elements of the Spanish department to remain in the same respected state well after he leaves.

"I realized my Spanish studies wouldn't be anywhere near the same. He [Stewart] had faith in the future of the program though, so that helped rest my unease," senior Marcus Pena said when he heard the news of Stewart's retirement. "I knew I could ask him for help too."

The advanced Spanish classes this year, while different from the previous incarnations, move in a positive direction that challenge students. They provide the same knowledge as seen in the Spanish IV and V classes of the past. The future of the flamenco dance team looks promising. Stewart, in fact, plans to help with that part of the program next year.

All that Stewart accomplished over the years helps preserve a core thought that he believes regarding language and culture. The actions of the people and what/how they

practice: the paintings made, the songs and hymns chanted, the food served on tables and the practices of families in their private domains, pertain to a society and its culture just as much as the language.

"Knowing the story behind something gives it legitimacy to a person," Stewart said. "I always wanted to know why, and there's just so much cultural overlap between language and everything. People and students just don't understand it. Some do, but many don't."

Students describe his method of teaching as story telling. He embeds true stories from throughout history to explain "the why," or even just to explain real world situations and applies his stories from his many years visiting Spain with students.

"There was a ruler, he had a lisp. Everyone thought back then, that rulers were God-chosen. So, they changed the way they said the 'c'," Stewart said. "I had a kid on a Spain trip ask me why they spoke like that, and I told him that story, and it added to what he already knew."

Over the course of thirty years, Stewart visited Spain roughly thirty times, accumulating countless stories and art pieces. What simply refuses to fit in his house from his classroom, or sits in storage, awaits its new home in the DHS library.

"My room is very similar to my house, and I just don't need all of it. I can't fit all of it, even if I wanted to," Stewart said. "I'm donating my one ballet piece to the dance studio, and what I don't take has a rightful place in the library."

Quite fittingly, Stewart chose for his pieces to display in a place that harbors knowledge in the school that gave him so much, where he brought forth just as much.

"While I may be gone, I know that kids in the future will look at those pieces and really get something from them," Stewart said. "It will be my legacy on top of everything else I've worked to achieve."



Photo by: Jada Boner

Charles IV riding a battle stallion, dressed in armor with a spear in his right hand, and in his left hand, the reigns of his steed. The portrait, painted by Titian, commemorated his victory against the Schmalkaldic League at Mulhberg of Spain. Painted by: Titian.



Photo by: Jada Boner

A street scene in Seville, titled Calle Sevillana. Painted by: unknown artist.



Photo by: Jada Boner

An onlooker watching people walking in the Cuchilleros, titled Calle de Cuchilleros. Painted by: unknown artist.



Photo by: Jada Boner

Pictured is a flamenco dancer in Seville. Painted by: unknown San Antonio artist.