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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NACOGDOCHES—“**East Texas Talks**” a close-up look at the region, will begin a one weekend run at the Lamp-Lite Playhouse on Friday, February 20, at 7:30 p.m.

Written by **Dr. Bobby H. Johnson**, a retired history professor at Stephen F. Austin State University, the show will be presented as a radio play modeled after a popular program on National Public Radio. Dr. Johnson recently received a Life Time Achievement award from the Texas Oral History Association.

Other dates are February 21 at 7:30 p.m. and February 22 at 2 p.m., said Director Sarah McMullan. The two-act show will feature about 20 actors and an equal number of musicians, she said.

“This play is a continuation of my ‘East Texas Remembers’ series,” Johnson said. It will focus on the twentieth century, with oral history interviews as the source. Johnson has been gathering such material for more than thirty-five years; he has talked with more than five hundred persons. This will be his fourth play, the last being “A Texas Tragedy,” presented at the Lamp-Lite in 2005.

The setting for “East Texas Talks” will be a radio studio with a live audience. “My goal is to produce an interesting but probing treatment of East Texas,” Johnson added. Vignettes will feature comments from about twenty “characters” Johnson talked with in his research. They range from farmers to housewives and preachers to undertakers.

Musical offerings will vary from Sacred Harp singers to light classics, combined with a little folk music and an audience sing-a-long. Musicians will include Tom Nall, Ab Abernethy, Deborah Dalton, Pat Barnett, Jerry Lacky, Steve Josephsen, Charles Gardner, Charisse Glazener, the Robinson family of sacred harp singers, plus a barbershop quartet from the Timbretones Chorus.

Other cast members include Garland Buffalo, Bobby Johnson, Ron Hurst, Cynthia Ballew, Bryan Holt Davis, Jackie Vost, Katherine and Samantha Whitbeck, Scott Parrish, Rosie Fulks, Robert Adamson, Sarah McMullan, Richard Malloy, Erica Steed, Kent Johnson, Nancy Yarbrough, A.M. Smith, George Deckard, Ken Wood, Amy Maurer, Ken Untiedt, and 10 young actors.

Tickets are \$15 regular \$12 seniors/students. They may be obtained at the regular Nacogdoches sites or by calling the Lamp-Lite at (936) 564-8300. Students and others may attend the dress rehearsal for \$5 on February 19 at 7:30 p.m. The Playhouse is located at Old Tyler Road and Loop 224.

About the play...

“East Texas Talks” is the culmination of something that started nearly forty years ago. My first oral history project occurred in the summer of 1970. I was a relatively young assistant professor of history at Stephen F. Austin State University, and my subsequent efforts ultimately resulted in more than five hundred interviews about the region.

The characters you hear tonight are the voices of East Texas: hard-working, honest people whose experiences unite us all in the common problems and joys of life regardless of where we faced them. Modeled after a popular radio program on NPR, the play is set in a radio studio where some twenty “characters” tell their stories. It is tied together by the Stage

Manager's narration and musical excerpts that amplify the message. It is my wish to provide an interesting but probing treatment of East Texas.

About the author. . .

For those who might want to know more about me, I'm a native East Texan who later grew up in the Houston area. I went to college in West Texas and graduated from Abilene Christian College in 1958 with a B.A. in journalism, which is my first love because it taught me to tell stories. I worked in the newspaper world for a few years, including a short stint in Little Rock, Arkansas, during the civil rights problems that community faced. I then went to the University of Oklahoma, where I studied journalism and American history. I earned both M.A. (1962) and PhD (1967) degrees there. I came to SFA in 1966, and I've been here ever since. I rose to become a Regents Professor of History. Last Fall I received the lifetime achievement award from the Texas Oral History Association.

About oral history. . .

Tape recorded interviews have become an adjunct to the study of history over the past half century. As noted above, my involvement in oral history began in the early 1970s. Since then I have done projects on the East Texas oil boom, the impact of the Great Depression on East Texas, both world wars, the history of SFASU, and the Southland Paper mill. I have used these interviews to write four dramatic productions, all performed at the Lamp-Lite and in other sites around the region. The first, "East Texas Remembers," occurred in 1991, followed in 1993 by "East Texas Remembers World War II." Then, in 2005, I wrote "A Texas Tragedy: The New London School Explosion" which was later done in the state high school one-act play competition. Oral history has been an important part of my life for more than forty years.