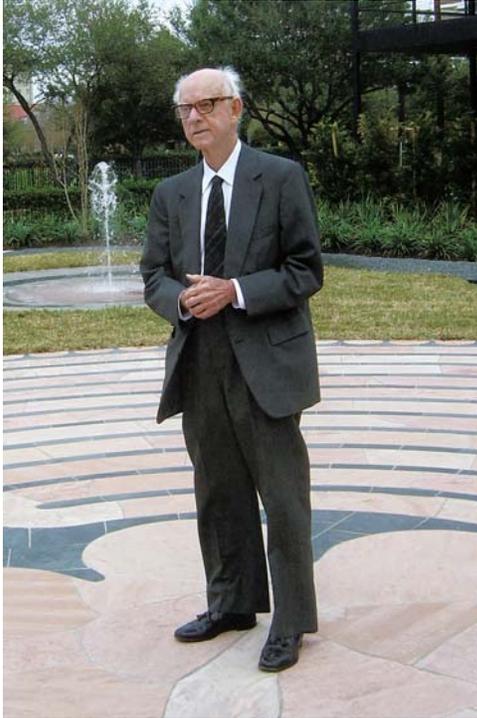


Chapel Garden



Adolphe G. Gueymard

A Man who Knows the Importance of Perseverance

As the University of St. Thomas honors its soldiers who are fighting in the war in Iraq and those who have fought in past wars for freedom's sake, it doesn't want to forget one veteran who has recently honored the University.

Louisiana native Adolphe G. Gueymard, 92, never attended the University as a student, but recently donated a meditation garden, named for his late mother, adjacent to the Chapel of St. Basil. "It's a good school. It is a Catholic school. It's just being able to do something good for Houston and the University. It's doing something good for humanity," Gueymard explained of his gift.

The Felicie Babin Gueymard Memorial Garden is a replica of the renowned Labyrinth of the Cathedral of Chartres, which is made of 11 concentric circles that contain a slow, meandering path to a center rosette, symbolizing pilgrimages made to Jerusalem in the Middle Ages. Gueymard, who is one of six children of former Louisiana State Rep. Adolphe Gueymard, made a career as a petroleum engineer in Louisiana and Texas until he formally retired in 1973. During his career, however, this Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Reserve was called into active duty during World War II in 1942 and fought in the most pivotal battles in Europe. Sitting behind his desk at an office he keeps near his Tanglewood home, Gueymard moved from talking about the University's tranquil new garden to the subject of war and his first taste of it when he landed in Normandy, France, on June 6, 1944. He recalls like yesterday his entry into the war as a member of the 101st Airborne Division. "We flew into France on a glider plane at 3 am on D-Day. We fought for six weeks," he said. Remembered as the day allies first established a foothold in western Europe, D-Day began a roughly year-long campaign to free Europe from Nazi domination.

The following September, Gueymard was flown to a destination near Veghel, Holland, in Operation Market Garden where his unit was positioned in enemy territory. His mission was to keep a highway open for British troops to attack the Germans. Although the 101st achieved most of its objectives, Market Garden proved overly ambitious. The Germans repeatedly cut the road of advance, and the British were unable to relieve their 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem, Holland.

When the Germans mounted their last offensive out of desperation in the Ardennes Forest, Gueymard and the 101st were sent to Bastogne, Belgium, to fight during the Ardennes Offensive, which began on December 16, 1944, and is better known as the Battle of the Bulge. "The Germans attacked every day until they wore themselves out. After that, the war was easy," he said.

Gueymard and his comrades then flew to Berchtesgaden near the border of Germany and Austria to successfully capture the headquarters of Adolf Hitler, often called Hitler's Eagle's Nest. But the war was not over for Gueymard. Following his service in Europe, he was returned to the United States to build an army to invade Japan. However, while taking a two-week pass home in Louisiana, plans to invade Japan were obviated by America's atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. "The war was over so I was discharged," Gueymard said, adding he was grateful for not having to fight in a second theater. Although he was surrounded by death, violence and mayhem, Gueymard said he doesn't feel the war has jaded him or his outlook on life. "We were fighting for the freedom of Europe. That was the world we believed in. Hitler was a terrible thing. We had very strong objectives," he said. "I don't think it's pained me in any way. I am very proud of my three and half years of service to my country. I have no regrets." Gueymard finished his military service with the rank of Major, two Bronze Stars and two presidential unit citations. Despite experiences that could easily taint a man, Gueymard has held on tightly to his faith and to his family. He asked that the meditation garden be named for his mother, who taught him the importance of perseverance. "She taught me not to give up, to keep pushing. She was that type," he said of the woman who ran a seven-bedroom house. "She never gave up until the end of her life. I haven't given up anything so far either."

As an alumnus of Louisiana State University, Gueymard has contributed to his alma mater over the years, including setting up an endowment to establish the Adolphe G. Gueymard Distinguished Professorship in the College of Basic Sciences through the Campanile Charities professorship, which he founded with 11 other alumni. During his career, he worked for Stanolind Oil and Gas Co. and in the oil and gas division of City National Bank (First City National Bank) as Senior Vice President for Petroleum and Minerals. He is affiliated with various professional clubs and societies, including the Petroleum Club of Houston, American Bankers Association and the Houston Geological Society.

As he continues to advance in years, Gueymard, a widower with no children, said he is healthy and in great shape. Aside from advocating a strong faith in God and work ethic, he offers one more piece of advice for those who wish to live long lives: "Don't worry. Just take life as it is," he said. "Worrying will kill you quicker than anything."<

– Heather Saucier '95

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