



# The Bridge

[www.auburnknightsalumni.org](http://www.auburnknightsalumni.org)



***Connecting Members of the Auburn Knights Alumni Association***  
**APRIL 2017**

## From the Prez!

Greetings & War Eagle!

For this edition I am channeling my best Sgt. Joe Friday from Dragnet—"Just the facts, Ma'am!"

The 87th Anniversary AKA Reunion will be held July 5-8 at the Auburn Marriott Opelika Hotel and Conference Center at Grand National. Room reservations can be made by calling 800-593-6456 or 334-741-9292 (ask for the AKA reunion rate). Four days of great jazz music as well as fellowship with former bandmates, associates, and various and sundry families. Bring your horn (or not), hang out by the pool, laugh with old friends, make new ones, share stories of past gigs (the good, the bad, and the ugly), reminiscence as you browse our ever-evolving Archives room, and enjoy the unique experience of being part of the greatest college dance band ever—The Auburn Knights Orchestra!



We look forward to seeing you. While enjoying the stimulating rehearsals, high energy concerts, and hotel amenities, a few minutes of your time would be greatly appreciated. We need volunteers to staff the registration table, monitor for the silent auction area, recruit willing and not-so-willing nominees to the Board of Director, folks with strong backs (weak minds optional) to set up chairs and move band equipment, etc. Let's do our best to put aside that old adage about "20% of the members of any given organization do 80% of the work."

Can't make it this year? The AKA still needs your support. Your Association dues and contributions to the general treasury are used to offset reunion expenses and assist the AKO with major purchases—please remember to renew your membership and send a tax-deductible donation our way. Gifts to the scholarship fund can help current band members attend school next year. How about donating goods or services to our silent auction? Check out this edition of The Bridge for additional ways to assist YOUR Auburn Knights Alumni Association.

So, it's now less than three months to the big event. I hope you will join us this July as we "honor our past, celebrate the present, and plan for the future of the AKO and the Auburn Knights Alumni Association."

Long Live the Knights!

Woody Leonard, AKA President

## The 86th Anniversary AKAA Reunion Auburn Marriott - Opelika Conference Center July 5-8, 2017

The Marriott began accepting AKA Reunion room reservations on **January 1, 2017**. So, if you haven't made yours yet, please do so at your earliest convenience. Room rates are:

Standard:	\$119/night
Junior Suite:	\$139/night
Executive Kitchen Suite:	\$159/night
Executive Suite:	\$179/night

To reserve your room, call Marriott reservations directly at (800) 593-6456 or (334) 741-9292.

## THE AKA NEEDS YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT! DIG DEEP AND MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION TO YOUR AUBURN KNIGHTS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION!

**FOR DETAILS, CONTACT WADE JOHNSON,  
AKAA TREASURER, AT EITHER (334) 332-9156  
OR WADE.JOHNSON@GMAIL.COM.  
PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY!!!**

### Era Bands

Era band players—If you haven't yet heard from your era band leader(s), please contact them ASAP regarding your availability this year.

Era	Leader(s)	Phone	E-mail
30s/40s	Richard Garrett	(334) 322-9300	PIALLC@msn.com
50s	Jay Owen Sonny Harris	(908) 510-3910 (205) 823-4165	bebopbuf@mindspring.com sondrum.harris@gmail.com
60s	Steve Means	(251) 504-6004	aunknights@hotmail.com
70s/80s	Fritz Siler	(404) 421-8674	dogsiler@hotmail.com
90s/ 2000s	Wade Johnson	(334) 332-9156	wade.johnson@gmail.com

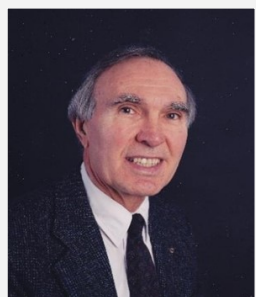
## Notes from the AKA Winter Board Meeting

- AKA President Woody Leonard called the meeting to order at 10:06 AM Central.
- The minutes of the July 9, 2016 meeting were reviewed, corrected, and approved unanimously.
- Treasurer Wade Johnson reported the AKA operating budget is in decline; the current balance is \$8,994.72. He's also identified a less expensive, climate controlled storage option for AKA and AKO needs. The Board approved a motion for Wade to execute a new contract with the new vendor if a lower cost cannot be negotiated with the current rental complex.
- Jeff Jones commented about his disappointment at the lack of planned giving to the AKA from Knights alums. He believes this issue needs more attention to encourage giving.
- Fritz Siler reported a Scholarship Fund account balance of \$53,537.50 as of February 2016. He also discussed re-investing \$30,000 of current scholarship monies into financial instruments paying a higher rate of return. The Board moved to have Fritz finalize his recommendations, then seek Board approval for re-investment.
- John Norton reported last year's Silent Auction realized about \$2,800 for the scholarship fund. He emphatically stated the Silent Auction must have a volunteer to oversee the auction during the reunion; he cannot continue to do it due to the demands of coordinating the reunion. After further discussion, Jennie St. John volunteered to assist. John also stated the auction would definitely benefit from the donation of "big ticket" items. Jeff Jones suggested AKA members be encouraged to donate the use of vacation rentals for the silent auction. Fritz suggested the current AKO contribute a gig to the Silent Auction.
- The Scholarship Committee will continue to look into hosting a fundraising golf tournament to raise scholarship monies; there was further discussion on suggestions to develop a tournament.
- Music Librarian Bob Jemian reported he's continuing to work towards cloud storage of the digitized AKA Library. He anticipates a storage need for 10-15 GB and would like to post the index of library scores to the AKA website. When asked if there was anything the Board could do to expedite the digitizing and cloud storage of the library, Bob didn't believe there was. He's also working with donated charts gifted to the AKA library from the Cliff Harmon estate.
- Peter Blaise reported the November 2016 issue of The Bridge cost \$399.85 to publish and mail; about \$1 per recipient.
- In his AKA merchandizing role, Bob Jemian reported sales have been disappointing; the embroidered polo shirts with the Knights crest have not been selling well. He resurfaced previous Board member Phil Gipson's suggestion that a reunion event tee shirt be designed each year and made available for sale. Fritz recommended Bob contact Rick Bell for tee shirt artwork ideas.
- Paul McCracken has resigned as AKA Historian. Becky Cain agreed to replace him.
- Fritz Siler and Becky Cain are working on organizing the archives, scanning photos, identifying individuals in photos, etc. At this time, there's no more room available in the AU Library for Knights archived items. They're working with the AU Library to restrict permission to remove items from the AKA collection to limited number of approved persons.
- VP Richard Garrett requested suggestions for potential nominees for the 2017 slate of five incoming Board members. Every year, Richard works with the Alabama Press Association to disseminate AKA reunion information to all newspapers in the state. The AKA pays a \$110 fee for that service and Richard will continue that practice.
- While he had the floor, Richard expressed his concerns regarding assignment of burdensome duties with AKA Board appointees. Currently, the Treasurer also has the responsibility of webmaster and the Secretary is also responsible for publishing the AKA newsletter. Richard believes those duties should be separated so no one appointee is overly burdened. Nat Michelson volunteered to take on the Secretarial duties, effective July 2017. Jeff Jones volunteered to assume AKA webmaster duties. The Board approved both assignments.
- Jeff Jones discussed ways to further employ Facebook to market the AKO/AKA to include soliciting more photos from AKA members and the current band. He also asked about the whys and wherefores re: using ProCat video on the AKA Facebook page. John Norton will provide Jeff the contact info for ProCat.
- John Norton provided a 2017 Reunion rehearsal/performance schedule. The Jazz Brunch will be 11 AM – 2 PM; Ike Bell from the music faculty at Alabama State will be kicking off the jam session for the Jazz Brunch. The matinee band is scheduled for 2:00-3:30 PM Saturday in the Ballroom.
- Before yielding the floor to Bob Jemian, current Chair of the AKO Board of Directors, Woody commented that everyone's been provided a copy of the AKO Board of Directors Bylaws for reference. The AKO Board was incorporated to provide support to the current band.
- Bob Jemian reported his and Bob Greenhaw's terms on the AKO Board expire March 2017. He thanked John Norton for coordinating the AKO exhibit at the 2017 AMEA conference. Three current band members supported the AKO booth along with John Norton, Bob Jemian, and Bob Greenhaw. The AKO may play the Tallahassee Jazz Festival on April 4th.
- Woody commented about the timeline of succession for the AKO Board members and suggested Board terms be realigned to start at the same time. After considerable discussion, it was clear that realignment of AKO Board member terms might be more problematic than initially believed. The actual AKO Board member terms will be determined by the AKO Board.
- Bob opined about the stated requirement in the AKO Board Bylaws to hold their annual meeting in July and believed that might necessitate a revision since the earlier AKA reunion time may complicate the scheduling of that annual meeting.

*Continued on Page 4*

## Grace Notes

**Dr. Lacey E. Powell, Jr.:** Lacey Powell, a longtime devotee of the Auburn Knights, died November 14, 2016 at the age of 87. Lacey and



his wife, Margaret, were familiar faces at the annual AKA A reunion and always a joy to meet. Lacey's Alabama music roots ran deep and he enjoyed enviable success. As the director of bands at Georgiana High School, Andalusia High School and Davidson High School, his bands were awarded only superior ratings. Moving to Mobile, he became supervisor of music for the Mobile Public Schools before beginning his 30-year career at the University of South Alabama where he was appointed the music department's first director of bands. While at USA, he was selected

to be the first executive director of the Alabama Music Educators Association. He was the director of the "Marching 200" which performed on the three national telecasts as part of our nation's bicentennial celebration. An active clinician, Lacey conducted All-State and regional honor bands in numerous states and also appeared as adjudicator, clinician, consultant, and speaker. He was inducted in the Alabama Bandmasters Hall of Fame and the Alabama Music Educators Association Hall of Fame. Lacey received his bachelor's degree from Troy State University, Master's from VanderCook University, and Ph.D. from the University of Alabama, with additional study at Northwestern University.

**Neil Everett Lawler:** Everett Lawler, longtime leader of the AKA A 50s Era Band, died October 27, 2016 at the age of 90. A graduate of the



Birmingham Southern Conservatory of Music, Everett earned his Master of Arts and Doctorate degrees from the University of Alabama. Before teaching, Everett was employed by US Steel while he performed as an active musician with numerous groups, shows and musical productions. In 1963, he reinstated his educational credentials and began his teaching career. As a band director, he taught at Tarrant, Montevallo, Berry, Bessemer and Jess Lanier High Schools. Other musical pursuits included 20 years as the conductor of the Miss Alabama Pageant and 28 years as an adjunct professor at the University

of Alabama—Birmingham (UAB). While at UAB, he started the UAB pep band for the new basketball program. For lovers of big band jazz in the Birmingham area, Everett developed the idea of a jazz ensemble for advanced musicians to periodically perform periodically under the sponsorship of the UAB. Known as "SuperJazz," the ensemble continues to this today, 39 years after its inception. Everett was a WW II US Marine Corps veteran who served in the Pacific, Korea, and China. He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Mary T. Lawler (Betty), his son, Neil, and several grandchildren and great grandchildren.



Nattily attired AKA A President, Woody Leonard, addresses the Auburn Knights faithful during the 2016 reunion.

**Need to hire an awesome  
Big Band? The Auburn  
Knights Orchestra is  
awaiting your call.**

**Contact Jayson Perry at  
(256) 945-0079 or by email at  
"jep0021@auburn.edu."**

## Auburn Knights Photos

Do you have old photos of Auburn Knights jobs, rehearsals, trips, reunions, etc.? If so, the AKA A Archives needs copies! Flip through your old photo albums (does anyone use those anymore?), open up those dusty boxes under your bed or in the attic and send us your images, especially photos from the 80s, 90s and newer. We are organizing and digitizing the AKA A Archives and want to add all available pictures from the past. Send them digitally to Becky Cain at [becky56@bellsouth.net](mailto:becky56@bellsouth.net) or contact her about sending in other formats. We need your memories for the Archives!



### Notes from the AKAA Winter Meeting *(continued from Page 2)*

- Jayson Perry, Business Manager for the current AKO, updated the Board up to date regarding the status of the band. The AKO lost their rhythm section after the 2016 reunion; have now filled the drum and bass chairs; however, they still need to fill piano, guitar, two trombone, and two trumpet slots. The current bass player will be leaving the band after the 2017 AKAA reunion.
- Current AKO officers are Jayson Perry, Business Manager; Sam Liaw, Treasurer; Marie Robertson, Marketing Coordinator; Wilson Childers, Equipment Manager; Ben Furman, Equipment Manager; and Ryan Blackwell, Rehearsal Coordinator. The band is undergoing some “teething pains” as AKO management responsibilities shift to the new officers.

- The band needs leads for new gigs. Fritz recommended the band not rely on the AKO Portal for scheduling substitute players for gigs; just use the phone to contact substitutes. Jeff Jones initiated considerable discussion re: the high turnover of AKO players and wondered why. Recruiting new players to the AKO continues to be a challenge.

- John Norton reported good things from this year’s AMEA Conference. He had lots of support from AKAA Board members and the current band in staffing the AKO booth. Also, from AMEA Conference attendees, John was able to compile a list of several high school students expressing interest in playing in the AKO. To that end, Bob Greenhaw attended AMEA jazz band performances and scouted some impressive players.



It's a proven fact—you play better with gray hair!

- In New Business, Richard Garrett discussed ongoing plans to celebrate the Alabama state bicentennial (Alabama became a territory in 1818; a state in 1819). A possibility may be a music fest with a jazz concert combining a recreated 1930s AKO playing side-by-side with the current AKO. If that were to happen, in all likelihood it would be recorded and eventually broadcast via Alabama PBS.
- Woody commented again on the issue of expediting consolidation of AKAA hard copy music scores into our current storage area. If help is needed, Bob needs to reach out to the Board for assistance.
- Woody commented re: the ambiguity surrounding different AKAA membership categories, especially “Associate” vs “Honorary.” He recommended we review those memberships to ensure their proper applicability. Jeff Jones proposed formation of a subcommittee to review/clarify the selection of Honorary members and report their findings at the upcoming July 2017 meeting.
- Peter Blaise opened discussion regarding revising the AKAA Bylaws to open a small number of AKAA Board Member positions to Associate Members. He further explained that he believes it’s ill advised to close Board membership to loyal Associate Members who have demonstrated a long-term commitment to the AKAA. His comments were intended to plant a seed to explore the idea for more inclusive Board membership so he had not drafted a suggested revision to the AKAA Bylaws. As a result of the ensuing discussion, Peter will draft suggested language to revise the Bylaws to allow Associate Members voting membership on the Board of Directors, then forward that suggested revision to Woody. Subject to Board approval, a final recommended revision to the Bylaws will be included in an upcoming issue of The Bridge for approval during the General Membership meeting at the July 2017 reunion.
- Jeff Jones commented about going after large donations from alumni and associate members for annual giving and/or planned giving. He’ll provide copy for The Bridge addressing this issue.
- Jennie St. John inquired as to how scholarship monies are distributed. Basically, could the award of the multiyear scholarship force a commitment from players to stay with the band? The short answer was, “no.”
- 2018 Reunion: John Norton commented the Marriott has not yet produced a proposed contract for the 2018 reunion. Complicating negotiations has been the decline in rooms booked for the reunion (see Attachment G for a room pickup comparison). John will continue to discuss the contract with the hotel.
- Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 2:14 PM Central.

## Memories of Everett *by Jay Owen*

The Auburn Knights 50th anniversary reunion in 1980 was the Knight's first major anniversary event and it crystallized the era band concept still in vogue today. A highlight of that reunion was a performance by the House Band comprised of a select group of Knights alums from the 48/49, 50s and 60s eras. After this reunion, the 50s band became the 'pseudo-survivor' of the House Band but, in order to continue, it needed a musical director; someone who could build upon the success of the House Band. To direct this new 50s era band, coordinator Don Culley recruited noted Birmingham arranger and conductor Everett Lawler who thankfully agreed to fill the post.

Everett was well known among Birmingham musicians and Culley knew him from SuperJazz, the successful big band that Everett cofounded and led. Needless to say, a few eyebrows were raised by this appointment since Everett was not an Auburn graduate and had never been a member of the Auburn Knights Orchestra. But Everett brought fresh new arrangements to the somewhat over-worked 50s band library and his easy manner and competence made him a natural fit as the new music director.

My first encounter with Everett's work was with the arrangements he wrote for the Knights in the mid-1950s. When the band played in Birmingham, Ev would often show up to hear the band but I didn't get to know him personally until he began fronting the 50s Era Band. Ev knew how to put together a good program and how to showcase the band's many talented players. He was also very patient, encouraging and willing to perform new arrangements written by band members.

During one AKAAs reunion, Everett initiated an arranger's workshop to take place during down times away from rehearsals. All interested arrangers were invited to participate and the workshops continued a few years. The workshops were discussion sessions in which arrangers could exchange techniques, ideas and issues. If memory serves, the participants were Everett, Charlie Ard, Gene Mullins, Neil McLean, me, and possibly one or two others. These sessions were fun and productive, valuable not only for the information exchange but for the camaraderie. For transcribing his own work, Everett used Finale, the standard music notation computer software. He was very enthusiastic about this technology and we had many interesting discussions about its use.

Everett and his wife, Betty, made many friends during the many reunions they attended. Betty was a big help to Ev, for example, helping keep track of music folios between rehearsals and performances. We've missed her attendance and look forward to Betty's visiting another reunion soon.

Among other Auburn Knights alums, Everett was honored by being inducted into the Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame. He led the 50s band from the early 1980s, a tenure of over 30 years, working alongside 50s band coordinators Don Culley and Al Norman. Ev donated over 100 of his special arrangements to the Auburn Knights library, an impressive and valuable collection that has firmly secured his Auburn Knights legacy. He is missed.

## Potential Revision to AKAAs Bylaws

During the recent winter meeting of the AKAAs Board of Directors, discussion included possibly revising the AKAAs Bylaws to open a few Board Member positions to Associate Members, in other words, members who never played on the Auburn Knights. The rationale for this possible revision included:

- As other big bands have faded into history, some alumni of those bands have gravitated to the Knights annual reunion and have convincingly demonstrated their long-term commitment to the AKAAs.
- Even graduates of a certain unnamed state university located west of Birmingham have become faithful and loyal supporters of the AKAAs.
- Influenced by Knights alums, musicians from around the country have found a home at the annual AKAAs reunion.
- In the corporate world, it's common to bring in Board members from outside the corporation due to their outside perspective. After all, the Board is focused upon the success of the company.

The AKAAs Board is likewise focused upon the long-term success of the organization. Board members were not opposed to opening Board Member positions to Associate Members but did express a desire to limit the number of Associate Members on the Board. Right now, current thinking is that Associate Members on the Board would be limited to no more than one third (1/3) of the total Board. Subject to Board approval, a final recommended revision to the Bylaws will be included in the next issue of The Bridge for approval during the General Membership meeting at the July 2017 reunion.



The '70s/'80s Band killin' it with Woody Leonard's arrangement of *All Night Long*.

## 2017 AKA A Reunion Schedule

	Thursday, July 6		Friday, July 7	Saturday, July 8
	<b>Registration 1 – 4:30 pm (Ballroom Foyer)</b>		<b>Registration 10 am – 3 pm 5:30 pm – 9:00 pm</b>	<b>Complimentary Continental Breakfast 7-9 am in Lobby Saturday &amp; Sunday Registration 10 – 11 am</b>
8:30 am	<b>Food and Beverage Options</b> <i>Lakeview Room</i> Breakfast: 6:30 – 11:00 am daily Lunch: 11:00 am – 2:00 pm daily Dinner: 6:00 – 9:00 pm daily Patio Bar: 11:00 am – 11:30 pm daily		30s/40s Dress Rehearsal 8:30 – 10 am (Ballroom)	AKAA Board Meeting 8:30 – 10:00 am (Theatre)
9:00			50s Dress Rehearsal 10:00 – 11:30 am (Ballroom)	General Membership Meeting 10 – 11 am (Theater)
9:30			60s Dress Rehearsal 11:30 am – 1:30 pm (Ballroom)	Jazz Brunch 11:00 am – 2 pm (Pool area)
10:00			70s/80s Dress Rehearsal 1:00 – 2:30 pm (Ballroom)	
10:30			90s/2000s Dress Rehearsal 2:30 – 4:00 pm (Ballroom)	
11:00	30s/40s Rehearsal Noon – 2:00 pm (Ballroom)		AKO/AKAA Mixer 4:00 – 5:30 pm (Ballroom Foyer)	Matinee Band 2:00 – 3:30 pm (Ballroom)
11:30				
Noon	50s Rehearsal 2:30 – 4:30 pm (Ballroom)			
12:30 pm				
1:00	70s/80s Rehearsal 5:00 – 7:00 pm (Ballroom)			
1:30				
2:00	90s/2000s Rehearsal 7:30 – 9:30 pm (Ballroom)			
2:30				
3:00	60s Rehearsal 7:30 – 9:30 pm (Meeting Room 1)			
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## 2017 AKA Reunion Highlights

- Era Band rehearsals will begin at noon on Thursday with two hours allocated for each band.
- Following Friday's dress rehearsals, there will be a "mixer" for alums and current band members, with two complimentary beverages for all attendees.
- The Marriott is extending the Patio Bar hours each night and will also offer the Patio Bar menu in the Lakeview Dining Room from 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm on Friday and Saturday nights prior to the concerts.
- There will not be a midnight buffet this year. Instead, the Patio Bar menu will be available after the concerts in the Lakeview Room until 11:30 pm.



Clarke Williams groovin' with the 90s/2000s Era Band.



Bob Greenhaw layin' down some tasteful licks with the 60s Band.

If you didn't purchase CDs and/or DVDs for the 2017 reunion, don't fret! They're available online from Procat Audio Video.

Enter "[www.procatav.com](http://www.procatav.com)," in your browser, search for "Auburn Knights," and you'll find a host of recordings available, including earlier reunions.



Auburn Knights Alumni Association  
c/o Peter Blaise, Newsletter Editor  
1195 Muirfield Way  
Niceville, FL 32578

**The 2017 AKA Reunion  
July 5-8, 2017**

**The Auburn Knights Alumni Association  
2016-2017 Board of Directors**

**OFFICERS**

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Wade Johnson, Treasurer | (334) 332-9156 | wade.johnson@gmail.com

**BOARD MEMBERS**

2014 - 2017 Becky Cain | Jason DeBlanc | Sonny Harris | Jeff Jones | David Zuwiyya  
2015 - 2018 Nat Michelson | David Spencer | Steve Means | Neal Brumbeloe | Jerry Phillips  
2016 - 2019 Norm Boldin | Neil Sasser | Jennie St. John | Joe Watson | Milton Welch

**APPOINTMENTS**

Bob Jemian, Music Librarian | (334) 246-1227 | bob.jemian@gmail.com  
Jeff Jones, Webmaster | (757) 748-7872 | jpjones7@uga.edu  
Becky Cain, Historian | (404) 985-0849 | becky56@bellsouth.net  
John Norton, Reunion Coordinator | (334) 887-9883 | john.norton72@gmail.com  
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**CURRENT BAND**

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