



The Bridge



Connecting Members of the Auburn Knights Alumni Association
DECEMBER 2014

Thanks from the Prez!



Greetings and War Eagle!

For those of us fortunate to attend the reunion each year, the 2014 Auburn Knights Reunion will stand out as one of the most memorable in recent history. Not only did every band perform at a high level, but the song selections and program formats made for two terrific and very entertaining evenings.

The new ballroom layout improved the overall acoustics and visibility, and brought more of the audience closer to the bandstand. Adding the screen behind the band gave each performance that special touch and a

completely new dimension to some of the bands programs. With fewer rehearsals and a revised reunion schedule, AKAA members and guests had more time to spend with family and friends—an enriching reunion experience. And who could forget the 1940s Band's rendition of *God Bless America*. What a unique song choice for a swing band that had the audience standing and singing along!

Many thanks to John Norton, our reunion coordinator, for having the vision and skill for crafting such a fine reunion. John worked tirelessly throughout the year to ensure every detail was addressed and all problems were solved. Great job, John! As always, we had so many helpful volunteers that made the reunion such a success. Without them, none of this would be possible. So, a warm thank you to the volunteers that worked the front desk, handled the silent auction, and pitched-in with the many other aspects of the reunion.

With five new members, I know our energized AKAA Board will help guide us to a successful 2015 and beyond. On behalf of the Board, I thank you for your continued patronage in supporting the reunion, the AKAA, and of course, the current Auburn Knights Orchestra! I hope to see all of you return for our 85th reunion next year. In the warmth of an Auburn July, I can't think of anything better than coming out to the Marriott to bask in the wonderful music and comradery that characterize an AKAA reunion.

Long Live the Knights!
Tim Baur
AKAA President

New Reunion Dates for 2015

As some of you know all too well, due to increased room demand from the AKAA as well as other groups, the Marriott sold out of our room block for this year's reunion. In fact, the entire hotel was sold out! Subsequently, John Norton met with the Marriott staff to explore possible solutions for 2015 as even greater demand for AKAA rooms is expected. The hotel advised if we moved our reunion up one weekend to July 9-11, they could substantially increase our room block for all four nights and we would still be able to retain our previously negotiated standard room rate of \$99.

After the meeting, the AKAA membership was polled regarding the change of dates. The majority of those responding were in favor of moving the dates in light of increased room availability. Hence, the AKAA Board approved the move and an amended contract was signed with the Marriott. By the way, our total room block increased from 7 to 15 rooms on Wednesday night, 48 to 55 rooms on Thursday night, 91 to 110 rooms on Friday night, and 80 to 110 rooms on Saturday night.

Obviously, having more rooms available, especially for Friday and Saturday nights, will go a long way toward avoiding the room shortage problem experienced in 2014. However, you can also help out by making your reservations well in advance of the cutoff date, which is now June 11, 2015. **The Marriott has provided the AKAA a new dedicated toll-free reservation number, (800) 593-6456.** Please use that number instead of calling the hotel directly. Also, please note that while you may request a specific room or floor, such preferences cannot be guaranteed.

If you have never attended a reunion or have been away for awhile, you're encouraged to start making your plans now to join us next year. To see what you've been missing, I also suggest you order at least one of the 2014 CD's or DVD's, which, by the way, are terrific!

**The 85th Anniversary
AKAA Reunion
Auburn Marriott - Opelika
Conference Center
July 9-11, 2015**

AKAA Board of Directors Welcomes Five New Members!

At each reunion, a third of the 15 elected members of the AKAA Board of Directors completes their three-year term and five new Board members take their place; sometimes, even willingly! At this year's reunion, Becky Cain, Richard Garrett, Sonny Harris, Jeff Jones, and David Zuwiyya joined the Board, replacing outgoing Board Members Ralph Black Jr., Andy Duke, Nat Michelson, John Norton, and Sonny Mayfield. The AKAA appreciates their commitment and service.

Two Current Knights Awarded \$2,500 Scholarships

AKAA President, Tim Baur, presented \$2,500 AKAA scholarships each to Charlie Ann Grimes and Dusty Sanders, both vocalists in the current Auburn Knights Orchestra, during the current band's performance at the 2014 reunion.

Notes from the AKAA Summer Board Meeting

- ◆ Tim Baur called the July 19, 2014 meeting to order at 8:41 AM.
- ◆ The five nominees for Board membership were named and the five departing Board members were thanked for their service to the AKAA.
- ◆ Treasurer Wade Johnson reported a balance of \$12,642.24 in the AKAA operating account.
- ◆ Fritz Siler, AKAA Scholarship Chair, reported a scholarship fund balance of \$40,660.63 and recommended two scholarships be awarded this year.
- ◆ Fritz, in his role as AKAA Archivist, is pursuing digital conversion of archived Knights video and audio material to ensure their longevity.
- ◆ Fritz also reported historical Knights photos are deteriorating from acid in the paper on which they're mounted.
- ◆ John Norton reviewed the activities of AKAA fundraising committee. They continue to pursue new fundraising ideas including the silent auction introduced at the 2013 reunion.
- ◆ Historian, Paul McCracken, is continuing his video interview project to capture AKAA history from those who created it.
- ◆ Bob Jemian reported the AKAA music library is growing with the addition of 125 charts from the Cliff Harmon estate obtained through Dr. Cecil Prescott. Digital archiving of music continues with Tom Winstead adding about 200 more charts to the digital library. Over 200 3-2-1 charts (30's vintage tunes) will be coming into the library.
- ◆ Peter Blaise reported the annual cost to publish and mail out three editions of *The Bridge* was \$1,674.24 last year. It mails out at a non-profit rate.
- ◆ The current AKO Board of Directors is comprised of Tyler Strickland, President; Bob Jemian, Chairman, Jeremy Leff, Secretary/Treasurer; Phil Gipson, VP; and Bob Greenhaw rounds out the group.
- ◆ The current AKO still needs to fill the piano slot; the Valentine's Day dances they've hosted in Opelika have been very successful. The band is playing about one gig a month.
- ◆ Nat Michelson recommended that proper focus be given to renewing the AKAA tax exempt status.
- ◆ Although the Board has been working to boost audience numbers at the annual reunion concerts, the number of reunion attendees staying at the Marriott has declined. John Norton is doing his best to ensure reasonable room rates. He noted the hotel is seeing an increase in non-reunion guests like the youth tennis tournament families this year.
- ◆ The Board meeting segued into the annual AKAA General Membership meeting that adjourned at 11:03 AM in time for the Jazz Lunch.



Knights Alumnus and newly minted PhD, Dr. Ryan Chapman, killin' it with the 70's-80's Era Band at the 2014 reunion.

The Rest of the Story

A grandson of slaves, the boy was born in a poor neighborhood of New Orleans known as "the Battlefield," part of the Storyville district.

His father abandoned the family when the child was an infant, and his mother then left the boy and his sister in the care of their grandmother. In and out of trouble, the young boy would sing on the streets for money.

At the age of seven, he found work with a Lithuanian-Jewish immigrant family, the Karnofskys, who had a junk hauling business and gave him odd jobs. They took him in and treated him as almost a family member, knowing he lived without a father, and would feed and care for him. To honor them, the boy wore a Star of David pendant for the rest of his life and years later wrote about what he learned from them: "how to live—real life and determination."

As time went on, the boy developed his cornet playing in the band of the New Orleans Home for Colored Waifs, where he had been sent multiple times for general delinquency. By fourteen, he was hauling coal by day and playing his horn in New Orleans dance halls at night.

Know his name? The little boy who once worked odd jobs for the Karnofskys was none other than Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong!

**NEED A TAX DEDUCTION?
REMEMBER—ALL CONTRIBUTIONS TO
THE AKA SCHOLARSHIP FUND ARE
TAX DEDUCTIBLE!**

Get Well Soon, Sonny Harris!

The Bridge has learned that Knights alumnus and drummer extraordinary, Sonny Harris, recently fell and suffered a neck injury that required surgery. The entire AKA Board of Directors and Officers wish him a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing and hearing him at the 2015 AKA Reunion.



The current Auburn Knights Orchestra taking a bow at the 2014 Reunion.

REUNION DVD'S AND CD'S

The 2014 CD's and DVD's are now available, so if you preordered at the reunion, you should already have received yours. As usual, the quality is excellent. More importantly, all the era bands honored Charlie Higgins in some way and there are some wonderful moments captured in the recordings. Please see the order form below or order direct from ProCat.



**AKAA DVD/CD
ORDER FORM**

BEST DEAL!!!

**ALL 6 BANDS ON Blu Ray
AND CD \$76.00**
\$6.84 TAX + 2.16 SHIPPING TOTAL **\$85.00**

**ALL 6 BANDS ON DVD
AND CD \$68.00**
\$5.60 TAX + 1.40 SHIPPING TOTAL **\$75.00**

Blu Ray's

DVD's

CD's

- ALL 6 BANDS Blu Ray \$47.00**
\$4.23 TAX + 3.77 SHIPPING TOTAL **\$55.00**
- 1930/1940 DVD FRIDAY 7:30PM \$30.00
\$2.70 TAX + \$2.30 SHIPPING TOTAL **\$35.00**
- 1950 DVD FRIDAY 8:30PM \$30.00
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- CURRENT AU KNIGHTS SAT. 9:30PM \$30.00
\$2.70 TAX + \$2.30 SHIPPING TOTAL **\$35.00**

- ALL 6 BANDS DVD \$40.00**
\$3.20 TAX + 1.80 SHIPPING TOTAL **\$45.00**
- 1930/1940 DVD FRIDAY 7:30PM \$20.00
\$1.60 TAX + \$3.40 SHIPPING TOTAL **\$25.00**
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www.AllAboutTheBand.Com



Auburn Knights Alumni Association
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**The 2015 AKA Reunion
July 9-11, 2015**

**The Auburn Knights Alumni Association
2014-2015 Board of Directors**

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BOARD MEMBERS

2012 - 2015 Cathy Bell Altonji | Ryan Chapman | Rob Cothran | Bob Greenhaw | Tony McCutcheon
2013 - 2016 Jana Calano | Cecil Wilder | Hank Elliott | Phil Gipson, Jr. | Reid Gavin
2014 - 2017 Becky Cain | Richard Garrett | Sonny Harris | Jeff Jones | David Zuwiyya

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