



The Bridge



Connecting Members of the Auburn Knights Alumni Association

VOL. XI NUMBER 1 OCTOBER, 2009



Dear Friends,

What a wonderful Reunion we had this year! It was great to see the many faces who have not been able to make it in recent years due to scheduling issues. We hope that next year we will be adjusted to the change in date and have a record number of alumni to join in the festivities. Of course, we owe tremendous thanks to Charlie Higgins who did such a wonderful job coordinating all of the bands, room reservation block, and all of the other details that go into such a huge event. I am continuously amazed at how he orchestrates so many moving pieces into such a seamless event. And the drinks in the lobby Saturday morning were such a nice treat! Thank you Charlie for all you do and for the example you set for us all by providing leadership through service to our organization.

Also, congratulations to our three scholarship recipients this year: Jeremy Leff, Errick Johnson and Jimmy Johnson. Special thanks to Fritz Siler (and friends) for the Scholarship

Committee's work. At the most recent board meeting, it was mentioned that when the scholarship fund was first formed, the goal was that it would reach \$50,000 and we have almost reached this goal! Thank you to those who had the foresight to create such a wonderful resource for our current AKO members.

In addition, the current band sounded unbelievable! The precision of the group was remarkable. I am sure they will continue to cultivate their unique sound and image throughout the upcoming year and next year's 80th reunion concert is one that I am looking forward to.

At the last board meeting, Neil Brumeloe mentioned a book called *Big Bands and Great Ballrooms*, written by Jack Behrens, that mentions the Auburn Knights. I read the book and also spoke with the author who is an expert on territory big bands and he confirmed that the AKO is the oldest college-age big band in the country to the best of his knowledge. This is a considerable accomplishment and we should continue to do our part to help promote the AKO. Please be sure to let AKO Business Manager Errick Johnson know if you hear of any performance opportunities in your area.

I look forward to seeing you all again in a few short months, and don't forget to order a copy of the concert DVD. The DVD includes footage from the entire weekend and is a great memento of the Reunion.

Stay well and God Bless you and your family.

Jana Calano 🎵

Wick Watkins Gift

Shortly after the 2009 Auburn Knights reunion the Auburn Knights Orchestra received a generous gift from Mr. Wick Watkins. This money will go towards the expenses of producing promotional DVDs that the current band will use for marketing purposes.

Mr. Watkins has been a loyal attendee of the Auburn Knights reunions since back in the 70's and is well known to many Auburn Knights alumni. In recognition of his support, the Auburn Knights Alumni Association is pleased to name Mr. Watkins as an honorary member of the AKAA. 🎵

The Auburn Knights Alumni Association

80th Year Reunion
Auburn Marriott Opelika
Hotel and Conference Center
at Grand National
July 20-25, 2010

Need a great band for your club or organization's next dance? Contact now:

Auburn Knights Orchestra
P.O. Box 1024
Auburn, AL 36830
www.auburnknights.com

Errick Johnson
(334) 707-5405
johnsej@auburn.edu

AKAA Reunion Recordings

If you didn't get a chance to place your pre-order for the audio or video recordings of the 2009 Auburn Knights Reunion concerts at the reunion, we wanted to let you know that these recordings are now available for sale at the Kelsey Creative Media web site:

<http://www.kelseycreative.net/webstore.htm>

Each concert was professionally recorded, and in addition to the audio recordings we are offering a special DVD compilation of the entire 2009 reunion weekend. Each concert is included in this one-of-a-kind multi-disc DVD collection. The DVD also includes the following special bonus features:

- A 2009 AKAA Reunion Video Scrapbook: Camera personnel worked all week to capture the magic moments that make the AKAA reunion so special.
- Special interviews with AKAA President Jana Calano and other AKO superstars.

The cost for each individual concert recording is \$12, including shipping and handling. The cost for the multi-DVD video scrapbook is \$39.99, including shipping and handling. Visit the Kelsey Creative Media web site to place your order! **Note that if you did pre-order, we have received word that Kelsey Creative Media currently anticipates a delivery date of early to mid-October.** ♪

2009 AKAA Scholarship Winners

The Auburn Knights Alumni Association was pleased to award three \$2500 scholarships, one each for Errick Johnson, Jimmy Johnson and Jeremy Leff.

I would just like to thank all those involved for the AKAA scholarship presented to me this year at reunion supporting my tuition for fall 2009. Words cannot express how much it means to receive this financial assistance. Throughout my time with the Auburn Knights Orchestra, I felt it a privilege just to be a part of such a wonderful organization. Getting to know the history of the Auburn Knights and share jazz music with generations of musicians was enough for me. Truly, this organization has been a blessing to me in ways I have yet to appreciate. So thanks again to everyone that helped not only in the decision to grant me this scholarship, but also the many donors that will continue helping students that make their way through the current band.

Sincerely,
Errick Johnson

I just wanted to take a second to express my deepest gratitude for the 2009 AKAA Scholarship. I'm sure that most of you know that graduate students aren't recognized for their lavish expenditures, and it's true that every little bit helps. But to be quite honest, it pales in comparison to the gift of making music with my esteemed colleagues in the Auburn Knights. I like to think of it as my personal sanctuary from the rigors and tribulations of school and life, and one of the few things that continues to keep me 'sane'. It is truly a blessing that I continue to cherish every day. Again, please accept my sincerest thanks.

WAR EAGLE!!
Jimmy Johnson

What a blessing and honor it is to receive this scholarship gift. Thank you to all members of and donors to the Auburn Knights Alumni Association. Your generosity is the ultimate memorial to a legacy of great musicians, which I am so proud to be a part of, and means more to me than I can ever put into words.

Sincerely,
Jeremy Leff

For Your Reading List...

Jack Behrens' book *Big Bands and Great Ballrooms: America is Dancing... Again* (available from Amazon.com and other booksellers) offers a nostalgic look back at bands and dance halls, as well as an up-close view of today's leaders and bands. The book includes some of the history of the Auburn Knights Orchestra, and includes several quotes from Auburn Knights alumnus Dorsey Tippet about how the band has managed to stay together for so long and the future prospects for the Auburn Knights and big bands in general:

"The future of our band is very promising. I believe our standards are classic and will always be around, and people will always have a desire to hear them... I have enjoyed listening to swing ever since I was a little girl. I love it! I believe that is the way it will be for others in the future."

If you've read this book and would like to let us know what you thought of it, let us know! ♪

AKAA Board Meeting and General Membership Meeting Highlights

What follows are some highlights from the Auburn Knights Alumni Association Board of Directors and General Membership meetings that were held on July 18, 2009. Many thanks to AKAA Secretary Nat Michelson for providing the minutes.

For several years, Historian Charlie Kinzer has been compiling information for a history of the Auburn Knights Orchestra. Charlie reported that he is ready move forward with the AKAA history after World War II. He is seeking interviewing assistants to speed the work of gathering the oral history.

Based on the report of Scholarship Committee Chairman Fritz Siler, Charlie Higgins noted that we are very close to fulfilling the original Scholarship charter's goal of \$50,000 in standing assets.

Hank Elliott reviewed the history of the recently-completed effort to realize non-profit status for the Auburn Knights Orchestra, Inc. This process started with the tasking by then-President Fritz Siler to A.J. Coleman, Hank Elliott and Charlie Higgins in 2006. The AKO is now incorporated as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. The AKO logo is officially copyrighted. The current AKO corporation was overseen by a board composed of Errick Johnson, Lisa Ray and Mark Belfast. Mark later resigned and was replaced by Hank Elliott. The AKO board has met with the current band to review its legal rights and responsibilities under the charter. An annual meeting of the AKO board will occur two weeks before the reunion, as stated in the AKO board's by-laws.

Hank noted that A.J. Coleman has given hundreds of hours to the crafting of these legal instruments, and that without his efforts the incorporation never would have occurred. The board heartily agreed. Noting the completion of its chartering tasks, Hank asked that the current chairperson officially dissolve the Incorporation Committee

and President Calano carried out his wish.

Current AKO Business Manager Errick Johnson reviewed the gig history for the year past and stated that the band will be doing a monthly exposure performance at Bogie's Bar & Grill in Auburn. Tom Winstead noted that playing for food is a whole lot better than not playing for nothing! The laughter that followed showed the board's concurrence. Appreciation was expressed to Charlie Higgins for mentoring the current band. Commendations were given by President Jana Calano for Ryan Chapman's and Errick Johnson's efforts at pulling the band together and infusing professionalism into this young group.

Reunion Coordinator Charlie Higgins reported that the contract for the 2010 reunion has been signed for July 20-25, 2010. Room rates remain \$79.00 per night. The board approved Charlie's recommendation to hold both membership dues and nightly concert admission rates at \$10.00.

In the general membership meeting, Jack Drescher reminded AKO Business Manager Errick Johnson (and indeed the membership at large) that the band's newly acquired 501(c)(3) status allows interested parties to make tax-free contributions to the Auburn Knights Orchestra. This should assist the band in its goal to become more financially independent of the Auburn Knights Alumni Association.

Also in the general membership meeting, Jeff Jones noted that there is a rising sentiment among the 80's alumni to rise from the ashes of the 70/80's band consolidation. President Jana Calano agreed that this would be discussed further at the February board meeting. Fritz Siler noted the need for up-front commitment from 80's players in order to make this a success. 🎵

OUR LEADERS

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IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Mark Belfast

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2010

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Jerry Phillips
Lisa Ray
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2011

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Ricky Callaway
Dave Edmunds
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2012

Tim Bauer
Norm Boldin
David Friddle
Jason DeBlanc
Jim "Teeny" Mahaffey

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