



The Bridge



Connecting Members of the Auburn Knights Alumni Association.

VOL. VII NUMBER 3 JUNE, 2006

Last Letter

by Fritz Siler



Greetings to Auburn Knights, friends of the Knights, and loved ones:

Thank you! It has been my honor to serve you as your AKAAs President and sometimes Court Jester. There has never been a dull moment. We were, and continue to be, presented with the challenges of changes in many ways. Personally speaking, I must say that some of the challenges I wish I had not had to face. But, endurance and forward thinking have generally won the day.

The groundwork of moving the site for the reunion was carefully laid by the board, reunion staff, and Past President Jon Smith. It was not an easy task, but it was the right thing to do. The end results of the move have proven to be great accommodations at a reasonable price. The reunion committee, led by chief architect Charlie Higgins, is ever thoughtful in tweaking the logistics before the arrival of the faithful minions. This year will be no exception to that with some needed construction and renovation happening at the Lodge.

We have lost some good alumni and beloved friends during my term of

service to you, and we would rather have them back than scholarships that bear their names, but that is the way of life. The memories of each one are honored in a special way through these scholarships. There are those that we miss who choose not attend the reunions for one reason or another, but still we gather to see one another... and we talk about them. But, after all is said and done, we have a great time, laugh and sometimes cry together, and we play.

This year brings to us a new friend. The acceptance speech of Jack Dresher at last year's AU Board of Trustees meeting, during which the Auburn Knights Orchestra was honored, brought us Mr. Jimmy Rane. I sincerely hope that Jimmy "Yellow Fellow" Rane comes to the reunion this year with his family so we can meet and personally thank him for his incredibly generous gift of \$10,000 to the scholarship fund. There is no way that we can thank him enough for this unprecedented, loving gift. In case you are not familiar with who he is, look him up on the Auburn University web site under Board of Trustees.

Lastly, let me take this opportunity to thank the past boards I have served, and the one which is now at work for all, for trusting me to be at the helm through some wonderful times, and through some personal ones I wish I could have back to try again. Nat Michelson and Jon Smith have my undying friendship for their guidance before and during my tenure. Charlie Higgins is the steadfast beacon for our reunions. There is no way we can ever thank him enough for his efforts and his coordination of our huge gathering. The ladies who are in charge of the ticket table, and other things we don't

know about, are worthy of our undying praise. Thanks, Quillen, for starting this crazy thing when I was on the band thirty-something years ago. It has turned out pretty well, don't you think?

Enough already! Come to the reunion and thank them all yourself! Be a part of old friends, new friends, and great playing. Come celebrate with us. Get out your instrument and practice a little, or write us a new arrangement, or just make arrangements to be there. It is nearly that time again. I hope to see you at some point during our festivities. 🎵

The Auburn Knights Alumni Association

76th Year Reunion
July 27-29, 2006

Auburn Marriott Opelika Hotel
and Conference Center
at Grand National
3700 Sunbelt Parkway
Opelika, Alabama 36801
(877) 563-4301

<http://www.marriottgrandnational.com>

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

Ricky Callaway
(334) 750-3927
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Happy Sounds Are Here Again!

CD REISSUE OF
KNIGHTS' 1960 LP
COMING THIS SUMMER

One of the most cherished treasures from the vaults of the Auburn Knights Archives is scheduled to see new light this summer, thanks to a collaborative effort spearheaded by AKAAs associate member Mary Kate Gach and the Dean of AKO alumni drummers, Alvon "Sonny" Harris. With assistance from alumni vocalist Jane Drake, they have teamed up to begin the digital remastering and CD reissue of the celebrated Knights LP of 1960, entitled *Happy*.

With or without a recording, the 1959-60 Auburn Knights are one of the best-remembered units in the fabled history of the organization, for that was the year that Toni Tennille sang, with Bobby Boettcher fronting, Dave Edwards playing sax solos, and Sonny Harris "swinging it smooth" behind the drum kit. Other personnel included saxophonists Norman Boldin and Bob Mayfield, trumpeters Jim "Teeny" Mahaffey and Frank "Boots" Butenschoen, trombonists Dale Mann and Bud Goodrick, and bassist Herb Edwards. It was also during this period that Bobby Collins played a trombone part on his French horn!

The *Happy* album was recorded at the educational television studio at the newly-named Auburn University, and the engineer was none other than Bob Ware, the outstanding alto saxophonist and singer who had fronted the Knights for the latter part of the 1950s. Norm Boldin, now a part-time musician in the Panama City-Fort Walton Beach, Florida, area, remembers that "the recording session was really handled well. Bob Ware knew exactly what we needed. We did very few takes on anything."

The album includes ten examples of the Knights' best work, all from in-house arrangers. Bob "Fop" Richardson, then on the music faculty at

A.U., contributed two compositions, the title tune, "Happy," and "Count's Carol," as well as a vocal duet arrangement of "The Tender Trap." According to Boots Butenschoen, Bob was still finishing up the score to "Happy" when the recording session took place, and some of the players never got parts – they huddled around a score with Bob handing them pages as they played!

Four numbers came from the pen of then-recent alum Jay Owen, including two features for Tennille, "Hallelujah, I Love Him So," and "Too Close for Comfort." As Jay remembers, "Toni was an exquisite and extremely talented vocalist, a great source of inspiration. She could sing anything I could write, and she'd challenge me by coming up with her own vocal ideas."

Tennille also shines on Gene Mullins' ballad arrangement of "Happiness Is Just a Thing Called Joe," and soloists Dave Edwards and trumpeter Harold Alexander come to the fore on Everett Lawler's chart on "You're the Cream in My Coffee." Rick Bell's arrangement of "Castle Rock," then and now a band favorite, features romping blues solos by Boettcher (alto), Harold Alexander, Dave Edwards, Larry Jones (piano), and Herb Edwards.

Rick recently sat down with his vintage *Happy* LP and had this to say: "The first thing I noticed was, 'Hey, this is a good band!' The ensemble playing was crisp, the soloists were hot, and it was great to hear those charts again. I particularly enjoyed the title track. Fop's writing was in top form. Of course the charts by my old roomie, J.H., were outstanding, and Toni sounded wonderful. I also thought the band did a great job on 'Castle Rock' — listening to that tempo makes me realize how young and full of ourselves we were!"

Project exec Mary Kate hopes to have the new CD completed by the July AK Reunion. She and Sonny are following a meticulous engineering process, and also plan to reproduce exactly the original cover for the album, which features a photo of the full band and a portrait of a young Toni

Tennille. The original liner notes, believed to be written by Bobby Boettcher and Bob Richardson, will also be duplicated as they appear on the original. Mary Kate says "this album should be heard by all, and the time for that has come." Amen, amen! from one 70s/80s alum who cut his teeth listening to 50s and 60s Knights at reunions too numerous to mention!

The reissue of *Happy* (after a mere 46 years) is a project that all the AKAAs will welcome, and hopefully may touch off similar efforts at bringing back the sounds of more of our bands from various eras. Are you hearin' all this, Means? Hurston? Watson?

Charlie Kinzer, AKAAs Historian 🎵

Urgent News!

The Marriott will have construction underway, beginning in May, which will affect 13 rooms. We have already booked 116 rooms out of the 129 available rooms.

Some people may not have the same room as last year, and the staff will do its best to handle special needs. As construction continues, the management will release rooms as possible for occupancy.

The hotel is maintaining a waiting list for those now requesting reservations. **Any calls must mention the "Auburn Knights Reunion" to receive our special room rate, and June 25 is the cutoff date for reservations.** Calls can be made to Mary Munday, at (877) 563-4301, or direct to General Manager Jay Prater at (334) 737-2121.

The Marriott will also assist anyone with reservations at another close-by hotel, and will provide complimentary shuttle in their 15 passenger van to such location. Hopefully, this will be of some help to those who did not make advance reservations, and Charlie Higgins will continue to work with Jay Prater in the interim.

2006 Auburn Knights Orchestra Reunion

JULY 27-29, 2006

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Era	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30's	1-3 PM Lounge	9-10 AM Ballroom	
40's	6-8 PM Lounge	10-11 AM Lounge	12-2 PM Ballroom
48/49	11-1 PM Ballroom	11-1 PM Ballroom	
50's	4-6 PM Lounge	1-3 PM Lounge	10-12 Noon Ballroom
60's		2-4 PM Lounge	2-4 PM Ballroom
70/80	4-6 PM Ballroom	2-4 PM Ballroom	
90's	6-8 PM Ballroom	4-6 PM Ballroom	

BAND COORDINATORS

Era	Coordinator(s)	Phone
30's	Charlie Higgins Terry Mosley	(334) 288-5001 (828) 697-8604
40's	Tom Winstead	(256) 852-0138
48/49	Don Irvine Bob Hurston	(251) 666-4720 (901) 755-4567
50's	Al Norman	(404) 237-5916
60's	Steve Means	(256) 549-4646
70/80	Lisa Ray Fritz Siler	(334) 887-1544 (770) 978-1287
90's	Wade Johnson	(334) 285-6846

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Time	Friday	Saturday
7:30 PM	30's	40's
8:30 PM	48/49	50's
9:30 PM	70/80	60's
10:30 PM	90's	Current

OUR LEADERS

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Fritz Siler
3110 Deer Chase Ct. SW
Snellville, GA 30039
(770) 978-1287

VICE-PRESIDENT

Mark Belfast
500 Webster Rd. #193
Auburn, AL 36832
(334) 887-9384

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St. Augustine, FL 32080
(904) 460-1396

TREASURER

Craig Lunsford
2608 Crofton Springs Dr.
Raleigh, NC 27615
(919) 870-1906

HISTORIAN

Charlie Kinzer
1101 Fourth Ave.
Farmville, VA 23901
(434) 392-1731

ARCHIVIST

Jef Thurman, jeft@wwisp.com

LIBRARY ARCHIVIST

Tom Winstead
(256) 852-0138

PUBLICITY

Hank Elliott, (334) 826-1054

AKAA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

COMMITTEE

Vic Atkins, Chairman

REUNION COORDINATOR

Charlie Higgins
(334) 288-5001

EDITOR, AKAA NEWSLETTER

Lyle Johnson
(256) 837-5540 or lyle@knology.net

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Auburn Knights Alumni Association
 Internet: <http://www.auburnknightsalumni.org>
 82 Surf Drive
 St. Augustine, FL 32080
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Auburn Knights Alumni Association
 2006 Reunion Registration Form
 July 28th & 29th 2006

NAME: _____ STREET: _____
 CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____ EMAIL: _____
 PHONE#: _____ Member: _____ Associate: _____ Visitor: _____

Number	Event or Item	Cost	Total
_____	2006-2007 Dues (Members & Associates)	\$ 10.00	_____
_____	Concert/Dance, Friday, July 28th	\$ 6.00 (\$7.00 @ Door)	_____
_____	Concert/Dance, 7:30pm, Saturday July 29th	\$ 6.00 (\$7.00 @ Door)	_____
_____	Saturday Jazz Lunch, 11:00am	\$ 6.50	_____
_____	BBQ Beef or Chicken, Baked Beans, Cole Slaw, Bread & Drink	\$ 5.00	_____
_____	Hamburger, Chips & Drink	\$ 4.00	_____
_____	Hotdog, Chips & Drink		_____
Contribution to the AKA Scholarship Fund			_____
Total Amount Enclosed			_____

Send form & Payment to:
 T Craig Lunstorf, AKA Treasurer
 2608 Crofton Springs Dr
 Raleigh, NC 27615

Don Culley

Donnell Hebbard Culley Jr., 85, of Birmingham, died April 11, 2006. He grew up in the South Highland area of Birmingham and attended Ramsay High School, graduated with a Mathematics degree from Birmingham Southern, and served as a 1st Lieutenant Communications Officer in the WWII Army Air Corps in the Pacific and Japan. After a year teaching at Birmingham Southern, he graduated from Auburn University with a Mechanical Engineering degree. A lifelong musician, Don played trumpet with the Birmingham Symphony and Pops, the Auburn Knights Orchestra and many area jazz bands. He was an active board member and officer of the Auburn Knights Alumni Association. Don established Culley Engineering & Manufacturing Co., Inc. (CEMCO) in Whitesburg, TN, which he operated from 1965 until his retirement in 1985. During that time the family resided in Morristown, TN, where he sat on the board of First Tennessee Bank and was a board member and president of Morristown Country Club.

Don is survived by his wife, Martha Ross Meadows Culley; three daughters, Laura Carper of Seattle, WA, Sally Wilkins (John) of Curtis, WA and Lisa Patete (William) of Charlotte, NC; five grandchildren, Phillip Carper, Michael Howard, Angela Battaglino, Dallas and Andi Wilkins; and a sister, Lillian White (Dewey) of Birmingham, AL.

A memorial scholarship fund has been set up in his name. If you would like to contribute to this fund, please send donations to Vic Atkins, 22 Berkeley Road, Selma, AL 36701-6805. Checks should be made out to the Auburn Knights Alumni Association – Scholarship Fund. Be sure to designate on your check (or in a cover letter) that your donation is in memory of Don Culley.

Don Culley, As I Knew Him

by Everett Lawler

To me, Don Culley was one of the most avid and staunch supporters of the Auburn Knights. His support included planning, playing, practicing, organizing, and generally trying to improve the Auburn Knights reunion. Don seemed to be consumed with AK reunion activities twelve months of the year. Yet, he enjoyed it. The Auburn Knights was his passion.

Don was a first-class organizer, and knew how to get things done. Naturally, his firm methods did not please everyone, but he seemed to always get excellent results whether with the Auburn Knights or in his business. (He was former owner and president of the Culley Engineering & Manufacturing Co. in Tennessee, with some 70-80 employees).

Even though he was involved in many business ventures, Don was a lifelong musician and a superior trumpet player who was more than just a player – he was student of the trumpet. In his high school days, in the 30's, Don played with the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, as well as numerous dance bands.

After service in WW II, Don returned to teach math at Birmingham-Southern College, and started playing trumpet again. It was during this period ('46-'48) that I met Don who had become the premier trumpet player in Birmingham. He soon joined the Marion Evans Orchestra (yes, Evans had a band). Eventually, both Don and Marion went to Auburn in 1950 to play and write for the Auburn Knights. Don received another degree from Auburn University at that time.

As the years rolled by, Don was in and out of playing the trumpet, but, he could lay off playing for years and go into a practice mode and return to a high level of playing, and always "lead-trumpet."



Don had a marvelous ear for pitch and was very sensitive to tuning. That talent came not only from family heritage, but from playing the violin. Before his finger accident, he played violin with the 30's AK reunion band.

Don was such a capable player that he could remember various passages of symphonic literature that he played in the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, not only the symphonic work itself, but the fingering of the notes for the trumpet. He could also recall any arrangement he played with the Knights, including the trumpet fingering.

Don was a mechanical engineer by trade and could build most anything, or he could manufacture a machine that could build any product.

Don was generous with his time and willing to help and advise his friends with their projects large or small... I know, since I was a recipient along with many others.

Don's influence, work, and tireless energy for the Auburn Knights will be missed, but his legacy of devotion to the Auburn Knights and attention to details will be a model for those who carry on. 🎵