Continuing the Centennial Years Salute: 2006-2013

Greek System Celebrates 50 Years at Valdosta State

by Donald O. Davis

During the weekend of October 17 and 18, 2008, hundreds of VSU alumni and spouses will be attending VSU sorority and fraternity reunions. The occasion is fifty years since the chartering of the first national groups on campus. The sororities came in 1958 with national fraternities beginning in 1959. Local alumni that had earlier graduated from other colleges got the VSC groups started. The first sororities were Alpha Delta Pi, Alpha Xi Delta and Kappa Delta. The first fraternities were Pi Kappa Phi, Tau Kappa Epsilon and Sigma Phi Epsilon. (See charts on pages two and three.)

This newsletter continues our series of Centennial Salute articles. This report emphasizes the first 25 years of the Greek System through a brief overview of photographs and captions with the subjects mainly being people that grew up in Valdosta or made their lives in this area after college.

The newsletter also includes information from the museum archives giving some early history of fraternity alumni and their activity in Valdosta. This early tradition set the stage for VSC students to follow when bringing the Greek System to the campus. VSC became coed in 1950. By 1951 male students had established local fraternities.

Honorary Centennial Co-chairs
Chartered in 1906 and opening in January, 1913, VSU is having commemorative events throughout the Centennial Years. Three successful alumni, representing three different decades of VSU history are serving as VSU ambassadors for the centennial years. David Ratcliffe was the recent president, chairman and CEO of the Southern Company. He has received many awards for distinguished achievement and service. Ratcliffe is a 1970 VSC graduate and member of Pi Kappa Phi. His wife Cecilia is also a VSC graduate. Alfred W. (Bill) Jones, III, is chairman of the Sea Island Company, overseeing the legendary Cloister and Sea Island Resort. His business and conservation activities led him to be named Georgia Trend Magazine’s Georgian of the Year in 2004. Jones graduated from VSC in 1981 and is a member of Kappa Alpha Order. Chair Martha Barrs Robertson graduated before national groups established chapters.

Left: David M. Ratcliffe
Right: Alfred W. (Bill) Jones, III
Sigma Alpha Epsilon (S. A. E.) Dance

This SAE dance was held December 26, 1909, in the upper floor of the T. B. Converse Building, 121 North Patterson Street. The building, constructed c.1900 is on the east side of Patterson Street, north of Benny’s Alley. The building is now occupied by Bas Blue Restaurant. The *Valdosta Times* stated that this was "one of the most brilliant affairs ever given here." SAE alumni reported that the dance began c.1898 and the Corbett building was another early site for the function. There were very few automobiles in Valdosta in 1909, so some of the guests would have arrived in carriages, and others could have enjoyed taking the trolley to town.

Caroline Parrish Thomas, in the photo at left from the 1958 *Pine Cone*, worked at Valdosta State from 1929 to 1973, many of those years as Registrar. She died in 2002. In the museum archives is her 1920s scrapbook which includes the invitation below. She wrote about the occasion, “My first ‘sho-nuff’ dance with a written invitation! Christmas holidays 1925 – went with John Winn- had a splendid time. I also went to the SAE dance and the tea dance Christmas afternoon. The Xmas holidays were very enjoyable.” One can note here that SAE held its traditional dance while members of the nine fraternities below combined for another holiday gathering.

The pleasure of your company
is requested at the
Woman’s Club Building
Wednesday evening, December thirty-first
nineteen hundred and twenty-five
Valdosta, Georgia
Dancing Ten to One

Alpha Tau Omega
Kappa Alpha
Psi Delta Theta
Sigma Nu
Lambda Chi Alpha

Alpha Delta Pi
Kappa Sigma
Pi Kappa Alpha
Phi Mu
Chi Omega

National Panhellenic Council
1958 Alpha Delta Pi
1958 Alpha Xi Delta
1958 Kappa Delta
1965 Phi Mu
1971 Zeta Tau Alpha
1984 Chi Omega
1998 Alpha Gamma Delta

National Interfraternity Conference
1959 Pi Kappa Phi
1959 Sigma Phi Epsilon
1959 Tau Kappa Epsilon
1968 Delta Chi
1971 Delta Sigma Phi
1971 Kappa Alpha Order
1973 Sigma Alpha Epsilon
1987 Theta Xi
1996 Kappa Sigma
1996 Sigma Nu
2008 Phi Kappa Sigma

(Colonies)

Fraternity & Football

The first coach of America’s winningest high school football team, the Valdosta Wildcats, was a member of Kappa Alpha Order. The photograph of Turner Rockwell, below, is taken from the 1912 Emory University yearbook. A copy is in the museum archives. He graduated from Emory and was on the football team. He moved to Valdosta, and by the fall of 1913 had Valdosta High’s first football team organized for play. Turner Rockwell became Editor of the *Valdosta Daily Times* and was active in civic affairs. Created in 1989, the Emory University Sports Hall of Fame posthumously elected Turner a member in 1994.
In the photograph above are Jennifer Johnston Steedley, Wendi Nix and Heather Corbett Bonner. Hopefully everyone is aware that Valdosta was recently voted EPSN’s Titletown USA. Jennifer is Director of Public Relations for the Valdosta City Schools and worked diligently to prepare for the celebration with coordination from Heather Bonner, Director of Public Relations for Lowndes County Schools. They are both VSU KD’s and were pleased to discover that Wendi Nix, the ESPN Titletown show host, was also a Kappa Delta, she from Wofford College, SC. Jessie Tuggle, VSU and Atlanta Falcon football great, accepted the trophy on behalf of the City of Valdosta. To quickly access this fun celebration, visit www.valdostawildcats.com, click on play, and enjoy.

**NPHC**

VSC integrated in 1963 with one female and one male student. For three or four years there were few African American students. By 1971 the first historically black Greek organization was chartered at VSC. National Pan-Hellenic Council groups at VSU include.

**Sororities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Delta Sigma Theta</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Alpha Kappa Alpha</td>
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<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Zeta Phi Beta</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Sigma Gamma Rho</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Fraternities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Alpha Phi Alpha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Phi Beta Sigma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Kappa Alpha Psi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Omega Psi Phi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VSU yearbooks show that Zeta Phi Beta began the Miss Black VSC Pageant in 1977. These groups have active alumni chapters.

Probably the most visible person initiated into a sorority or fraternity at Valdosta State is Nancy Grace, above, of CNN television. Nancy Grace is a member of Alpha Delta Pi initiated in 1978. She became engaged to Keith Griffin, Athens native, who played on the VSC baseball team and was a member of Kappa Alpha Order. Keith was murdered while on a summer job in a case of mistaken identity.

A lover of Shakespearean literature, her plan to become an English professor was derailed by the random murder. Nancy, from Macon, completed her degree at Mercer University near family. The incident propelled her to enroll in law school and set her on the path to become a felony prosecutor and outspoken victim’s rights advocate. Her effectiveness led to appearances on Court TV and then to her own Nancy Grace Show on CNN.

Nancy Grace married David Linch in 2006 and twins were born to this couple November 4, 2007. Nancy Grace came to VSU for homecoming 1996. She was a guest of the Kappa Alpha Order chapter who were recognizing their former varsity athlete members on the occasion of their 25th anniversary. The ADPi chapter came to the Ann Street KA house, serenaded Miss Grace, and advisor Barbara Talley Griffin presented her the sorority’s national Distinguished Alumna Award.

Jenny Nadack (Gilbride) of Zeta Tau Alpha 1973
Miss VSC Calendar Girl
Event sponsor Tau Kappa Epsilon
Right: Major Lyn McIntosh, a Sigma Phi Epsilon brother, died at age 33 in April, 1980, in an all volunteer Joint Special Operations Group in the aborted attempt to rescue Americans taken hostage at the US embassy in November, 1979, in Tehran, Iran.

Below: Larry Lee and James Lee Herndon, successful area businessmen and members of Sigma Phi Epsilon, are shown accepting the Lowndes County Historical Society’s preservation award for developing the Cherry Creek North Mitigation Bank for wetland and ecosystem restoration.

Left: Valdosta young men comprised part of the 1970 Tau Kappa Epsilon pledge class. Pictured are Steve Jarmillio, Richard Moore and the late Max Stephenson.

Below: Joey P. Davis, PhD, Tau Kappa Epsilon alumnus. The American School Counselors Association awarded the late Dr. Davis, National Middle School Counselor of the Year in 1983 and later the National Writer of the Year. He was twice named Georgia School Counselor of the Year. Commentary on his writing said that his concepts advanced counseling a decade.

The finalists in the 1970 Miss VSC pageant were all local ladies. Ann Brightwell (McCord), above center, a member of Alpha Xi Delta, was named Miss VSC. Charlotte Cunningham (Ford), also of Alpha Xi Delta, left, was named first runner-up and Linda Reddick (McDermid), right, Alpha Delta Pi, was named second runner-up. Linda became Miss VSC in 1971. Ann graduated from Lowndes High and Charlotte and Linda from Valdosta High. Ann B. McCord is the daughter of Coy C. and Evelyn Brightwell, Charlotte C. Ford the daughter of Earl and Lois Cunningham and Linda R. McDermid is the daughter of Merle and the late Haines Reddick. Pi Kappa Phi sponsored the Miss VSC pageants.

Like Father, Like Daughter
Ken Ferrell was a charter member of Pi Kappa Phi in 1959. His daughter Jill Ferrell Rountree was a charter member of Chi Omega sorority in 1984. Ken was longtime Dean of Students at VSU; Jill is Director of Transportation and Parking. While in college Jill was named Gulf South Conference Senior of the Year for women’s tennis.
Bomb Threat Beauties

It was a cold winter night and Miss America, Laurel Lee Schaffer, right, and Miss Georgia, Lisa Lawalin, left, were in Valdosta for the Miss VSC Pageant. During the swim suit competition an announcement came to immediately clear the building [Fine Arts]. The contestants were out beside Oak Street in their swimsuits and heels, shivering under trench coats. After a considerable delay the pageant continued with Teresa Griffis, center, being crowned Miss VSC 1972. An Alpha Delta Pi, Teresa was a 1970 Valdosta High graduate. She now has her PhD and is Assistant Vice President for Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD)-Atlanta Campus. Lisa Lawalin attended Shorter College. Laurie Schaffer was a graduate of Ohio University and a member of Alpha Xi Delta.

Above: Area State Senator Tim Golden, Delta Chi, is a long time member of the Georgia legislature. He introduced the bill for sales tax free shopping days before school opening. Below: Robert Clyatt, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, a Valdosta attorney who in 1988 had the vision to begin Kids Chance, Inc., now in 32 states. The purpose is to provide financial scholarships so children of catastrophically injured workers can complete their education.

Petite Sharon Smith (Sessions), Miss VSC 1966, stood on a riser to crown Gloria Thompson Miss VSC 1967 – a Kappa Delta crowning a Kappa Delta. Sharon married Valdosta native J. R. Sessions, a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon, who was for many years VSU Director of Alumni Relations and on city council.

Instrumental in the formation of the Phi Mu chapter in 1965 was alumna Margaret Nisbet, left, longtime National Financial Officer of the sorority. Center: Phi Mu Amy Carter is the Valdosta area State Representative in the Georgia Legislature. Photo right: Phi Mu Vallye Blanton was named Georgia Teacher of the Year in 1994. Margaret Nisbet is a Life Member of the Lowndes County Historical Society and Vallye’s mother Tomie Jean Blanton is longtime member.

The late Frances Funderburk, photo above, was for many years a member of the national extension committee of Alpha Gamma Delta sorority. She very much contributed to the chartering of an AGD chapter at VSU in 1998. Her husband Carl continues as a member of the Lowndes County Historical Society, the couple having been long time members.
MEMORIALS

E. Frank Golden
by
Donald O. Davis
Mr. and Mrs. John B. Lastinger

Dr. John C. Huxford
by
Mr. and Mrs. John B. Lastinger

Dr. Noah N. Langdale
by
Judge and Mrs. Arthur McLane

Donald Lee Skiles
by
Charles and Jean Sheffield

Memberships

Renewal and new listings
Continued from previous 2008 newsletters

Dorothy Dewar
Philip & Vickie Ledbetter Everitte
Ken & Sadie Smith Harbin
Ginny Bridges Ireland
Randall Jones
Joy Shelton Mathews
Sidney & Sharon Morris
Mr. & Mrs. Bill Pearlman
Charles & Jean Webb Sheffield
John & Beth Anne Trombetta
Lanelle & Lyndal Webb

LCHS Abbreviated Membership Application for 2008

Individual  $25.
Family  $30.
Contributing  $100.

Name ____________________________
Address ____________________________

Mail To: LCHS
P.O. Box 56
Valdosta, GA 31603-0056

Snow Seniors

George Bennett, Nancy Patterson, Frances Warlick and Ray Shirley, Jr., members of the 1958 Sandspur yearbook staff, are pictured above with snow laden azaleas in Drexel (Brookwood) Park after the memorable February 1958 snow. It was the delight of the town and some said it was the first snow fall of effect in fifty years. Valdosta had a significant snow in 1895 and we have a couple of photographs of this event. Dr. John Crowley of the VSU faculty said that in 1895 the snow fall reached as far south as Havana, Cuba.

Front Row: Mary Nussbaum Jackson, Dale Vickers Meehan, Barbara Pitts Bando, Beverly Greene Hickox, Judy Ellison Folsom, Lillian Carter Strozier. Second Row: Sidney Morris, Pat Griffin Lindenmeyer, Joni Gerlando Hudon, Anne Moore Farquhar, Ramon Griffin, Ben Landey, Comer Cherry. Third Row: Robert Sheffield, Joanne Faircloth Bass, Nancy Henry Moore, Jo Ritch Minchew. Fourth Row: Charles Exum, Emory Dampier, George Bennett, Jimmy Nichols and Ray Shirley. This group had people from Massachusetts to Colorado and many from Georgia and neighboring states. Our thanks to this class for their generous donation to the museum.
The Spirited VHS Class of 1958 Visits the Museum

Above: Pat Griffin Lindenmeyer, Summerville, South Carolina; Sidney Morris, Valdosta; Ben Landey, Atlanta and Ray Shirley, Jr., Florence, Alabama. Even the guys enjoyed the two Marie Harris Johnson scrapbooks that cover the over 150 weddings she directed from the 1950s to the early 1970s. Ray Shirley found a football game program from 1954 with his name on the roster. It was the only year he played. He made a copy.

Center above: Dr. Comer Cherry and wife Marilyn of Tallahassee, Florida: Right and Left; Jimmy and Sunny Nichols of Yarmouth Port, Massachusetts. Comer and Marilyn Cherry made copies of the signature article by Louis Lomax from the April 1965 issue of *Harper’s Magazine* in which Lomax included information on Comer Cherry’s father efforts as a member of Valdosta’s biracial committee.

Above: Ann Moore Farquhar, Greenwood, South Carolina, and Nancy Henry Moore, Santa Fe, New Mexico, identified faculty and students in the Leila Ellis school scrapbooks

Rev. John Harrington (VHS ’65) of Valdosta took the opportunity to visit the museum by coming with his brother and sister-in-law, Jimmy and Kay Harrington of Birmingham, Alabama

Left to right: Barbara Pitts Bando, Marietta, Georgia; Anne Moore Farquhar; Nancy Henry Moore; Dale Vickers Meehan, Valdosta; Pat and Lin Lindenmeyer; and Joe Ritch Minchew, Jacksonville, Florida. The late Tootsie Foy Anderson was a member of the Class of ’58. Her four extensive scrapbooks housed at the museum brought much pleasure to her classmates.
MUSEUM CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 11:  7:00 PM First Baptist Church
    Speaker: Dr. Kevin McCowan, “A Time to Pray, A Time for Peace: A Surgeon’s Story of 9-11”

September 25:  5:00 PM, Board of Trustees Meeting

September 26 & 27: Georgia Southern & Florida Railroad Historical Society Workshop

Lowndes County Historical Society & Museum
305 West Central Avenue
P.O. Box 56, Valdosta, GA 31603
(229) 247-4780
Fax: (229) 247-2840
E-mail: history@valdostamuseum.org
Web page:
http://www.valdostamuseum.org

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