

# Editor's Note

## Securing a legacy; delivering a destiny

BY BILL WAGNON

Thinking back on it now, it happened so fast that I didn't have time to be nervous. In less than 30 minutes I, along with a video crew, had interviewed two Broadway legends—in a dressing room of New York City's Al Hirschfeld Theatre—and had managed to make it back outside without embarrassing myself or running afoul of the union. Just the word Broadway conjures up larger than life images for someone whose previous closest encounter with the famed theatre district was my high school production of *South Pacific* (I was in the audience.). Throw in the word legends and it was almost incomprehensible.

As I walked back to my hotel on that cold, snowy December evening, I remember thinking about all the worry I had made myself suffer through leading up to that interview and how it turned out to be all for naught. Once the interview began, all my worries went away. I simply became star struck. Not so much struck on the stars I was interviewing, but on the stars' words—words that brought a sense of peace over the room, and over me. Birmingham-Southern graduate Jim Newman changes lives for the better. Tony and Emmy Award-winning actor David Hyde Pierce and Tony, Emmy, and Grammy-winning composer John Kander of the famed composing duo of Kander and (Fred) Ebb said so that night in Pierce's dressing room just minutes before Pierce and his fellow cast members would take the stage for another performance of *Curtains*, the latest Broadway success by Kander and Ebb.

To be in the presence of these two accomplished men for even the briefest of time was overwhelming to say the least, but to listen as they conversed with such sincerity and confidence about

the impact that a Birmingham-Southern graduate has on the lives of so many others was affirming.

Jim Newman '86 changes lives for the better. Not only is he making a name for himself on Broadway (currently appearing with Pierce in *Curtains*), he's making a difference—to others. And not just with his acting talents. Jim Newman also volunteers in local soup kitchens, speaks with school kids about theatre, and assists Broadway Cares, an organization that helps people struggling with life-threatening illnesses—living out a desire to help others that was first instilled in him while a student at Birmingham-Southern.

Graduates such as Jim Newman are Birmingham-Southern's legacy. Men and women who were prepared on this Hilltop campus to go out into the world and make it a better place for all people. It sounds trite. That is until you hear it from those who have experienced the impact of a BSC graduate, as I have been so fortunate to do in person the past few months.

As you will read in this Special Edition of *'Southern*, on March 1, your college publicly launched *Destiny: Delivered, The Campaign for Birmingham-Southern*. It may very well be the most important fundraising effort in Birmingham-Southern's history.

Because of the efforts of so many who have come before—alumni, faculty, friends—and through the success of this two-phase campaign, Birmingham-Southern can realize its place among the best liberal arts colleges in the nation. That is the college's destiny, and it will be delivered by drawing upon its legacy—its graduates. Highlighted in the special campaign section of this issue are five other heroes just like Jim Newman—Birmingham-Southern graduates whose names may not be known far and wide, but who *are* making the world a better place, as told by those who know them, those whose lives they have changed.

It's a legacy well worth securing, so that a destiny can be delivered.

Bill

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Jim Newman '86



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