Students see world through the Wiley Travel Fund

BY BARRETT HATHCOCK

“Take 12 callow, unsophisticated college students. Remove them from the safety of a small college campus in Birmingham and set them down in the rarefied, heady atmosphere of Paris. Watch them reenact history, have them match action with fact, and then see their lives change forever. Evelyn Wiley did just that.”

This “recipe for greatness” comes from Bill Eiland, director of the Georgia Museum of Art and 1970 Birmingham-Southern graduate, who delivered the 2005 eulogy for Dr. Evelyn Wiley. Wiley, a 1938 BSC graduate and longtime history professor, helped begin the study-abroad education that has grown into today’s popular Interim term—regularly cited as one of the best experiences during students’ time at BSC.

Wiley was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Mortar Board, and other honor societies. She received a master’s degree from Vanderbilt in 1939 and a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania in 1959. She joined the BSC faculty in 1944 and served as chair of the History Department from 1960 to 1968, retiring in 1972. She passed away at the age of 88 in 2005.

During her time on the Hilltop, Wiley was an avid traveler. Among her journeys, she took a trip to China to explore its nationalist islands, studied Indian civilization at the University of Mysore in India, and traveled extensively throughout Africa. Her interest in travel dovetailed with her involvement with BSC’s Washington Semester in the late ’40s, a precursor to Interim. During the first year of Interim, Wiley took a group of students to Paris to study the French Revolution at the very site where historical events occurred.

“Until I finally discovered that I would never win at this game, I used to interrogate her along the lines of: ‘Have you ever been to …’” says Eiland, “and then I would name the most remote, most exotic countries and cities in the world. The only two places I remember she had not visited were Cuba and Yemen.”

The Dr. Evelyn V. Wiley Travel Fund was established in memory of the former mentor and world traveler in 2001 by former students, colleagues, and friends with the purpose of enabling BSC students to benefit from domestic and international travel opportunities. Earnings from the endowment provide a perpetual source of income to be used for future student travel.

According to Eiland, Wiley believed that the art of teaching was the art of assisting discovery and that travel abroad was a necessary step toward that discovery.

Referring to a $200,000 bequest from Wiley’s estate to the fund established in her own honor, Eiland said, “This gift to Birmingham-Southern College means that many more students will have the scales fall from their eyes; will benefit from direct experience, unadulterated, undiluted through the words of others; and will have life-altering sensations of other cultures, in short, the chance to develop a personal sensibilité that is a prerequisite for real education.”

The Wiley Travel Fund not only honors a wonderful member of the BSC family, but also honors current students on the Hilltop, ensuring that they see the world so that they can then go on someday to change it.

For more information on how to establish a study/travel fund, contact Martha Hamrick Boshers, director of major gifts and planned giving, at 205/226-4978 or mboshers@bsc.edu.
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The Parents Fund at Birmingham-Southern was established more than 25 years ago to give parents of current students an opportunity to assist with needs of the college and to directly support their children’s educational experience.

Some 258 families participated in last year’s fund drive, which was started with a goal of raising $25,000—or roughly 150 families at $150 each in honor of Birmingham-Southern’s 150th anniversary. The drive ended with more than $48,000 raised.

This year, BSC’s goal is $65,000, and so far the college has raised $57,000. But don’t worry—there’s still time to participate in this year’s fund. You have until May 31 to contribute to this year’s goal.

“I realize there are many students within our state who have probably decided what college they will attend before they even start kindergarten,” say Jim and Rasie Miller, parents of BSC student Ellen Miller ’08. “After our daughter decided she did not wish to go out of state, there was only one school on her ‘college list.’ Needless to say, it was Birmingham-Southern. We choose to go the ‘extra mile’ and contribute to the Parents Fund annually because we consider it a privilege to say that ‘our daughter attends BSC.’”

Gifts to the Parents Fund go to support the overall Annual Giving Program, and thus have an immediate impact on current students through scholarship assistance, technology upgrades, faculty research, and other programs. And as always, all students benefit from the Parents Fund.

For more information about the Parents Fund, contact Maggie McDonald in the Office of Annual Giving at 205/226-7737 or toll-free at 800-523-5793, extension 7737, or mmcdonald@bsc.edu, or just use the envelope in this issue of ‘Southern. Some employers have matching gift programs which could double contributions to Birmingham-Southern and the Parents Fund.

Will your ‘will’ be known?

It may have started the first time we took a deep breath and blew out the candles, or perhaps it was when we gazed upon a lone star in a dark sky. We would quietly make a wish and take care to tell no one, in hopes that the wish would come true.

Wherever it began, the practice of keeping our most personal hopes and dreams to ourselves is a practice that many of us tend to use when it comes to a final communication with family and friends. This final communication is the Last Will and Testament—one last opportunity to give expression to personal values and wishes.

The charitable bequest affords a way for virtually anyone to express specific philanthropic wishes. In fact, the bequest is the most frequently used method to support charity in America. A bequest may take on a number of forms, including naming a specific dollar amount, a percentage of the estate, or specific assets.

The philanthropic spirit is given a voice when wishes are expressed in the will. While many may think philanthropy is reserved for a select few, the truth is that every bequest to Birmingham-Southern makes a mark that will last in perpetuity. Many of the college’s scholarships were established with bequests made by alumni and friends of BSC.

If you would like more information on wills, including sample language for making a charitable bequest, we invite you to contact:

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