

For the love of Birmingham-Southern College

BY CARL BAILEY

One of the things that makes Birmingham-Southern College so special is its people. Although I graduated from Auburn University, I have served on Birmingham-Southern’s Board of Trustees since 1985. Over those 24 years, I’ve been exposed to many BSC graduates, and I’ve always been amazed by their life accomplishments. Not just how far they have risen on the career ladder or how much money they have made, but by the impact they have made on the lives of others. Birmingham-Southern graduates *do* change lives.

Maybe the most interesting thing I’ve come to realize about BSC people is that they love their college. This love for an alma mater is very strong, and very special. The college has been asking alumni far and wide of late, “Just what is it that makes BSC so special, so distinctive?” It’s an age-old question to which there have been many, many answers. All of them the right answer in one way or another. But we still haven’t been able to pinpoint that one thing that sets BSC apart from the other colleges and universities. And maybe it isn’t just one thing, but a combination of factors. All I know is that Birmingham-Southern graduates love their alma mater, and they will go to great lengths to help the college.

As always, this issue of *Southern* magazine includes “In Memoriams” for those alumni who have passed on. In particular are six Trustees of the college who have passed away in the last 12 months, each who did great things in their lives, and devoted their time, energy, and resources to help steer Birmingham-Southern through—at times—troubled waters to become an institution that today is realizing record

enrollments and well-deserved national recognition, while securing its financial future.

Mr. James C. Lee Jr. ‘40, a Life Emeritus member of the Board; Mr. Frank M. Dominick Jr. ‘41, a Life Emeritus member and past chair of the Board; Mr. L. Paul Kassouf ‘42, a Life Member of the Board (“In Memoriam” appeared in Fall 2008 issue); Mrs. Gabriella “Gay” Comer White ‘44, a Life Emeritus Trustee; and Rev. Dr. Jerry Edward Sisson ‘58, a 22-year member of the Board and past chair.

Then there was Mr. John Cowan Evins ‘33, also a Life Emeritus member of the Board of Trustees, or “John the Methodist,” as he was eulogized by Rev. Allen Montgomery at Canterbury United Methodist Church in Mountain Brook in February. I was fortunate to serve with John both at Birmingham-Southern and at Canterbury. He epitomized what it means to be a Birmingham-Southern graduate, and a Methodist. His love for both his college and his church was beyond measure.

John gave his time, attention, and financial resources to BSC for some 75 years. He served on the Board of Trustees for 44 years and held just about every position of leadership, including chair of the Board, and chair of the Executive, Development, and Finance and Investment committees.

He was a confidant to BSC presidents, and was there for Birmingham-Southern through some of its most trying times. He played an integral role in keeping the college at its present location, and in ensuring that Birmingham-Southern remained open in the mid ‘70s when enrollment was 727 and the endowment was around \$10 million.

John Evins was the most humble man I ever knew. And he was private, especially about his giving to Birmingham-Southern. Not only did he give his time and leadership to the college for three-quarters of a century, he gave his money—both directly and indirectly. He never would allow the college to talk publically about his contributions, but he was one of the college’s most generous



donors. When an idea or project arose that was for the betterment of BSC and its students, the Trustees would say, “How are we going to pay for this?” John would say, “This is what we need to do, and I will help raise the funds and also make a contribution to see that it gets done.” He also encouraged the many organizations of which he was a member to support Birmingham-Southern.

John never sought recognition for his leadership or his gifts, but both were invaluable. Whether he was leading or giving, it was always behind the scenes. He was a quiet leader. Birmingham-Southern would not be here today if not for John Evins. I truly believe that.

John served his church just like his college. He served as chair of the Administrative

Board and as a Trustee for Canterbury United Methodist Church. He was a Lay Leader and on the Board of Trustees for the Birmingham District of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. In 1995, he received the Francis Asbury Award from the United Methodist Church as the one individual in the nation having the most outstanding contribution to higher

education within the church.

John loved Birmingham-Southern, and he loved the United Methodist Church.

And both will miss him. As will Birmingham-Southern miss Jimmy, Frank, Paul, Gay, and Jerry. I hope you will read their expanded “In Memoriams” and realize how much this place meant to them and how much of their lives they gave back to the college in service. These are the types of respected and dedicated people who lead your institution. And we should all be thankful for their love of Birmingham-Southern.

Editor’s Note: Carl Bailey is a past chair and Life Member of the BSC Board of Trustees. He is retired president of South Central Bell/BellSouth and co-chair of BellSouth Telecommunications.



Sticks up!—March was a historic month for Birmingham-Southern athletics as the men's and women's lacrosse teams played their first games at Panther Stadium on campus. Lacrosse—a combination of the elements of soccer, basketball, and hockey—is a field game typically played in the spring by two teams of 10-12 players on the field, each of whom uses a long-handled stick with a net pouch on one end to carry or throw a small, hard ball into the opponent's goal. Although the rules for lacrosse are different for each gender, the game basics still apply. The BSC women won their home opener—and first match ever—March 5 against Methodist College; the men's team captured its first victory March 8 at Guilford College.

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