

Debate Alumni Newsletter

KU Debate Alumni Association

Spring / Summer 2003

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Jayhawk Debate Reunion a Success[Back to top ▲](#)

Over 100 debaters, spouses and friends, representing the years 1938 (!) to 2002 returned for the first debate reunion anyone could remember. They represented the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and the 2000s. The event took place October 25-26, 2002, with a brunch for late-goers on October 27th.

A number of activities were scheduled - and a few unscheduled - for the returning Jayhawks. On Friday, October 25, Dr. Robin Rowland, current Communication Studies Department Chair, former debate director (1988-91) and debater (1973-77) hosted a reception at his new mansion-he had moved in but a month before. Following the reception the group departed for dinner at the Herford House's hospitality room, where almost 50 shared dinner and Jayhawk stories (some of which had grown considerably over time).

On Saturday morning, October 26, alumni returned to view the new "digs" in Bailey Hall, one of the oldest buildings on campus, but having the best space for debate in the history of the program. (The debate space is the entire sub-basement of Bailey Hall, with offices, room for materials, debates, and a squad room). Noon meals were provided in Bailey Hall with a prominent cooler displayed on the serving table. Actually, the meal consisted of Yellow Subs, a huge step above the sandwiches made from the cooler on various trips in the 1970s and 1980s.

We adjourned to the Satellite Burge Union for the afternoon entertainment which consisted of a program of recollections and a debate.

The recollections were provided by debaters in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s and supplied by: Kent Shearer, Jack Stewart, Steve Mills, Russell Baker, Bill Conboy, Margaret Arnold, Bill Arnold, and Richard Schiefelbusch. They recalled their strongest opponents, favorite tournaments, poor quality motels (things never change) and supplied some startling stories of coach E. C. Buehler.

Following the discussion we heard a practice round of debate. The topic was, "Resolved the 1980s and beyond should be considered the high water mark of KU debate rather than the 1970s and before." It was about as well worded as some of the topics we've been forced to examine for an entire year. The 1980s and beyond were represented by Zac Grant, Andrea Richard, Paul Johnson, Mark Gidley while the 1970s and before were defended by Robert Prentice, Steve Griffin, Kevin Fowler, Jim Prentice, Diana Carlin. Dan Beck became a presence at the 70s table but felt the debate was sufficiently under control that he didn't have to speak. Like many practice rounds, the amount of evidence per outrageous generalization was in the ratio of 1 to 5, and one coach thought there needed to be a few more practice rounds before the group was ready to travel. However the cross-exam was sharp, and the debate produced humor faster than insight. There was supposed to be a ballot at the end, but the idea was scrapped, much to the relief of the 80s team.

The group then adjourned to the Andi and Donn Parson's house for a cocktail party where attendance exceeded any former Heart of America coaches' party. One idea was to find returning teams and take their pictures, so there could be a 'before' and 'after' glimpse of these Jayhawks. A number of these comparisons are contained in the picture section of the newsletter. We even employed a professional photographer to improve the quality of our product.

The highlight of the weekend was a banquet at the Adams Center, where the Jayhawk's grasp of multi-media was demonstrated. The pictures taken over the years had been scanned to discs by year and were presented to the music of the various songs of the year chosen in the past (From Edith Piaf's "Those Were the Days" and "Just Once in a Lifetime" in the 1960s, through "Send in the Clowns"

and "We Did it Our Way "in the 1970s to "The Gambler" and "Some Days are Diamonds" and "Growing Up" in the 1980s.

Joel Goldman served as master of ceremonies, and Dean Kim Wilcox brought greetings from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Various debaters brought back greetings from their decade: Steve Mills from the 1950s, Sharon Mahood from the 1960s, Steve Griffin from the 1970s, John Culver from the 1980s, David Magariel from the 1990s, and Matt Cormack from the current squad.

We honored those returning from the 1940s with special awards, and their pictures are included in the newsletter: Steve Mills, Bill Conboy, Jack Stewart, Fred Cross, Eugene Balloun, Kent Shearer and Richard Schiefelbusch. We had a special award for Russell Baker, who preceded them all. He was able to tell us of KU Debate in the 1930s. Sadly, Russell Baker passed away in December of 2002. All who interacted with him will remember his wit, thoughtfulness and sense of humor.

Again, sadly, we also lost Lee Turner in December of 2002. He wanted to come to the reunion but Betsy Turner said he was not quite strong enough. She invited the debaters of that era to visit Lee in Colorado.

We had an unannounced contest for those who had traveled the farthest and wound up giving a host of Jayhawk mugs: Bob Gass (Fullerton, CA), Tuna Snider (Burlington, VT), Steve Mills (Los Angeles), Kathleen Kauffman (Washington DC), Kent Shearer (Portland, OR), Craig Dudczak (Buffalo, NY), Randy Lake (Los Angeles), Charles Kauffman (Washington DC), Steve Griffin (New Orleans), Robert Prentice (Austin, TX), Mark Gidley (Washington DC), Lynn Goodnight (Los Angeles), Neil and Dana Phillips (Buffalo, NY), Tom Goodnight (Los Angeles and Evanston), Brian Stucky (VA),m Hanna Bell (Seattle, WA), Jim Klumpp (College Park, MD, and Zac Grant (Atlanta).

Current director Scott Harris presented a "State of the Program" address and we learned that while excellence in performance continued, the state of the budget - never adequate to begin with - had worsened. When compared to other programs,

especially those of our competition, we are suffering badly. One confirmed rumor has our budget at half the size of another (unnamed) school in Kansas! Joel Goldman followed Harris' evaluation with a summary of what the alumni committee had planned, how alumni could become a part of the program, and the need for alumni support for the future of the program. No arms were broken, but the message was clear: given state, university and other exigencies, the debate program will need alumni support not only to prosper, but to survive.

Various smaller parties following the banquet renewed old friendships, claimed victories where there had been losses, shifted blame where the losses could not be forgotten, and brought Jayhawks up to date on sometimes years of negligent correspondence.

For those left on Sunday morning, a brunch was held at the Eldridge Hotel, and about 45 were in attendance. The brunch concluded what been an incredible weekend. A questionnaire was passed out (called a "Final Exam") and it demonstrated that those attending want another reunion - and before 5 years have elapsed. The "exams" also demonstrated why Jayhawks debate, what they remember, and why it is important to them. How was the first reunion? "Awesome," the favorite phrase of the 1980s, was resurrected to describe the weekend.

2002-2003 Season Highlights

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This past season was a productive one for a very young Kansas debate team. Twenty-one different debaters traveled to nineteen tournaments around the country. While the core of the team was composed of first year college debaters the squad won twenty-two team and individual trophies at those tournaments. Eighteen of the debaters were first year college debaters.

While the squad enjoyed significant success during the season, it was at national tournaments that the team shown brightest at the end of the season. For the thirty-fifth consecutive season KU debaters qualified for the National Debate Tournament. It is the second longest streak in the country behind only the University of Southern California. This year two KU teams qualified for the

NDT. The team of Matt Cormack and Lindy Simonsen and the team of Todd Jordan and Jordan Tinsley both advanced to the field of 78. Those four students also reached the elimination rounds at the Cross Examination Debate Association National Championship tournament hosted at Arizona State University. Matt Cormack and Lindy Simonsen also took ninth place at the Novice National Debate Tournament at Northwestern University, the national championship for first year college debaters. Two other KU teams competed at the National Championship tournament for debaters in their first two years of college competition hosted by Johnson County Community College and placed two teams in the top five. The team of Kevin Garner and Wade Thomas took third place in the country and the team of Greg Holmquist and Jared Zuckerman finished in fifth place.

During the course of the season sixteen different debaters reached the elimination rounds of various tournaments. Brian Nye, Scott Stinson, Dan Dahl, Jared Zuckerman, Kyle Stearns, Lindy Simonsen, Matt Cormack, Stephanie Craig, Stephanie Kirmer, Lynn Burke, Nick Korzeniowski, Greg Holmquist, Kevin Garner, Wade Thomas, Todd Jordan and Jordan Tinsley all qualified for elimination rounds at tournaments hosted at Universities ranging from San Diego State University in the West to Wake Forest University in the East. In what was considered to be a rebuilding year the young hawks enjoyed a very good season.

In Memory of...

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Russell W. Baker

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of one of KU's all-time great debaters, Russell Walter Baker, Sr, on December 14, 2002. Russell successfully debated for Prof. E. C. Buehler at the University of Kansas in the late 1930s and early 1940s at many national tournaments. He later attended the University of Michigan Law School, and subsequently began a very successful law career, highlighted by two appearances before the United States Supreme Court.

He attended the reunion in October, 2002 and

received an award for more than 50 years of debate and legal excellence. He provided a wonderful capstone to our reunion with the memories he shared during the round table discussion earlier that day. He provided a key link to the range of KU debaters attending the reunion - from 1938 to 2002. He chose to spend his 82nd birthday with us during the reunion, and we appreciate this honor.

He is survived by his son, Russell Baker, Jr.

H. Lee Turner

We regret to report that H. Lee Turner, class of 1951, died at home on December 10, 2002. Lee was an accomplished KU debater in the late 1940s and early 1950s who competed successfully against Harvard, Dartmouth and other historical rivals of KU.

Lee was married in Lawrence in 1951 to Elizabeth (Betsy) Dillon, who survives him. They had six children. After completing his law degree at KU in 1952, Lee went on to become a very successful trial lawyer. In 45 years of practice, he tried more than 1,700 jury cases. He also founded the American Law Firm Association, which currently includes 7,000 lawyers. Lee thought that debate training was an extremely important qualification for attorneys and hired a number of former KU debaters.

Lee was not able to join our reunion but Betsy sent a message inviting "Kim Giffin era" debaters from those years to contact him or stop by at their home. The address is: 52 Boulder View Lane, Boulder, CO 80304 should you wish to send a message to Betsy Turner.

Jayhawk Debate Presence on the WWW

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KU Debate and the KU Debate Alumni Association now have a viable presence on the world wide web.

This new website features virtual squad rooms, including rosters and photographs of KU debate teams throughout history. Although the virtual squad rooms currently begin in the 1960's there are active plans to expand the website to include every KU team from the 1890's to the present.

The website also features an extensive discussion of the rich history of KU debate, current news on the present-day Jayhawk squad, information on Alumni development, information regarding the Jayhawk Debate Institute, as well as contact information for the current KU debate staff and team members and the KU Debate Alumni Association .

Through the gracious and hard work of KU undergraduate student Nick Lerner, this website is coming along well, and is in a state of constant improvement and updating.

**Please visit us on the world wide web today.
The web address is:**

www.kudebate.org

KU Debate Alumni Association

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