



# The ORANGE & BLUE

THE NEWSLETTER FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBUS HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, INC. • WINTER 2017

## From the Desk of Our President

By Carl A. Rhodes Jr. '04



It has been an exciting and challenging eight years since the formal establishment of the Columbus High Alumni Association in March of 2009. In 2008, several alumni came together to help sponsor the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Columbus/Jordan football game. It included a special ceremony during the game at Memorial Stadium and a weekend of alumni events.

Following the celebration, the group stayed together and organized the CHS Alumni Association, helped with the renovation of an alumni memorabilia room at CHS, and hosted an alumni event for all past graduates. The leaders during this formative year were **Cecil Calhoun '52**, **Betty Brinson Bush '53**, **Gloria Jones Dodds '62**, **Pat Hill Lane '64**, **Ken Crumpler '61**, **Vickie Logan Rounsaville '66**, **Milton Jones '54**, **Margie Alexander Drury '59**, and **Judy Whitt**, who was then the Assistant Principal and later became the Principal of CHS. Many others were also involved.

During this time, Cecil Calhoun recruited **Morton A. Harris '52** to the association with a request to form a charitable non-profit corporation for the purpose of providing financial support to enable all deserving students at CHS to fully participate in the school's many cultural, leadership, and academic opportunities, and to enhance the already outstanding academic achievements at Columbus High.

In 2010, we began helping students with their participation in various academic, cultural, and leadership activities by providing funds to cover certain student expenses. In December of that year, we created a permanent endowment to be known as the CHS Endowment for Excellence and entered into an agreement with the Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley for the Community Foundation to serve as custodian of our endowment funds and manage its investments. The income from the endowment fund is transferred by the Community Foundation to our association. With these funds and additional monies from member dues and contributions, our trustees, after determining the areas of student priority needs with input from the CHS principal, transfer funds to be used in support of students in each identified area. Today, the CHS Endowment for Excellence has more than \$500,000 in investible funds and several remaining pledges, all of which are current.

Some of the areas of recent student support include paying the costs for taking advanced placement tests and the PSAT for the entire

freshman, sophomore, and junior classes, assisting students in need of school supplies due to family emergencies, participating in the first annual CHS Investment Club, and the partial funding and selection of the Morton Harris Scholarship for Leadership. We are proud to announce we have initiated one of our largest funding programs to date and are partnering with CHS's Robotics and Space Programs to provide substantial financial support to allow these programs to expand and continue to excel nationwide. Just this month, Luther Richardson (the faculty sponsor and inspiring physics teacher) and the CHS Robotics Team were a mere two wins away from winning the World Championship in Robotics. These two programs are direct links to CHS students' acceptance by the top schools in the county and entry into meaningful careers in the fields of math and science. There will be much more information about these two fine programs sent out in the months to come, including how each of us can further support the students involved.

Throughout the years, CHS continues to maintain its top class reputation for academic excellence, having been named the number one public high school in the State of Georgia by U.S. News & World Report Best High School Rankings for 2017. During the past decade, Columbus High School has consistently been ranked by U.S. News & World Report as one of the top public schools in the United States.

I could not finish my first message as president of the association without recognizing and thanking my now departed friend and mentor, Morton A. Harris (former President of the CHS Alumni Association), for his friendship, guidance, and the many things he did to help our association and its leadership. We dedicated the "Morton A. Harris Auditorium" in his honor in June. To recognize him, I finish this letter with the final paragraph of his last message as president of the association in the March 2014 edition of this newsletter and echo his message of thanks to our Board of Trustees members and all of the CHS family who continue to support our beloved CHS:

"Finally, I want to express my appreciation for the privilege and honor of serving with so many enthusiastic and committed people in our efforts to make a positive impact on the lives of dedicated and bright young students who attend Columbus High, many of whom will become the future leaders in our community. My sincere thanks go to all of those who have given so generously of their time and efforts and financial support on behalf of our Association and to those special people for making my past four years as President so enjoyable and meaningful. Go Devils!"

# Carson McCullers, Roberta Lawrence, and Me

## By John Ballard '62

Earlier this year, Bill Nigut's guest on Georgia Public Broadcasting's Two-Way Street was Carson Dews, founding director of the Carson McCullers Center at Columbus State University. That radio program triggered a sequence of connections between **Carson Smith '33** and Miss Roberta Lawrence, an English teacher at that time who was still on staff when I graduated in 1962. When I left for college, one of my few assets was knowing I had learned to write well, thanks not only to Miss Lawrence, but a teaching staff that was better than most. However, I later wondered, remembering those yellowed pages Miss Lawrence used to copy blackboard notes, if Carson McCullers had been among her students.

To give credit where it is due, in those days there was a program of "lay readers," teacher's aides whose sole assignment was to grade written assignments, dropping by once a week to pick up the week's work, leaving the previous week's papers, and often hanging out after class to discuss grading notes or answer questions. This enabled teachers to assign far more book reports, essays, or research papers than they otherwise would without assistance in grading. With a little practice, students crank out reams of written material, but unless someone takes time to read and make corrections, their writing never amounts to much. (Unfortunately, this program didn't last long, which was a terrible loss, but that's

not the subject here...moving on). In any case, I knew I had a good foundation when I got to college, and the freshman placement tests put me into an honors writing class, skipping freshman English altogether.

For the record, I am not a native Columbusite. After leaving Columbus more than 50 years ago, I lost contact, except for a few visits to see my parents. When they passed away, the only contact I had was through friends by mail, Facebook, and the annual alumni reports. I was born in Kentucky, and our family only arrived in Columbus in 1958, when I was in the eighth grade. Still, those formative years at Columbus High School shaped my development more than any other life experience outside of my family.

Coming from a mostly rural background, I found Columbus to be as enlightening and informative as living in London or New York. The Bradley Library and Columbus Museum became recreational pastimes and helped me develop a sense of living history. The linchpin for me was the Columbus Little Theater, then under the direction of Charles Jones, who spearheaded the salvation of the Springer Opera House. I still have the vinyl record of "Don't Make Waves," a satirical musical by Don Tucker, which primed the social pump of anyone who saw it. Those were the years when a wreck of a Confederate battleship was being hauled up from the river, a project considered

crazy by many at the time, which became the centerpiece of a Confederate Naval Museum.

Carson McCullers was a natural historic link for the Springer with another original production, "The Lonely Hunting: A Memory of Carson McCullers," a sequence of vignettes from her work in a stage setting. Working as a volunteer at the Springer, I watched the rehearsals so my memories are durable. One particular scene depicted an adolescent couple picnicking on a river bank, and I recall hearing that the young woman playing the part was a niece of the real Carson McCullers. In any case, the McCullers production had more artistic substance than the inaugural musical production, "St. Elmo"—festive, fun and colorful, but about as shallow as the book for which it was named.

Thanks to research by **Gloria Johnson '62**, **Cecil Calhoun '52**, and **Vickie Rounsaville '66**, we have images from the 1933 COHISCAN showing the faculty and a page of that year's graduating seniors. Yes, there was the answer. Miss Lawrence did indeed teach Carson Smith McCullers as well as so many of us.

I hope this year's celebration of her life and work is a great success. Her life was a sad and tortured life, so any recognition she now receives comes late but is well-deserved. In some ways, the line she lifted to appear beside her high school photo was prescient.

***Wishing you and your family all the joys of the Holiday Season and a Happy New Year.***

Photo Credit: D. Bailey '09



Miss Roberta Lawrence and other faculty members of CHS in 1933.



Carson Smith McCullers '33. Beside her photo in the 1933 COHISCAN reads the quote: "Music, when soft voices die, vibrates in the memory." This quote is the opening line of the poem "Music, When Soft Voices Die" by Percy Bysshe Shelley.

## 55th Reunion – Class of 1962



## 50th Reunion – Class of 1967





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## Our Mission Statement

- To serve as a liaison between alumni, friends of education and Columbus High School
- To promote loyalty, knowledge and support of Columbus High, its programs and its continued educational excellence
- To encourage alumni association growth, camaraderie and spirit through unity of purpose

*"We are, as always, Columbus High"*

## Reunion Information

If you have questions about upcoming reunion dates, please contact **Vickie Logan Rounsaville '66** at [vickieroun@gmail.com](mailto:vickieroun@gmail.com) or (706) 566-3462.

## Connect With Us

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