

History of the NC State Forever Club

Background

The NC State Forever Club is an organization which has evolved over the past 15 years as something quite special, with its constituents being honored for having celebrated their 50th class reunion. The Forever Club alumni are a group whose careers are mostly behind them and who have gained a wealth of wisdom, experience and life views over the years.

The Beginning

There was never a specific date when someone said, "Let there be an NC State Forever Club!" Classes as early as 1932 had reunions every five-to-10 years. Maud Schaub and Roneo Lefort were involved in the Class of 1932. Skeet Atkinson and Dr. Ralph Cummings were active in the class of 1933. In the 80's, when these classes began having their 50th reunions, the thought was this is good and we should do this forever. As part of the annual university reunion weekend, class presidents and leaders organized these forever reunions. Though not formal or documented, these reunions were recognized by many as the Forever Club Reunions. This continued through the '90s and 2000s. Then, the Forever Club did evolve by a general recognition that the time had come to formally honor those celebrating 50 years as an NC State graduate.

Formative Years

Things began to coalesce in the 2007 – 09 timeframe. Some time prior to 2008, though still undocumented, Fleet Suggs was identified as the first president and Bill Lamm as president-elect. Also, prior to 2008, Brooklyn Winters, director of Constituency Planning, held an official Forever Club reunion/luncheon and medal ceremony, even though no medals were presented. In May 2008, the class of 1958 held its 50th Anniversary with a dinner on Saturday, a worship service at the Raulston Arboretum on Sunday morning, and the honor of throwing out the first pitch at the NC State baseball game at Doak Field against Boston College that afternoon. That honorary first pitch would establish that class forever in NC State history.

Around that same time, other alumni spoke of the possibility of a more formal alumni group that could be known as a Forever Club. The question arose as to what such a club would do and how it would fit into the overall membership of the NC State Alumni Association.

2010

With the approval of the Alumni Association's executive director, an Alumni Association staff member was assigned to work with a group of alumni led by Bill Collins '54, Lynn Eury '59 and Darrell Dail '59. This group worked to develop and formalize the NC State Forever Club. The NC State alumni magazine helped get the word out about the "newly established" NC State Forever Club, which listed Bill Collins '54 as the first president and Lynn Eury '59 as the first president-elect of the group in the spring 2010 issue.

The class of 1961 held its 50th Anniversary banquet in April 2011, headed by Charles Russell '61, former 1961 class president. In 2013, the class of 1953 celebrated their 60th reunion. Additional classes continued to celebrate with reunions throughout the decade.

"Docents" to "Governance"

In 2013, it was suggested by the Alumni Association executive director to invite alumni who had been out of school for over 50 years to voluntarily serve as docents at the entrance of the Dorothy and Roy Park Alumni Center. Docents would greet fellow alumni and visitors to the Park Alumni Center and provide information. A detailed schedule was set up for alumni to volunteer to serve. Alumnus Darrell Dail '59 was very active with this program for several years. The docent program was a simple and meaningful way that gave alumni a chance to serve their university. After setting up this program, there were many discussions and suggestions among the early docent volunteers to design a governance document of how the Forever Club would work.

NC State Memorial Bell Tower

At the 2013 reunion weekend, the Forever Club made the unanimous decision to adopt a \$250,000 fundraising project to finish the Memorial Bell Tower. The campaign started and contacts were made to class presidents and all Forever Club members, soliciting their help in reaching this goal. For their part, Forever Club members raised over \$182,00 for this major renovation project. After a major donation by the Bill and Frances Henry family, the final renovation, costing over \$7 million, was completed and dedicated during graduation weekend 2021.

We Are Official!

2015

The Forever Club officially adopted “Guidelines for Operations” in 2015. In 2017, under the leadership of Ronald Sneed ‘59 ‘71, by-laws were created, defining the purpose of the Forever Club, Board of Directors meeting dates, and officer and board selections. The by-laws have since been in place, with amendments being made as the group progresses.

Since its inception, the Forever Club has partitioned and gained representation on the Alumni Association Board of Directors and has a special “Forever Club Life Membership” dues rate of \$350 for an alumnus and \$450 for an alumnus and their spouse. These 2018 milestones were made possible by then-President Hugh Liner ‘56, ‘57, ‘67 and his executive committee - past President Perry Grady ‘62 ‘67 ‘73 and President-elect Ronald Sneed ‘59 ‘71.

The Roaring ‘20s

2020

COVID-19 shut down the country in 2020. In-person classes were cancelled, athletic events were cancelled, 2020 and 2021 graduations were cancelled and in-person activities for the Forever Club were also cancelled. Zoom became the word of the ‘20s. The Forever Club did, however, continue functioning via Zoom technology. In 2022, in-person meetings returned with Zoom options. Engagement through in-person outreach to Eastern and Western North Carolina and a quarterly newsletter were initiated and this Forever Club History document was created. Back to business as usual with renewed optimism.

Our Leadership Team

Although it should not be surprising, the Forever Club leadership has been universally outstanding with its executive committee (president, president-elect, past president), board of directors and emeritus members.

The group also has been augmented by excellent support from the Alumni Association staff, who has provided much needed notes, minutes, meeting hosting and event planning.

Presidents and Key Alumni Association Staff Support

This brief history, thus, thanks the key leaders to date who truly have made the Forever Club successful.

PRESIDENTS:

2007 – FLEET SUGGS

2008-09 – BILL LAMM

2009-11 – BILL COLLINS

2011-13 – LYNN EURY

2013-15 – DARRELL DAIL

2015-17 – PERRY GRADY

2017-19 – HUGH LINER

2019-21 – RON SNEED

2021-23 – I. MILLER WARREN

2023-25 – JOHN BARTELME (president-elect)

KEY AA STAFF:

BROOKLYN WINTERS

JASON GIPE

ALLISON DODSON

MATTHEW WILLIAMS

KELLY WRIGHT