



HOW THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CHAPTER OF ACACIA WAS FORMED

By

Joseph Boyett
Venerable Dean-1966-67

Preface

Several years ago, my wife Jimmie was doing some genealogical research and compiling family histories. I was trying to fill in some details about my family such as how my mother and father met, where they went to school, what life was like for them growing up and so on. I realized that although I thought I knew my parents and other relatives well there were many details of their lives about which I knew little. Most of them had passed away and it was too late to ask them about their lives. Much of what I would like to have known about them was lost forever. That's when I decide to write a kind of mini-history of my life that I could pass on to my kids and grandkids. Acacia was a part of my life story. This is what I wrote for my kids to tell them about an organization that meant a great deal to me at an important point in my life and was the source of friendships that remain important to me to this day.

What follows is my recollection of events that took place in Athens, GA at the University of Georgia roughly from the fall of 1964 when I was a sophomore at Georgia until the summer of 1967 when I graduated. It is based upon my memory of what happened and notes that I recorded in a journal that I kept during my college years. This is a true story. Of course, as someone once said there is the truth and our memory of the truth. The two are not always the same.

In 1963, when I began my freshman year at the University of Georgia, if you wanted to have much of a social life you had to be Greek. The student union did have dances and other activities, but their entertainment paled in comparison to what even the smallest fraternity could offer. I learned that during my freshman year. Consequently, I decided at the beginning of my sophomore year (1964) to go out for rush.



Me circa 1965

As I recall the process, you filled out a form specifying which fraternities you wanted to visit, and a weekend was set aside in the early fall when you went around to the various houses you had selected. They looked you over. You looked them over. And, you got bids to join. If you were an athlete and/or "stud" you got bids from the best or, at least, the largest houses. If your father or brother had been a member of a particular fraternity, you pretty much got a bid whether they wanted you or not. I wasn't an athlete or stud, my brother hadn't attended Georgia, and neither had my father. In short, my bid list was pretty short. In fact, it was pretty much non-existent. It didn't really matter. I just wasn't impressed, and the frats I met were likewise unimpressed with me. I didn't relate to the people I met. After the first round of visits I dropped out of rush.

A few weeks later I got a phone call from a guy by the name of John Phillips. He said he was a member of a fraternity called ACACIA and that he was in the Navy and stationed at the Navy Supply Corp School in Athens. He was working with the national office of ACACIA to try and get a chapter started at Georgia, and he invited me to a meeting in the student center the following Tuesday night. I'm not sure why I agreed to go but I did.

The next Tuesday I went to the meeting. There were maybe ten other guys there, including Phillips and two other Acacians, Greg Nelson and Dick Armstrong, who were also stationed at the Navy School. Phillips explained that Acacia was a national fraternity affiliated with the Masonic Lodge. Most of its chapters were in the northeast and mid-west, and it wanted to open chapters in the south. They had selected Georgia as one of the schools for their expansion effort and were looking for students who wanted to be part of starting a new fraternity at Georgia. Their pitch was simple.

If we joined Acacia instead of an existing fraternity at Georgia, we would be able to shape the chapter into the kind of fraternity we wanted. We wouldn't have to be pledges and take orders from some older upper-class men. We would be in charge from the start. I must say that appealed to me. Phillips asked for questions but there weren't any. He then closed the meeting by saying that he felt we had a good start and that he wanted each of us to come back the next Tuesday night and bring two other guys with us. That's the way he said we would build the fraternity. Each of us would bring in two guys. Those two guys would bring in two more and so on. He asked us if we didn't think we could do that. He was sure all of us knew two people that we could bring. Didn't we? We all murmured that we did or something like that. Good, he said, good.

Well, I had agreed to bring two people to the next meeting, but there was just one problem. I didn't know two people. I mean I knew my new roommate, but I was sure he wouldn't be interested. He was a graduate student studying entomology and too involved with his bugs. I was very much a loner and really didn't know anyone else.

The rest of the week, as I went to class and wandered around the campus, I kept trying to figure out how I was going to find two people to take to that damn meeting. Of course, I didn't really know Phillips and was under no obligation to him, but I had mumbled my commitment and somehow, I felt that I had given my word. It was kind of a John Wayne thing, but I wasn't about to give up. Then, I ran into Jerry Mitchell.

I had been to the Mayflower for dinner and was walking back to my car when someone yelled my name. I turned and there was this guy approaching me. I must admit I had no idea who he was or why he would know me, but I stopped and waited for him to catch up. "Hi, Joe," he said, "Jerry Mitchell, remember me? I was on your hall in Reed last year." "Oh yeah," I said without the faintest clue who he was, "how are you?" We stood there and talked for a few moments. Jerry told me that he was living off campus. He and a guy by the name of David Carnahan, who had also lived on our hall in Reed the year before, had rented an apartment in a house on Milledge Avenue. I had no idea who David was and couldn't recall ever meeting him, but as Jerry and I stood there talking something dawned on me. Jerry, David—two guys. Meeting Tuesday, need two guys. Jerry, David—two guys for meeting. Now, if I could only convince Jerry to go to the meeting and bring David along. How could I persuade him? I formulated my argument this way.

"You know, Jerry," I began. "these guys contacted me about starting a new fraternity and they are having a meeting next Tuesday night and..."

"I loved to go," said Jerry. "You mind if I bring David?"

That was that.

The next Tuesday, Jerry and David met me at the entrance to the student center and we went in for the meeting. Except for Phillips and the other Acacians, we were the only people there. No one from the previous week's meeting showed up except me with my two recruits.

And, that is how I came to establish the University of Georgia chapter of Acacia fraternity. I'm student number one on the rolls. In actual enrollment numbers, I think I am number 4 or 5 because members of the chapter board were given the lowest numbers. I later became the President and Chapter Advisor.



Jerry Mitchell (Left) & David Caranhan (Right)

SELLING ACACIA DOOR TO DOOR

After the Tuesday night meeting, Jerry, David and I just stuck with it, mostly because Jerry insisted that we could not stop. He talked me out of quitting many times. We got little help from the national fraternity, and I don't recall seeing Phillips or any of the other Navy School guys many more times after that. It was up to three of us.

Phillips had given us a computer printout with the names and addresses of guys who had dropped out of rush that fall. We began with that. David, Jerry, and I split up the list and toured the dorms knocking on doors. It was really door-to-door selling and most people weren't buying what we had to sell. I hated this cold calling and threatened to quit just about every week. Jerry would talk me out of it.

We met a couple of guys who came to a few meetings and then dropped out. Then in one of the tours of the dorms, David and I met Joe Jones. Joe joined the fraternity and stayed with us. He was our first real recruit. Joe was outgoing, friendly, and a little wild, but he was a fun guy and helped a lot with recruiting. With his help we began getting more and more people to come to our Tuesday meetings where it became my job to give the "pitch."



I would spend hours, late at night, writing out on a yellow legal pad what I wanted to say. Every Tuesday, I would get up before the group and make a short speech about the idea for a new fraternity. This one would be different, I would say. You can make it the kind of fraternity you have always wanted, make it into your image. And, I said, you don't have to wait. You can help shape the fraternity right from the start. It will be a small group. We'll all know each other, I would pitch. It will be like a family, someone to help you out if you have a problem. Someone to call to pick you up if your car broke down. Guys who would buy you a beer when you were down because you just broke up with your girlfriend or she broke up with you. I said we were all in a transition from the home and family we knew to the home and family we would have one day. Acacia would help us bridge that gap. Acacia would be our college/transition substitute family. We would be brothers. My little speech—my half-hour, hour, hour and a half when I got on a roll talk—was all philosophy and emotion and touchy-feelly in a tough guy kind of way. It sounds stupid, but it worked.

Gradually, we began to add one recruit after another. After me, Jerry, David and Joe Jones, they joined in this order.

Joseph Toby Brown

Carl Weinmeister

Kent Wiemeyer

Hank Anderson

Ronnie Hickox

Min Leong

Jim Owen

Chuck Claiborne

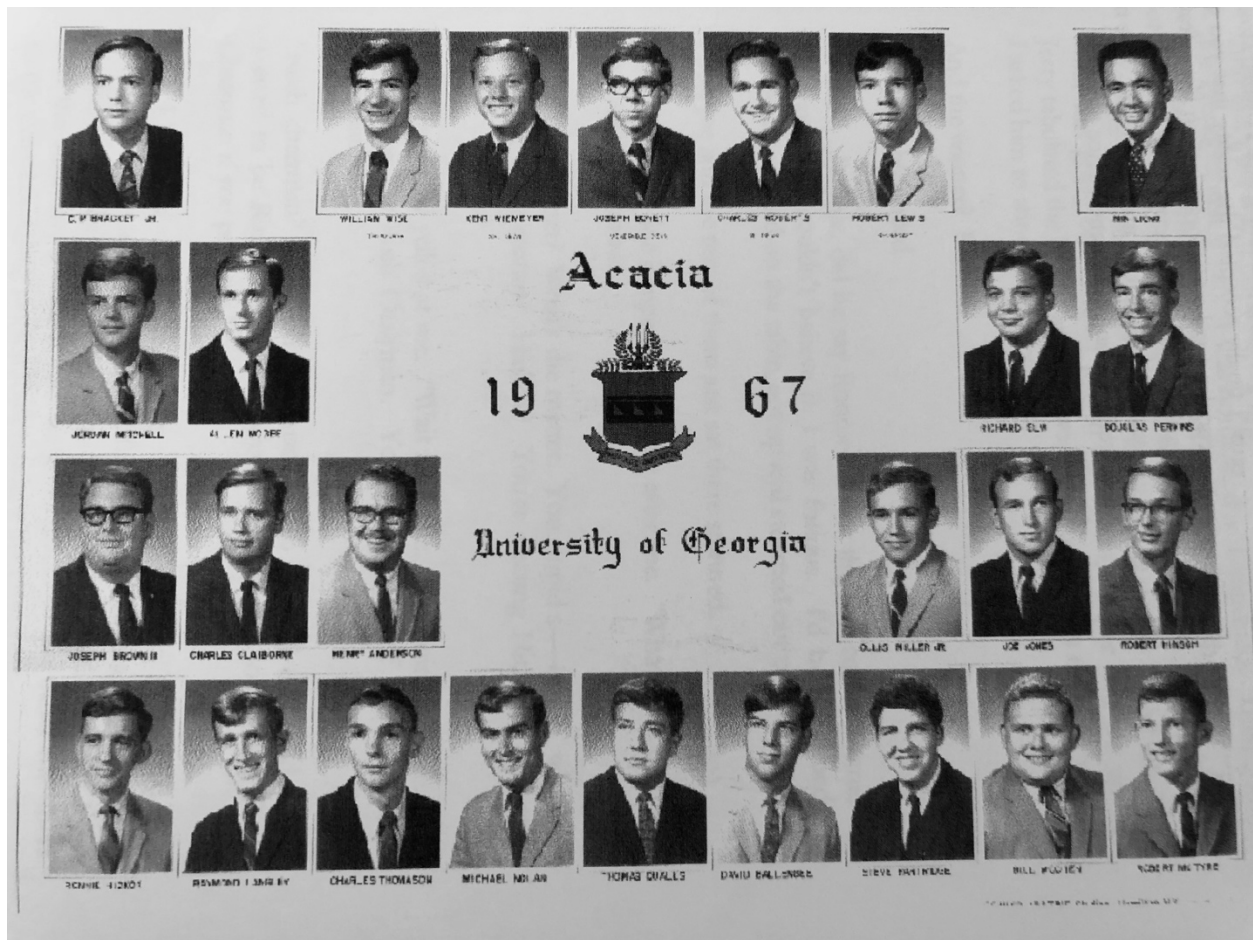
Milton Hinsch

Doug Perkins

Bill Wise

Bob Lewis

By the end of the school year we had 16 members and were an official Colony of Acacia. We also had a new President. And, it wasn't me.



THE PALACE COUP

Shortly after the Tuesday meeting where the whole thing got started, Jerry, David and I had our own meeting to divvy up jobs. We decided that, at a minimum, we needed a President, Treasurer, Recording Secretary, and Rush Chairman. Of course, since we only had three members one of us would have to hold two positions. In deference to my one-week seniority, Jerry and David agreed after some persuasion from me—I threatened to quit—to let me pick the title I wanted. It was a difficult choice, but I reluctantly agreed to the title of President. David picked Rush Chairman and Jerry chose Treasurer. Jerry and I insisted that David also take the job of Secretary. So, there it was and there it remained. I ran things. That is, I did until late that spring.

As I said, by the Spring of 1965, we had enough members to become a true Acacia Colony. The little chapter instruction booklet we had been given from the national office of Acacia said we

were supposed to hold annual elections in the spring for chapter officers. We had to elect six officers:

Venerable Dean (President)

Senior Dean (Vice President)

Junior Dean (a kind of social chairman)

Secretary

Treasurer

Rush Chairman (in charge of recruiting new members).

I was certain that I would be elected Venerable Dean (President). As I said, I had been in charge all along and saw no reason why my reign should end. But, I didn't know about a conspiracy.

It seemed that Joe Jones and Kent Wiemeyer had come to a different conclusion. They had their own slate of officers and launched a stealth campaign. Joe shouldn't be President, they told the members. He's too valuable. We need him as Rush Chairman where he can keep making those speeches that we all like. Don't tie him down with the duties of President. Let someone else do that, someone like Ronnie Hickox. Ronnie, they said, would be the right one for President.

And that's the way it came out. I opened the meeting. We would vote for Venerable Dean first, I said. I was nominated as expected. Then someone else was nominated, I forget who. "A token," I thought. "That's good, it wouldn't be a true election without a choice." I was about to close the nominations when Kent nominated Ronnie Hickox. I had no idea what was going on. Then I passed out slips of paper and we voted. Jerry tabulated the ballots and, not wanting to announce my own victory, I asked him to announce the winner.

Jerry stood up and said two words, "Ronnie Hickox."

I was dumbfounded.

Ronnie...Ronnie, did he say Ronnie? How the hell could Ronnie be the winner? I couldn't believe it. I was furious. I'd been robbed. I slammed my hand on the table, got up and stormed out of the room.

Kent, Joe and the rest of them just sat there stunned.

Then Kent and Joe jumped up and ran after me. "What's the matter?" they wanted to know.

"What's the matter? What's the matter? You stupid s---of---b what do you think is the matter? Hickox? You're electing Hickox? Are you crazy?"

"Hold on," they yelled at me. "Wait a minute. Just wait a minute. We wanted you for Rush Chairman. You know the stuff you do. Rush Chairman."

"Rush chairman? Rus...sh chairman. Who the hell ever told you I wanted to be Rush chairman. I wouldn't be your G...D...n Rush Chairman if you paid me."

And, I marched off into the night. It was two weeks before I would speak to anyone and I don't think I had a decent word to say to Ronnie for the rest of the time I knew him. It took awhile, but eventually I got over the insult and got back into the good graces of the other members to the extent that they elected me President the next year, probably just to shut me up.

Besides feeling snubbed, I think what made me most angry about them electing Ronnie is that I had to give up control. In the months since the first Tuesday meeting, I had become very possessive of the fraternity. Jerry and David let me make most of the decisions and I shaped things the way I wanted. The fraternity was MINE. They were members, but I owned it. That's really the way I felt. When I wasn't elected President, it was like having something that I owned stolen from me. I didn't get over the hurt until I finally accepted the reality that you cannot own an organization, particularly a voluntary organization like a fraternity. The people who are members own it collectively. It belongs to everyone. That was a hard lesson to learn but an important one. I've never gotten that emotionally invested in an organization since then.

FALL 1965—ACACIA GETS ITS FIRST HOUSE

In the fall of 1965, Acacia rented a house at 260 N. Milledge Avenue, not far from the Milledge Avenue Varsity. It was an old run-down wood-frame house and we crammed it with beds and furniture we got from a motel fire-sale. The decision to rent a house wasn't unanimous by any means. The men on the Board of Directors were in favor as were most of the members. I wasn't sure we had enough members who would agree to stay in the house and pay rent to cover the costs. Others, like Jerry and David, didn't want to be forced to live in a fraternity house. They wanted to keep their apartment. In the end, the Board rented the house and we moved in. My "room" was really just a tiny nook off the landing on the second floor. It was so small the one twin bed barely fit headboard to foot between the two walls.



Georgia Acacia's First House, 260 N. Milledge Ave., Athens, GA

We participated in the regular rush in the Fall of 1965 but got no new recruits. As the fall wore on though we began to bring in some more members, many of them people who had dropped out of the regular rush. They included:

C.P. Brackett

Ray Langley

Charlie Roberts

In the winter of 1966, we added several more members.

Mike Nolan

Charlie Thomason

Bill Wooten

David Ballenger

Steve Partridge

Tom Manton

Bob Crawford

Butch Miller

Tommy Qualls

Rick Elem

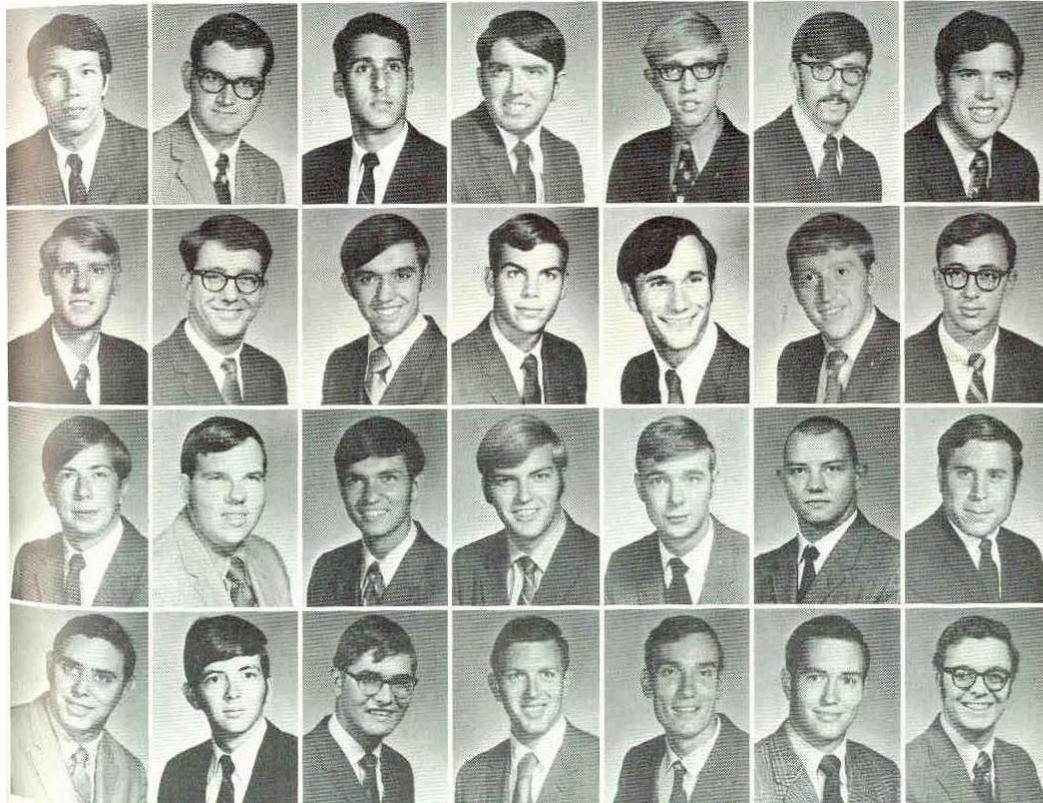
We stayed in the house on north Milledge for a year and then received our charter and became a chapter in the spring of 1966. I was elected as the first Venerable Dean of the new Georgia Acacia Chapter and along with Toby Brown represented it at the Acacia National Conclave in New Orleans that summer.

Georgia Acacia moved to another larger, but just as dilapidated, house on south Milledge during the summer of 1966. In the 1970s Acacia moved back to north Milledge to a large, white-columned house that was occupied by a law office for a time and eventually was purchased by the University.



Georgia Acacia's Second House, 1967

The University of Georgia chapter of Acacia continued to add members into the 1970s. By then, fraternities were having increasing difficulty attracting new members and the chapter folded. There was one later attempt to revive Acacia at Georgia, but it failed. The magic just wasn't there any longer.



Peter Anderson
H. K. Beacham
Steve Bienstock
Jeff Booker
Dan Byess
Michael Campbell
Donald Doherty

Don Eddins
Gary Edwards
Stephen Flagg
Harold Florence
Peter Foss
Jan Gillespie
Edward Hartness

Samuel Heys
Tom Manton
Miles McDonald
Billy O'Dell
Jay Osborne
Danny Payne
Henry Peck

Charles Rehberg
Robert Richardson
Randall Roberts
John Scoville
Charles Slade
Roy Tritt
Richard Van Ingen

Georgia Acacia-1970

Pat Finley, Sweetheart
 Sam Heys, President
 Eddie Hartness, Vice-president
 Fred Tunmer, Secretary
 Roy Tritt, Treasurer
 Miles McDonald, Social Chairman
 Bob Tritt, Rush Chairman

Dave Bass
 John Dry
 Don Eddins
 Neal Florence
 Peter Foss
 Jan Gillespie
 David Gravitt
 Edward Hartness

Sam Heys
 Mike Hooks
 Dickie James
 Dee Long
 Harry McDonald
 Miles McDonald
 Parker Owen
 Tom Smith

Lee Sommers
 Robert Tritt
 Roy Tritt
 Fred Tunmer



Georgia Acacia-1971

OUR OWN ANIMAL HOUSE

Maybe the best way to describe Acacia in the 1960s and our fraternity house is to direct your attention to a 1978 John Belushi comedy, *Animal House*. As you may recall, *Animal House* is about the exploits of members of the Delta fraternity. The Delta's in *Animal House* are just exaggerated versions of Georgia's Acacians as I knew them.

Unlike the Delta's, we did not drink in the fraternity house—that was against the chapter rules—a kind of bow to the Masons. But, we did drink on the lawn and in the garage next to the house. We also allowed drinking on the porch because while it was technically attached to the house, it had its own foundation and therefore was not really part of the house but, in fact, a separate structure entirely. Additionally, as I will explain later, the house wasn't considered to be "the house" at certain times of the year.

We didn't throw chairs through windows, at least not very often, but our house was a wreck most of the time. In fact, the bathrooms stayed so dirty that girls visiting the house would use them only when they were absolutely desperate.

Most of my memories of Acacia come in snippets. I recall, for example:

SERENADING THE PHI MU'S

I remember the time we decided to serenade the Phi Mu sorority across the street from our first house. Kent got his guitar and after a few beers we all stumbled across the street one spring afternoon. We launched into a rendition of great old folk songs, but the Phi Mu s just turned up their cute noses. Insulted, our songs got increasingly risqué, ending with a rendition of "High above a Phi Mus garter, high above her knees. Lies the object of my searching. Her virginity." At that point we got kicked out.

SCHOLARS AND "SCHOLARS"

Milton Hinsch and Jim Owen were good friends, roommates and probably the two smartest guys in Acacia. The two of them almost singlehandedly kept up our grade point average. They were both Chemistry majors. At one point, Milt and Jim shared a room with Ray Langley who majored in PE. One afternoon, Milt and Jim had returned from their Chemistry Lab where they had been engaged in experiments with a variety of deadly chemicals. They were sitting in their room memorizing the atomic numbers of chemical elements of the Periodic Table, or some such Chemistry thing. Ray returned from class and burst in the room all excited. "Want to see what I learned today?" he asked. Milt and Jim said, "Sure." At that point, Ray went to the wall and...stood on his head. Milt and Jim just shook their heads.

RICK GETS DRUNK

One hot summer day, in the house across from the Phi Mu's, Rick Elm and several of the rest of us pitched in to buy a keg of beer. We hauled it into the house and sat there drinking away the afternoon. Now, I know I said we didn't allow alcohol in the house, but we didn't always honor that pledge in the summer. We reasoned that regular school wasn't in session, so the fraternity house wasn't a regular "fraternity house" in the summer. Therefore, the no-drinking rule didn't apply. It made sense to us. Anyway, we were sitting there drinking and talking. We had nearly polished off the entire keg of beer and everything was going fine. Suddenly, we heard a scream like an Indian yell and the front door slam. We jumped up and looked out the window. There was Rick, totally drunk, wearing nothing but his socks, running around and around the house stopping late afternoon traffic on Milledge Avenue and giving the Phi Mus across the street more than an eye full. We all jumped up and raced after him. Rick was athletic and could be quite determined after a few drinks. It took five of us to wrestle him to the ground and haul him back inside.

BUTCH SHOOTS CP

C.P. Brackett was a bright guy. He graduated from Georgia at the age of 19 with a degree in psychology. He did some graduate work in sociology and then went to law school. He was a nice guy but sometimes he talked too much. He liked to argue. Butch Miller was PE major, tough and

feisty, very likeable, but Butch took no nonsense from anyone. I remember that he and C.P. disagreed about something-I forget what. Anyway, the argument had been going on for several days and Butch was getting tired of it, so one afternoon he went upstairs to his room and got a gun. He came down and cornered C.P. on the front porch. A bunch of us stood there watching in shock as Butch pointed the gun straight at C.P.'s chest and yelled at the top of his lungs, "Brackett, I've had all the shit I going to take from you." Then, Butch fired. Of course, it wasn't a real gun. It was just a starter pistol, but it made a loud sound and scared the shit out of C.P. He turned white as a sheet and when he realized he wasn't dead, he tore off down Milledge running for his life. All of us stood there doubled over laughing. We didn't see C.P. again for a week. It was one hell of a joke. Butch was like that.

BURYING MIKE'S CAR

The guys would often play jokes on each other. A funny one I remember had to do with Mike Nolan. Mike drove this small foreign car, a Karmon Ghia, I think. Anyway, it was one of the little ones. We were in our second house on South Milledge and they had torn down a house next to us to put up an office building. They were getting ready to pour the foundation and had dug big hole four or five feet deep. Mike had gone home for the weekend and must have gotten a ride with someone else, because he left his car behind. A group of us were sitting around that Saturday afternoon, drinking beer as usual and without anything to do, when someone pointed out that the hole next door was just about the size of Mike's car. We got into an argument about whether it was or wasn't and ended up going over to take a look. Still we couldn't decide. The hole looked big enough, but there was only one way to be sure. You guessed it. We got Mike's car, pushed it over to the hole, and tipped it in. It just fit. We went back to drinking beer and left it there. The next day, Mike returned and couldn't find his car. He was about to call the police when he spotted the top of it sticking out of the hole. I don't think I ever saw Mike quite so mad. I'm not sure how he got the car out of the hole. I think he had to get a tow truck to pull it out. Anyway, we just played dumb and didn't admit to anything, although I think Mike suspected what had happened.

DOUG'S MAKESHIFT WIRING

In our second house, Doug Perkins chose a closet for a room because he wanted some privacy and a place to keep his fruit flies. He was studying entomology. Doug's room was a nice size closet, maybe 8x8 or something like that. It was large enough for a single bed and tiny desk. The only problem was that Doug's closet had no lights. In order to remedy the problem, Doug took a long extension cord and cut off both ends. He then removed the wall plate of an outlet in the adjoining room, attached one end of the extension cord to the terminals, and ran the wire through a hole he punched in the wall to his closet. Inside his closet, he ran the extension cord wire to a switch he nailed above his bed. The switch was one of the old-fashion kind with a lever that went up and down making contact with the terminals. It was all open exposed metal and wires. Doug then ran another piece of extension cord from the switch to a light. When it was all hooked up, Doug could

lay in his bed, reach up over his head, and turn the light on and off by moving the metal lever. He just had to be careful not to touch any of the terminals or exposed wires. I know it sounds dangerous, but Doug never had a problem as far as I know. I do know he was careful. For example, once he attached the wires to the wall outlet in the other room he couldn't replace the outlet cover without damaging the extension cord wire. That left the outlet exposed. For safety and as a warning to the rest of us, Doug took some red paint and drew a big circle around the outlet.

Doug was a really resourceful guy. I remember one summer he got a job as a night watchman for one of the local funeral homes. They gave him a small salary and let him live in one of the rooms over the dead bodies. That's the way he spent his summer—sleeping with the dead. Doug said at night it was nice and quiet and all he had to do was make the rounds once or twice to make sure no bodies had been stolen or gotten up and walked out the door. We begged Doug all summer to let us get some beers and come see the bodies, but he wouldn't. It's a shame really. It could have been fun.

STEALING BRICKS

Since we didn't have very much money—make that no money at all—we often had to be creative. For example, our second house—the one on South Milledge—was sitting rather far back from the street and had no walkway to the front door. We thought a brick walkway would add to the house, but we didn't have any money to buy bricks. Then one day Joe Jones and I were uptown and noticed that some houses were being torn down as part of an urban renewal project. There, piled up before our eyes, were literally tons of old brick. Joe and I went back to the fraternity house and told Kent what we had found. Later that night, we got in my Ford Falcon and drove back to the renewal project. I opened the trunk and stood watch while Kent and Joe loaded it down with brick. I slammed the trunk, they jumped in and we took our new-found brick back to the house. We made about five trips that night, loading down my Falcon so much each time that the fenders on the back were almost touching the tires. We looked like we were hauling moonshine. It wasn't until the last trip as we were getting ready to leave that Kent noticed something none of us had paid any attention to before. Across the street from where we were stealing the bricks was the Athens police station. I guess it was luck, but nobody caught us. Doug took the brick and with very little help from the rest of us built a pretty good, although a little crooked and uneven, walkway all the way to the street. Curiously, no adult ever questioned where we got all those bricks. Maybe they didn't want to know.

BOOZE RUNS

Brick stealing wasn't our only scrape or near scrape with the law. Almost every weekend someone—not infrequently me—was at risk. After all, someone had to make the booze run. You see, at the time in Athens you could only buy beer, no hard liquor. For hard liquor you had to go elsewhere, and elsewhere meant making a run across the border to South Carolina. There, in little

towns along the Georgia state line, were plenty of liquor stores that never asked for an I D. Typically, the designated runner would take orders and collect money on Thursday night. Friday, either alone or with a companion, he would cut afternoon classes and race up to the border hoping to buy the booze and make it back in time for the Friday night party. Then came the problem of getting back. You see the Georgia State Patrol knew that carloads of frats would be leaving Athens every Friday to buy liquor and illegally transport it back into the state. So, starting around noon on Fridays, they would set up traps along all the main roads leading back from South Carolina toward Athens. The trick for the booze runner was not to get caught. That meant sneaking back into the state via the most inconspicuous route you could find. Between 1964 and 1966 I probably learned every miserable little road that existed between South Carolina and Athens. Surprisingly, no one in Acacia ever got caught making the run. However, I do remember one major scare.

That week I was the designated runner and Min, who was my roommate and best friend, went with me. As we made our way north we noticed that State Patrol cars were thicker than we had ever seen them. They seemed to be around every turn. Of course, they weren't a problem to us then since we were going to get the booze. It was coming back that had us worried. We would be loaded down with liquor. Min got out the map and started looking at our alternatives. We switched roads a couple of times just to check out the traffic. Nope. Still more cops. By the time we got to the border we had almost decided to give up and go back empty. Then it occurred to us. The cops were watching the roads north of Athens. Suppose we didn't drive directly south but took a slanting route, staying in South Carolina until we got down to around Augusta. We could then scoot south along the path of Interstate 20 and angle back up toward Athens from the east or south east. That's what we did. It took hours and we didn't get back into Athens until after that night's party had already started. The guys were all thirsty and mad at us for being late. But, we didn't get caught.

PURPLE PASSIONS

While I am on the subject of liquor, I should mention the favorite fraternity drink—the Purple Passion. We mixed it in a big tub in the garage next to the house. The ingredients consisted of roughly equal parts of grape juice, vodka, gin, rum, tequila, and grain alcohol. Everyone would take a break from dancing, come out to the garage and dip their cup in the tub. By the time you had two or three cups full of that stuff you were really ready to party.

Partying to us meant dancing to records, since we couldn't afford to hire a band. Later, after we moved into our second house, we had enough members to afford to hire some of the small, local start-up bands like the one Harvey, my wife Jimmie's brother, played in, but we were never able to afford the name bands like some of the larger fraternities hired. It didn't really matter. We enjoyed each other, and we had a loyal group of girls—more on them later—who helped us make the parties work. Anyway, after you drank enough Purple Passions you did care what kind of music was playing.

A side note: What we didn't know at the time was that some of the guys that played in these small bands at Acacia parties would go on to play with some of the most famous bands to come out of the 1960s Athens music scene.

SHRIMP NIGHT OUT

I guess if there was anything we enjoyed more than drinking and partying, it was eating. I remember that the Davis House Cafeteria once offered a Wednesday night special—all the fried shrimp you could eat for 89 cents. As soon as we found out about it, we made Wednesday at the Davis House a fraternity ritual. All twenty or so of us would pile into cars and head over together. We would pass through the line and all order the same thing—shrimp and water. “How about some fries with that?” the manager would beg. “Nope, just shrimp and water.” “Cole slaw?” “Nope.” “Tea?” “Nope.” “Bread?” “Nope.” “How about dessert?” “Well.... No, I'll pass. Just shrimp and water.” Eighty-nine cents each and in return we got shrimp, shrimp and more shrimp. I think my record in one sitting was 45, but that was nothing compared to what guys like Toby Brown, Tommy Qualls, and Dave Ballangee could eat. They could put down 60 or more on a regular basis. We had a pledge—I forget who—who stuffed down 83 one night all by himself. Of course, he immediately threw them all back up, so I don't know if that qualified as a record. Needless to say, the Davis House discontinued that special in a few weeks. Still, it was great while it lasted.

BEHAVING LIKE HOGS

When it came to meals, we were pretty much like starving hogs at a trough. That was never more evident than during meals at the house. After we moved into our second house, we hired a house mother—an elderly woman named Mrs. Urby—and one cook. We served meals twice a day—breakfast and dinner—week days. Weekends you were on your own. Breakfast was served from 6AM to 9AM and consisted mostly of eggs, bacon, and cereals. Dinner was meat and potatoes. Mrs. Urby usually skimped on the green stuff. Thus, a meal might consist of fried chicken, dinner rolls, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, potato salad, and French fries. We loved it.

We purchased two long conference tables that had been discarded by Georgia Tech for our dining room. The kitchen stove was cast iron and came out of an old diner/greasy spoon near Athens that burned down one night. When we got it, it was covered with so much grease that the only way to clean it was to pour gasoline on it and set it on fire. The local fire department was not amused.

Dinner at Acacia was served at 6PM sharp and you had to arrive early to get any food since meals were served family style. Platters of meat and bowls of potatoes were placed at one end of the table and passed down. Since everyone knew that by the time the bowls reached the end of the table there would be no food left for seconds, everyone took as much food as their plate would hold on the first pass. Consequently, if you came late and ended up sitting anywhere near the last

half or quarter of the table you were in real trouble. Your only hope was to grab as many rolls as you could from the bowls placed on the center of the table, so you would at least have bread to eat. Visitors to our house, particularly girls, often did not understand the basic meal time defense mechanisms and ended up with nothing to eat. Quite a few got really angry. What could you do? "I told you we had to be on time. Have a roll."

ACACIA GIRLS

Well, those stories will give you some idea of what it was like. In the early years—64,' 65,' and 66'—we were a close-knit bunch of guys. I'm not saying we got along all the time. We didn't. And, I'm not saying that I liked everyone equally. I didn't. But on the whole the worst of our group was better than the best of most. Maybe that's why we attracted this very special group of girls.

Almost from the start, we had a group of five to ten girls attached to the fraternity. They dated guys in the fraternity and showed up at all our events. They cheered our team on at intramural games and became a kind of mini-Acacia. Some of them were more dedicated to the fraternity than some of our members. They were people like:

Trudy Olsen, who married Steve Partridge

Mary Ellen McAlpine, who married Rick Elm

Carey Cram, who married Dennis Perrillo (joined after 1966)

Carol (I don't recall her maiden name), who married Dan Byess (joined after 1996)

and

Jimmie Towns, who married me even though she was repeatedly warned by Tommy Qualls and a number of other of my Acacia "brothers" that I was "weird," "crazy," and to be avoided at all costs. We celebrated our 50th anniversary in 2017.

I guess it is a little surprising when you think about it that guys in the same fraternity could date the same girls and not get into fights all the time. Somehow, we made it work. I think one of the reasons is that we had this unwritten rule. If a fraternity brother was dating a girl and you wanted to date her, you couldn't ask her out until she had broken up with your fraternity brother and then you were supposed to wait a few days at least before you asked. Most of the time people followed the rules and it worked.



**The Acacia Girls Playing Touch Football
(That's Jimmie second from the right with the "waist-gab" tackle.)**

GEORGIA ACACIA—WHAT MADE IT WORK

I've thought a lot about the Georgia Chapter of Acacia, at least as it was during the years I was most involved from 1964 to 1967. The guys that joined Acacia in those years and later, came from many different backgrounds. We had guys from rich families, poor families and middle-class families. We had guys who grew up in cities, small towns and in the country. We had guys from the south, north and mid-west. We had Jewish members, Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, and Atheists. We didn't look anything alike. We had tall members, short members, fat members, and thin members. We had good athletes and people like me who were bad at just about every sport. We had genuine scholars and guys who were just trying to make it through school. We had "ladies men" and guys who struggled to get a date. We had snappy dressers and guys who didn't care how they looked. Still, we got along, most of the time. Maybe it was because we all wanted the same thing.

In the early days, when I was making those speeches to new recruits, I always talked about Acacia as a family. When you joined, you became a Brother Acacian. That meant the rest of us cared about you just as if you were our real brother. We might argue. We might even fight. But, when the chips were down and you needed help, we would be there for you. Most of all, we would accept and celebrate you for who you were. You didn't have to look a certain way or dress a certain way or act a certain way or even subscribe to any particular beliefs except perhaps that people should be treated with respect and allowed to be themselves.

In 2001, we had a reunion in Athens. At least twenty or more former members of the University of Georgia chapter came. One of the Acacians came up to me and told me a story. He said: "Joe, before I joined Acacia, I had a troubled background. I did some things I shouldn't have done and got in a lot of trouble. You guys took me in. You didn't judge me because of my past. I got a clean slate. You accepted me for who I was and showed me what I could be. You made me part of the Acacia family. I got to start over. That meant a lot to me. "

I think that's what it was all about. That's what made it work—family.