December 2003

Dear Classmates:

Can you believe it has been thirty years since we were cramming for our first set of finals at Wabash? Remember the major dump of snow that greeted us as we trudged over to the Bio 1 final?

What a fall it has been for Wabash College. In September the College dedicated a new academic building on the mall—the first new academic building on the mall since Baxter Hall was dedicated almost 40 years ago. Waugh Hall and the Thomas Laboratories were demolished and a new beautiful state-of-the-art biology and chemistry building now occupies the space between the old Yandes Hall (renamed the Detchon Center after renovation and expansion) and Center Hall. There is also a brand new fraternity house on campus—I believe the first completely new fraternity house built since the Delt House. The Sigma Chis decided renovation of their old house was not feasible so the decision was made to build new. The new, beautiful, and much more traditional looking Sigma Chi House is located just west of the Delt House. I wonder if that means the traditional Beta-Sig wars and pledge class serenading (is there such a thing as mandatory study hours for pledges?) are now the Delt-Sig wars? I believe the old Sig House will serve as temporary housing as the other fraternity houses are gutted and renovated. I know the Phi Psis, Phi Gams, Phi Delts, and Kappa Sigs will all be renovated or demolished and rebuilt in the near future.

If you have not been back on campus recently you really owe it to yourself to visit the many new buildings resulting from the recent building boom. We would expect nothing less of Wabash, but it is the case that every new and renovated building on campus is absolutely beautiful in appearance, and no corners were cut in creating the most functional, modern, and attractive buildings. I am constantly visiting college campuses, and I can tell you that Wabash’s physical plant is second to none—again, you would expect nothing less of a college that is in a class by itself.

The College continues on target for a successful completion of the Campaign for Leadership. A significant milestone was passed last month when the Campaign total went past the $122,500,000 mark leaving just under $10,000,000 still to be raised to surpass the fundraising goal for the Campaign.

And, of course, we can all gloat for another year with all of our Dannie acquaintances with the Monon Bell safely on the Wabash campus following the convincing 37-20 victory in Greencastle. Wabash now leads in the all-time series record 51-50-9.

The physical plant is not the only facet of Wabash that is changing significantly since our time on campus. The faculty is much different than when we arrived on campus and will be even more different after this year. Five faculty legends have announced they will retire at the end of this academic year. John Zimmerman (Dr. “Z”), Aus Brooks, John Fischer, Pete Frederick, and David Phillips. Pete Frederick is the lightweight in the bunch having only taught at Wabash for 35 years.
“Z” is the senior member of the group completing his 41st year on the Wabash faculty. I totaled their combined years on the Wabash faculty—a mindboggling 190 years! I cannot imagine there is a member of the Class of ’77 who did not have the privilege of having a class or at least hearing a lecture by one of these five distinguished professors. Each of these men has dedicated a majority of his life to educating Wabash men and love Wabash dearly. I know they would appreciate hearing from former students. So you might want to make that trip to campus to not only check out the new buildings but also to visit with a former professor. After this year there will be only four non-retired teaching faculty members who were on the faculty when we arrived as freshmen—Phil Mikesell, David Hadley, and Pete and Brenda Bankart.

Classmate News

David Herzog has returned to the law firm of Baker and Daniels as partner after a three year stint as executive vice president, general counsel and secretary of Conseco.

Steve Heimann has been reappointed to serve a five-year term on the Indiana Board of Law Examiners. Steve is still serving as a Bartholomew County Circuit Judge, an appointment he has held since 1991.

Former class agent, Jerry Shonkwiler, was not able to make it to our 25th reunion, but I did meet Shonk’s son, who is a track decathlete at the University of Wisconsin, while he was cheering the Badger cross country team on at the national championship meet.

Bob Brandt’s son, Bobby, is a senior at Carmel H.S. and is going through the application process at Wabash. How many other ’77ers have sons considering Wabash?

Finally, I have made another move farther south. This past July Carroll and I moved to Houston, Texas where I am now the Director of College Counseling for The Kinkaid School. I’m hoping anyone from the Class of ’77 traveling to Houston for the Super Bowl (I’m looking for two tickets) or for any other reason will get in touch with me. Here’s my new contact information: Greg Birk, 10129 Valley Forge Dr., Houston, TX 77042, 713-974-0832, greg.birk77@wabash.edu.

I would like for these class letters to have much more information about classmates, so I need your help. Please send me updates with what’s new with you and your family and I will share it with the rest of the class.

For those of you who may have end-of-year tax decisions about charitable gifts I hope you will remember Wabash and the difference it may have made in your life and deem it worthy of your financial support. Additionally, remember that recommending a student to the admissions office and then encouraging that student to consider and explore all that Wabash has to offer is another critical way to secure Wabash’s future as a liberal arts college of the highest quality. We are in our prime-time for recommending students—many of us have high school age children which puts us in contact with potential Wabash men. I want to commend the following classmates who made the effort to recommend a student to Wabash this year: Greg Huebner, Herm Haffner, Dirk Berard, Pete Trybula, and myself.

I want to wish you all a Happy Holiday Season and Best Wishes for 2004!

Yours for Wabash,

Greg Birk
Wabash Keeps the Bell

Sigma Chi House

science building