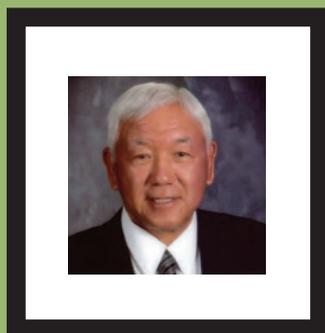
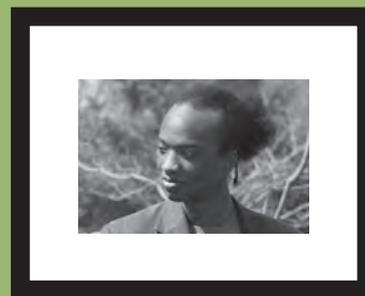
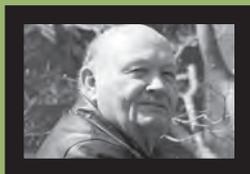
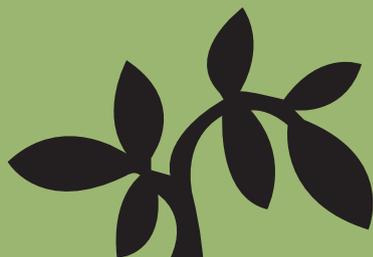
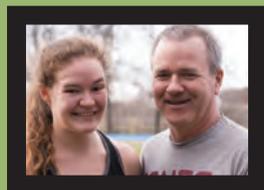


# BEREA COLLEGE

SPRING 2018 Volume 88 Number 4



## Legacy



*Living  
a Legacy*

First Generation  
Bereans, Generations  
Apart Page 6

My Berea: The Hairston  
Family Legacy Page 10

China to Appalachia:  
A Friendship Across  
Generations Page 20

# BEREA COLLEGE

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FSC LOGO

Sitting in the Charlotte, N.C., home of the fifth Hairston sister, Cynthia Hicks '79, and her husband, James Hicks '76, is a warm, inviting experience. During the interview with Ann (left) and Nancy who graduated from Berea College together in December 1974, the stories, memories and laughter shared were a testament to the Hairston family's love for and commitment to Berea. pg 10

Jay Buckner

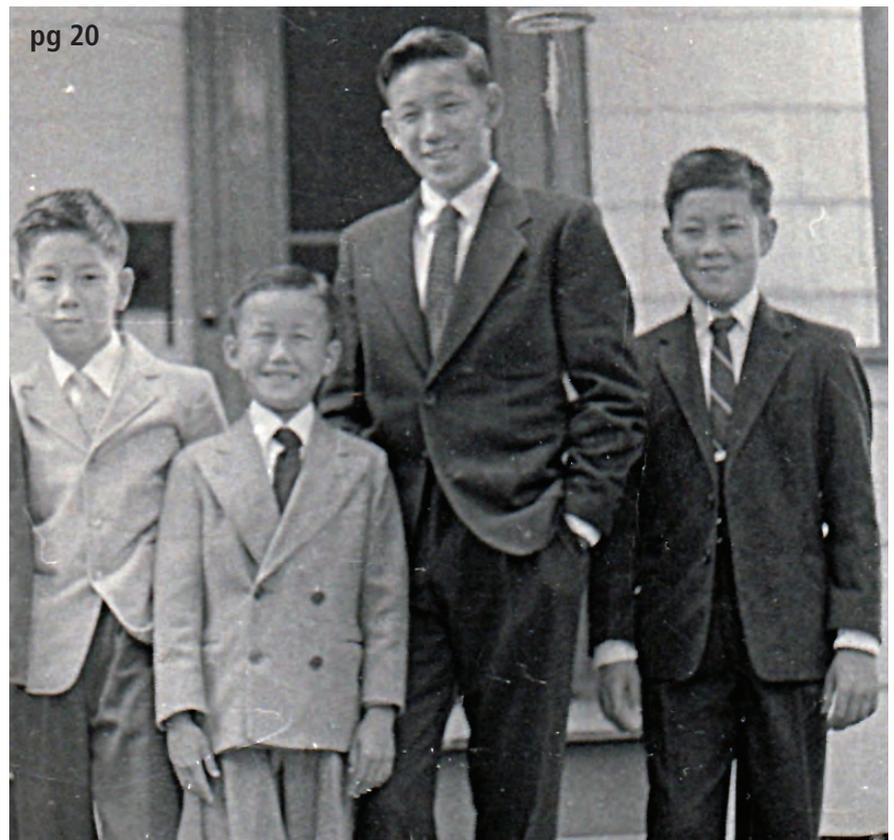
# CONTENTS

## FEATURES

- 6 | First Generation Bereans, Generations Apart**  
Though from vastly different backgrounds and generations, this 1967 alumnus and rising sophomore connect as first-generation college students—raising the bar for themselves and their families.
- 10 | My Berea**  
Six sisters from Williamson, W.Va., left an indelible mark on Berea College through their commitment to service and love of music.
- 18 | Jenna Hughes Hates Running**  
From a family of runners, Jenna talks about her experience as a Berea College student-athlete and her family's connection to the College and the sport.
- 20 | From China to Appalachia**  
Two idealistic Yale alumni—one Chinese, the other American—met in China nearly a century ago, laying the foundation for a three-generation legacy that stretched from rural China to the hills of Appalachia.
- 26 | Getting Down to Business**  
Several Berea alumni reveal how the College contributed to their success as entrepreneurs.
- 32 | Now, When You Go to School...**  
Berea's first post-Day Law graduate talks about her life and career after that momentous day in 1954.
- 35 | A Weekend with Jessie Reasor Zander**  
A behind-the-scenes look at the life and legacy of Jessie Zander '54, through the eyes of a recent African-American alumna.

## DEPARTMENTS

- 36 | Campus News**



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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## Dear Berea Alumni and Friends,

At a school like Harvard University, legacies—children whose parents and grandparents attended the institution—are prized, often accepted at a much higher rate than other students seeking admission.

But at Berea, the idea of legacy runs deeper than a generational connection stretching from alumnus to child. Berea alumni leave a legacy steeped in a rich history of social justice and equality, of overcoming the ails of poverty through education to exceed expectations. Berea alumni leave a legacy of confidence and creativity to students of limited resources who one day will walk in their footsteps and beyond. Berea alumni leave a legacy to students they may never meet, but who have a kindred connection through place, circumstance and lifelong achievement.

This issue of *Berea College* magazine celebrates some powerful and unique stories of family, friendship and first-generation college success. Touting three generations dedicated to Berea College and its mission, this issue's center feature, beginning on page 20, connects you to the Yahng family. Their friendship with former Berea President Francis Hutchins and commitment to rural reconstruction led them on their journey from China to Appalachia.

A two-generation athletic connection picks up on page 18. Jenna Hughes may say she hates running, but she, her father and her uncle have all left their mark on the Berea College track and field program. The entire Hughes family shares an affinity for running and an appreciation for the Berea opportunity.

On page 10, spend some time with the Hairston family. The six Hairston sisters' Christian values, African-American heritage, love of their Appalachian roots and commitment to service embody the traditions and commitments of Berea College. In the hours I spent with this family, I became enamored by their dedication to furthering Berea's legacy. I hope their stories also make you want to join them for Thanksgiving dinner and delve a little deeper.

Similar to the Hairston sisters, many Bereans are first-generation college students. On page 6, get to know Tom and Sunny, and discover the difference Berea made in the lives and families of this 1967 alumnus and first-year student. Reflect on what your Berea College experience meant to you—especially if you were the first in your family to attend college.

Allow these stories to inspire the legacy you are leaving through your Berea College connection.

Abbie Darst '03

# Tom and Sunny: FIRST GENERATION BEREANS *Generations Apart*

By Jason Lee Miller



Moriah Avery '21

Tom Hutchens '67 (left) and Sunny Bland '21 discuss their experience as first-generation students at Berea. Tom grew up on a farm in the Appalachian region of Virginia. Sunny is from Memphis, Tenn.

**T**om Hutchens '67 and Hasani "Sunny" Bland '21 would seem to come from different worlds. Tom grew up on a farm in the Appalachian region of Virginia. Sunny is from a rougher part of Memphis, Tenn., and wants to be an author, poet and playwright. Tom, after a career in the tobacco industry, now is involved in Kentucky's growing hemp industry. But they're both Bereans, and both are the first in their families to attend college—an achievement they once felt was not a possibility. We brought them together to find the commonalities that transcend geography, demographics and time.

## A limited future

**Tom:** I came from a small community in Patrick County, Va., grew up on a dairy and tobacco farm. My family worked hard. I didn't really have great aspirations. I was interested in agriculture and asked about Virginia Tech. The tuition was more than we could afford, so I was just going to farm with my dad.

**Sunny:** My childhood was super busy, complex streets and kind of an unfriendly vibe. I didn't have a lot of friends. It was a dangerous area. My parents hadn't gone to college and didn't know how to prepare me, so I focused on making A's. But there wasn't anywhere I wanted to go to college that would not plague me with incredible amounts of debt. So I stayed home and picked up work in a warehouse.

## Advocates

**Tom:** One day, my agriculture teacher asked me where I was going to school. I said was going to farm with my dad because I couldn't afford school. He recommended Berea and offered to get me an application. At first I was rejected. Berea said my dad made too much money. My teacher asked what I put down, and I told him. He said, "Son, they meant net income, not gross!" So he called to clear that up. And he spoke

to Coach C.H. Wyatt to tell him he had a baseball player and asked him to go over to the Admissions office and tell them the young man screwed up his application.

I don't know why my teacher asked me why I wasn't going to college. It must have been something. I thanked him personally. He brought me into a bigger world, and I've been enriched for that.

**Sunny:** My friend Charlie (Boyd '19) is a Berea student. We would have these philosophical conversations. Every year, he showed more growth and enlightenment and was returning with more insights, references and sources. I was enjoying our conversations more and more, but I was kind of jealous. I was buying books and soul searching for the information he already had. I was like, where are you getting this understanding and knowledge?

He said he had a lot of help and asked why I didn't come to Berea, too. I told him I was broke. He said, "That's the great thing about this place. They don't charge tuition." I said, "I've been lied to a lot in my life, but that one almost took it. That place doesn't exist." He insisted it wasn't a scam. So I called. It was real. I had a chance to go to college!

Charlie advocated for me with admissions. I got in. I finally made it. I was going to get a degree. I no longer had to worry about how to educate myself without going thousands of dollars into debt. It was this feeling of joy and elation. Charlie and I were both so happy. Berea has given me a chance I wouldn't have had before.



## On being a first-generation college student

**Sunny:** Before me, there wasn't a college degree. My dad tried and didn't get it. My mom is trying now, but I started before she did. I have five sisters. After I got into college, there was a spark in the family. We had more pride, a feeling like we all can do it. They tried harder, and I pushed them harder. Our parents believed more, and they started pushing harder. And it worked out. One sister is going to Middle Tennessee State University. Another is going to Sewanee University. It's like I helped lead a change where we can be prouder of ourselves, and we all can improve the family.

**Tom:** I had a similar experience in that I was the first in my family to go to college. I have four sisters. Three of them are college graduates. They're all good, productive citizens.

We set an example for the whole community. I feel good about that. Getting a college degree is quite a milestone. It's pretty neat to not be back home working on the farm. There's nothing wrong with working on the farm, but I like myself being where I am today.

## Their Berea experience

**Sunny:** I've never questioned myself or society as much as I have here. Because of Berea, I've learned to question and to ask what makes a person better. It's led me to a lot of answers and new questions that have bettered my life. Without Berea, I feel I would have become very stagnant. Berea is important because it gives people with a thirst to learn more of a chance to follow their dreams and, in turn, impacts society by bringing more people in who can invent and do more. Berea wants to

challenge you. All of my teachers ask the question, “so, what?” Berea does that to your life.

**Tom:** Berea cracked my small bubble. I knew nothing but 30 miles from home. Berea transformed me. This place here opened the door wider, brought me opportunities. I’m a much broader thinker. I enjoy going to museums. I enjoy music differently than I did. I wouldn’t take anything for my liberal arts education. And Berea is important also because of the hands-on work

experience that enables use of talents and skills and the way it magnified the information in the classes I took. It’s also important for helping the underprivileged like myself and Sunny, who wouldn’t have gotten an education otherwise.

Though different in a lot of ways, Tom and Sunny’s experience of being the first in their families to go to college matches the majority of the Berea College student body. Nearly two-thirds of Berea students hold this family honor. They

also found common ground in family dynamics and the effects of a broad education on a person’s worldview, and these human commonalities reiterate the Berea ethos that people are made of one blood, that we are more alike than we are different. Their discussion was much broader than represented here, ranging from economic theory to campus social life, then and now. In the end, Tom left Sunny with some friendly advice: choose human interaction over digital relationships, and find your “little wrinkle,” a societal niche only Sunny can fill.



Meriah Avery '21

Sunny Bland '21 (left) and Tom Hutchens '67 share a laugh outside of the Alumni Building on Berea’s campus. Though from vastly different backgrounds and generations, Sunny and Tom connect as first-generation college students—raising the bar for themselves and their families.

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# MY BEREIA

## The Hairston Family Legacy

By Abbie Darst '03

Between 1966 and 1985, six talented and determined young women left an indelible mark on Berea College. For these African-American, Christian sisters from Williamson, W.Va., Berea's commitments to interracial education, Christian values, hard work and service were a beacon of light and opportunity that radically changed their family's future. The Hairston sisters embody the values and mission of the College. And today, between marriages to alumni and a couple of children who also attended Berea, family gatherings bring together 12 dedicated and grateful alumni.

In the early 20th century, the sisters' father, Elbert Hairston, and his brother, John, left their home in Pine Hall, N.C. to continue their education. With their parents' blessing and great sacrifice, Elbert and John attended and graduated from Slater Industrial and State Normal School. In search of work and a better life, the brothers set off for Williamson, W.Va. Elbert took a job with the railroad, putting his dream of becoming a doctor on hold so his older brother could attend seminary.

Years later Elbert met Zada Stowe, a beautiful North Carolina native who shared his passion for education. In fact, Zada refused to marry Elbert until he promised her she would be able to complete her education. The two married and began their family. They built a Christian home filled with love, rooted in service and overflowing with expectation for their seven children.



The large Hairston alumni family gathered to celebrate the family's most recent graduate. **PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT:** Ann Hairston Hill '75, Willene Hairston Moore '71, James Hicks '76, Cynthia Hairston Hicks '79, Susan Jones English '02, Wayne Jones '15, Sue Hairston Jones '72, Nancy Hairston Abasiekong '74, Aniedi Abasiekong '73, Valerie Blade Thomas '84, Vivian Hairston Blade '85 and Vance Blade '82. The Hairstons' mother, Zada Hairston, sits in front.

"Daddy never did go back to college, but he always wanted to," said Cynthia Hairston Hicks '79, the Hairston's fifth daughter. "Mama always valued education. She held onto that dream for years."

The Hairstons made a life for themselves in thriving Williamson. The integrated community was bursting with young families from all over the country and the world. Active in the community, the two attended PTA meetings at the newly-integrated school. They were charter members of the NAACP in the turbulent 1950s and 60s. They actively worked for equality and social change and taught their children that the real key to social change was love.

They served in their church. The Hairston children sang in the Junior Choir, performed in holiday programs and participated in oratorical competi-

tions. The Hairstons sacrificed to provide piano lessons for each of their children, creating a home filled with music and joy.

The Hairston sisters brought their talent for music to Berea. All six sang in the Chapel Choir. The oldest sister, Willene, was the founding director of the Black Ensemble, now called the Black Music Ensemble, which carries on a rich tradition of gospel and spiritual music at the College to this day. Music was integral to their college experiences, and they left a legacy of excellence.

"They were pioneers," said Dr. Stephen Bolster, Concert Choir director. "The Hairstons did a lot to promote integration of the College's music programs and love of all people. They exemplify that in their lives, and the humility and grace with which they do it is remarkable."

## A place to belong

The first. The oldest of the Hairston's seven children, Willene, was the first to leave home. She laid the groundwork for her family's legacy and took the first step in realizing the dreams and expectations of her parents. Willene attended a segregated school until fourth grade. But in 1957, she and her sister, Sue, started attending the now-integrated neighborhood school located in East Williamson where they grew up. This switch, though not perfect, was smoothed by the love and support of her mother and father, as well as the church and community in which they were so deeply ingrained. Having had excellent teachers at both schools, Willene said she was well prepared to go on to Williamson High School. There, she met home economics teacher, Mrs. Mildred Wooten, who taught her about sewing, cooking, design, child development and Berea College.

The Hairstons always knew college was in their future, though exactly how it would happen for this working-class family of nine was yet to be determined.

"When Berea's door opened, it was someplace that really interested us, and we thought we'd feel welcome there. It would be a place that would take us where we wanted to go," Willene said. "The liberal arts education and a Christian environment—we were already a part of that and wanted to continue that through growth, learning and understanding. So we have to give Mrs. Wooten credit for introducing us to that opportunity."

In the fall of 1966, Willene stepped onto Berea's campus for the first time, undecided on a major, but filled with hope, ambition and a continued love for music that would propel her through the next four years.

"It was challenging being the first time away from home like that," she

said, "but I knew I had to make it, and I had ambition and goals in mind, and I didn't want to let my family down. But it wasn't long until I acclimated to the environment because people were so nice, caring and helpful."

Willene's first labor position was in needlecraft, but she soon gravitated to the music department, and spent the next three years working in the music library while working toward a degree in music education.

She auditioned for and was accepted into the Chapel Choir under the direction of Dr. Rolf Hovey, who became an encourager and mentor to her and, eventually, to her whole family. She took organ, piano and voice, and played the carillon as part of her labor assignment. Willene also was part of the Polyesters, a female, a cappella group formed by choir members.

Having grown up in church, connecting with a community of believers was important to her Berea transition. She was part of Union Church's Union Youth Fellowship that met on Sunday evening. With their bologna sack lunches from Dining Services, they studied together, served and built relationships with other students and community members.

By 1969, amid the unrest across the country following Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, the African-American students needed a way of coming together, and music was one way. Willene helped create the Black Ensemble and was the group's first director.

"It was a time of evolution and change for our country, and Berea students were engaged, and a part of the change and letting the administration know that African-American students were here and we wanted some things for us," Willene said. "The Black

Ensemble was an awesome way of filling in some gaps, pulling people together and creating unity."

After graduating in 1971 with a music education degree, Willene went on to earn a master's degree in music education from Eastern Kentucky University in 1975. She taught music in Williamson for 40 years before retiring in June 2011. Willene has been serving her church as either organist or pianist for 47 years and director of music/choirs for the past 28 years. She is married, and has three children and eight grandchildren.

"Berea nurtured us in many ways—intellectually, emotionally and artistically," she said. "You learned a lot about people through those things. It was a place to belong."



Willene Hairston Moore '71 (3rd from left) sang with the Polyesters, a group comprised of Chapel Choir women. She was the first of five Hairston sisters to sing with the Polyesters. This photo is from 1970.



Willene Hairston Moore '71 began taking piano and organ lessons in third grade, a big sacrifice for her parents. She played while at Berea College and continues to play the piano at her church in Williamson, W.Va.

## Icing on the cake

Sue came to Berea with the same love of music, heart for service and determination to succeed. She knew from day one that she was going to be a teacher. She had spent countless days at their kitchen table in Williamson, teaching her younger siblings their letters, how to read and American History. She loved to learn and enjoyed teaching her siblings, wanting them to have the same thirst for education. Only a year apart, Sue recalls going to elementary school with Willene, even before she was old enough to attend. She always knew that college was in her future, and following Willene to Berea just made sense.

At Berea, Sue began working in needlecraft and then moved on to hold positions in the record library and choral library in the Music department. She remembers earning about \$40 per month salary—being paid \$1 per hour, the top-of-the-line amount in 1967. Sue easily balanced the schedules of classes, labor, rehearsals, voice, piano and organ lessons and homework.

Sue was also section leader in the Chapel Choir, and she remembers how much she enjoyed singing at the Sunday evening convocations, performing in Choir concerts and going on Choir Tours. She has fond memories as a choir member at Christmas singing Handel's "Messiah" at Union Church, going Christmas caroling around campus and returning to the Hovey's home for hot chocolate. With the Choir, Sue sang at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., and in Williamsburg, Va., at Bruton Parrish. She also sang with the Polyesters and was the second director of the Black Ensemble after Willene graduated.

"There was a spirit of community and togetherness," Sue said. "It was open and loving. It was the Berea Way."



For Sue, Berea has always been a haven of peace. From her dorm mother, Mrs. Upton, at Kentucky Hall to the Union Church congregation and Union Youth Fellowship, having served as president and representing Union Church at the youth conference at Emory University in Atlanta, to the relationship she and her family built with President Willis Weatherford and his wife, Sue said Berea's campus has always felt like home.

After Sue graduated in 1972 with a music education degree, she completed master's degrees in music education and elementary education and earned her Rank One at Eastern Kentucky University. She taught as a music teacher in Louisville and Winchester, Ky. After her father passed away, she moved back to Williamson where she continues to teach first grade today and serves as a mentor teacher in her district. She has enjoyed a 45-year career teaching and inspiring students to help them fulfill their educational goals.

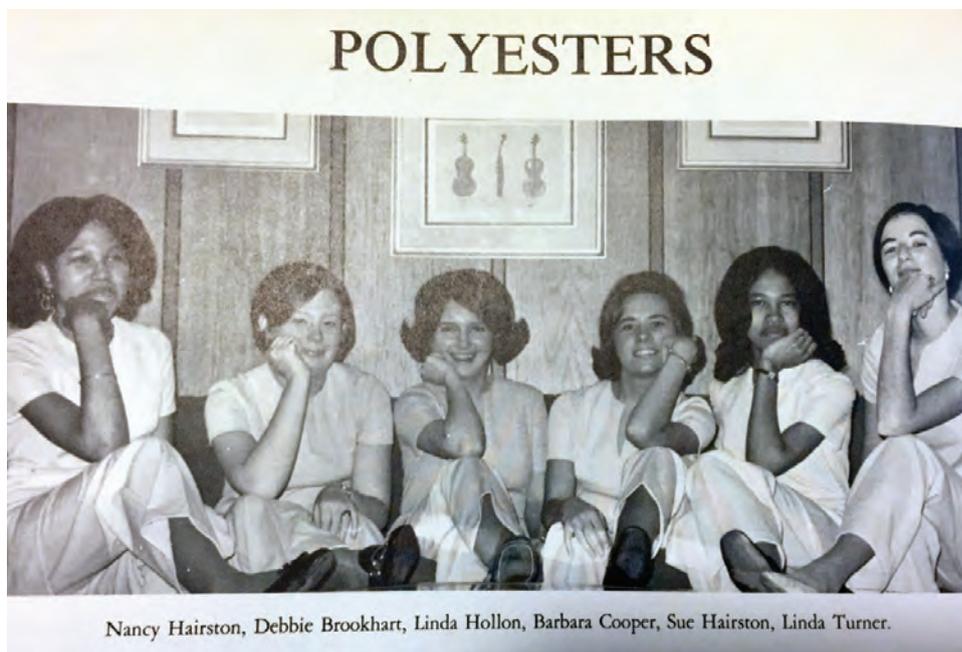
But Sue's love and gratitude for

Berea only grew after she left. She and her husband, Wayne Jones, were married in Danforth Chapel on Berea's campus. Though not a Berea graduate, Wayne began to advocate for Berea as well because he saw it as such an opportunity for youth in their area. Wayne recruited many students to Berea, even taking them to campus and standing in as their parent when necessary to help students succeed.

Twenty years later when Sue and Wayne's oldest daughter, Susan '02, was ready for college, Berea was once again a wonderful opportunity for their family.

"Students have thanked us for introducing them to Berea, and said it has changed their lives," Sue said. "I'm thankful for what Wayne did, not only for our own children, but for other people. It's a service mission and a part of our legacy."

"I think when we came to Berea, we had something to give; we were already filled up with love when we came," Sue continued. "Mama and Daddy nurtured us from the very beginning, so when we got to Berea, it was icing on the cake."



Nancy Hairston, Debbie Brookhart, Linda Hollon, Barbara Cooper, Sue Hairston, Linda Turner.

Nancy Hairston Abasiekong '74 and her sister, Sue Hairston Jones '72, sang together in the Chapel Choir women's group, the Polyesters.

## Eager to learn

“I wasn’t sure they would accept a third person from the same family,” Nancy joked about her college application experience. “Of course I wanted to go (to Berea), but I thought I should apply other places in case they had a quota.”

By 1970, Nancy’s family had visited Berea’s campus several times, attending Black Ensemble concerts and other events. She had listened to the multitude of stories that filtered down from her sisters’ semesters and summers spent at Berea.

She also was very aware of the financial constraints on her family. She knew that for her parents to send a third and soon a fourth daughter to college, she would have to help pay her way. Berea’s labor program made that possible.

“We were no strangers to work,” Nancy said, recalling all the ways she and her sisters had served throughout their childhood. “The good thing about Berea with your job assignments is you didn’t have to know how to do it—they taught us, and we were eager to learn.”

Nancy first was assigned to Fireside Weaving in the finishing room. She had no experience with mending/re-weaving different patterns but learned quickly. She continued there over her four and a half years, eventually weaving on display—along with potters, broom makers and other crafters—for tourists to observe and interact with students demonstrating their crafts. In addition to working at Fireside, Nancy also served as a student assistant for the Issues and Values class under Professor Glen Stassen.

Her first Mountain Day experience remains one of her fondest Berea memories. As a first-year student, several friends from Kentucky Hall decided to hike the Pinnacles together with the assistance of an upperclassman guide, Aniedi John Abasiekong '73. Along the

way, they realized that Aniedi, a transfer student also in his first year at Berea, had only hiked the Pinnacle once before. The group made it up the mountain



without incident, Nancy recalled laughing, but that sparked a friendship that eventually led to Nancy and Aniedi getting married in Danforth Chapel four years later. They have been married 44 years and have two children.

Following in the Hairston sisters’ footsteps, Nancy auditioned and was thrilled to join the Chapel Choir. She sang with the all-female Polyesters group and sang with the Black Ensemble for one year.

Nancy remembers her first choir tour as a freshman with Dr. Rolf Hovey to Dearborn, Mich., and other cities. She was introduced to various sights and sounds across the U.S. while on tour. She especially enjoyed singing with her sisters at the National Cathedral and in Williamsburg, Va., at Bruton Parrish.

“Dr. Hovey wanted to introduce new things to students,” Nancy said. “We stayed in people’s homes, and we were learning in so many different ways. It enriched our lives and our awareness.”

In addition to choir outings, interesting convocations and watching

movies in Phelps Stokes, Nancy also participated in various clubs and held offices across campus. The home economics major was involved in the Home Economics Club. She was president of the Berea Chapter of the Mortar Board National Honor Society, member of the Inter-dorm Council and served as secretary of the student body one year.

Involvement in these organizations afforded Nancy memories of having a meeting/sleepover at the president’s house hosted by Anne Weatherford, who was one of the sponsors of Mortar Board. She also enjoyed meals in the home of Home Economics Chair Marjorie Hilton, cooking and eating together as a club.

After completing an extra semester for student teaching, Nancy graduated from Berea in December 1974 with a bachelor’s in home economics education. She went on to earn a master’s degree in home economics education from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. Nancy has enjoyed a 40-year career as a Cooperative Extension family and consumer science extension agent in Cleveland County, N.C. She has worked with countless families, children and communities helping them improve their lives by putting research-based knowledge to work.



Ann Hairston Hill '75 and Nancy Hairston Abasiekong '74 did everything together as children. Ann was one year behind Nancy in school, but the two walked together at their December 1974 graduation.

Jay Buckner

## Opportunity for growth

In the fall of 1971, the first Hairston sister, Willene, had just graduated from Berea, and the fourth sister, Ann, entered on Nancy's heels.

"Berea was a part of our family by then," Ann said. "We were already connected there. The campus was beautiful, and I had family there. It felt like home."

Ann settled into Berea life easily. She auditioned and was accepted into the Chapel Choir and also began singing with the Black Ensemble and the Polyesters. She enjoyed working at the library, learning about the value of the College's rare books.

But what began as a smooth transition into college was soon disrupted by racially-charged campus turbulence. Nationwide, black college students were pushing for their culture and heritage to be remembered and taught, and Berea was no different. When tensions peaked surrounding the dismissal of a newly-hired African-American counselor, President Willis Weatherford dismissed students early for the fall semester, postponing finals and giving the campus time for its passions to cool over the extended break.

"We didn't come back until after Christmas—they just closed out the semester," Ann recalled. "There was so much tension on campus; it was a frightening time."

Ann and her sisters returned in January to what Ann recalls as a college community in the midst of clarifying its values and identity.

Ann had a transformative experience when comedian and civil rights activist, Dick Gregory, spoke at a convocation. Required to write a reaction paper about the convocation, Ann remembers writing about things Gregory presented that she had not understood before. Her professor

challenged her reaction, encouraging openness to ideas, balanced with questioning that led to deeper understanding.

"You come to understand that you must go out differently than you came in," Ann said. "We were there to learn more than just knowledge about the field we were choosing, but to think critically about ourselves, about life and purpose."

Ann continued learning through all the experiences she had at Berea. For example, on a choir tour to Washington, D.C. and Williamsburg, Va., she not only cherished singing in the National Cathedral and other historical venues, she also remembers experiencing sites like Thomas Jefferson's home at Monticello, and being deeply moved by the slave quarters.

"We could have just been singing," Ann said. "But Dr. Hovey gave us a valuable experience. These experiences were significant."

Soon after returning from that choir trip, Ann took a new position as a College tour guide, where she learned about and shared the story of John G. Fee, the foundations of Berea and what the College stands for.

"One of the things Berea gave me that I have tried to use throughout my career is the belief that everybody matters," Ann said. "Everybody has value. We need to speak for children, for the less fortunate, the elderly and the

disabled. That's what we're supposed to be about."

In December 1974, Ann walked beside her sister, Nancy, at graduation, finishing in just three and a half years with a degree in child development, and was inducted into the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society. She went on to earn a master's degree in family and consumer science from Wayne State University. Since then, she has served as an early childhood teacher, director of early childhood programs and as an early childhood licensing regulator. She spent the last 15 years before retiring as an early childhood professor, most recently as program director of the Early Childhood Development program at Florence-Darlington Community College in Florence, S.C. As a professor, Ann said she told every class about growing up in Appalachia in Williamson and emphasized Berea's motto, reminding her students they all have value and a voice. Ann is married and has two children.

"Berea has such a rich legacy that has been passed down to us," she said. "Wherever you come from, whatever your past experience, Berea is equipped to enrich your life, to help you grow and be successful."



Nancy Hairston Abasiokong '74 (left) and Ann Hairston Hill '75 (center) walked together at their December 1974 graduation. Their sister Sue (right) was the only member of their family able to attend their graduation.

## Opportunity to explore

“I am number five; I hold that position with high honor,” Cynthia said. “My sisters above me were always role models.”

Cynthia described 1975 as a progressive time for women. Although Ann leaving for college was traumatic for her, Cynthia decided she might go somewhere else for college—set her own path.

“That lasted all of two seconds,” she said, laughing. “Nothing else stacked up to Berea. There was nowhere else I wanted to go.”

Despite the three-year age gap between Cynthia and her older sister, she didn’t come to Berea alone. Four of her closest friends, with whom she had gone to school for 12 years, entered Berea by her side. These Williamson comrades brought several more friends into the fold and were nearly inseparable for four years. Some of these young ladies played tennis together, traveled together for Short Term and went on to graduate school together.

Between her encouraging family and loyal friends, Cynthia had the confidence to pursue a course of study that deeply interested her. While in high school, she had been intrigued by the paranormal thriller TV series, “The Sixth Sense.” Fascinated with what was going on inside people’s heads, she chose psychology as her major. Psychology Professor John White impressed on her that the field was wide open to explore. So even when she took a behavioral class that required her to keep a pet rat—which she named Sadie—alive all semester and teach it to run through a maze box, Cynthia was up for the challenge.

With her love for children and at her mother’s suggestion, Cynthia decided to triple major, adding child development and elementary education.



“It’s all part of the liberal arts education,” Cynthia said. “While I didn’t go into college just to be a ‘this’ or ‘that’, I had the opportunity to explore lots of different things.”

Her opportunities to explore expanded into labor as well. Her first labor position was in Development, “stuffing all those wonderful mailings that went out from that office,” she recalled. Cynthia went on to work as a hall monitor, resident assistant, janitor and receptionist at the front desk of the Alumni Building.

In Chapel Choir, Cynthia not only traveled in the U.S., but was the first Hairston to travel internationally on choir tours, going to Poland and Russia.

“Being able to go behind the iron curtain, standing in Red Square and seeing the statue of Chopin in the park in his birthplace, Warsaw, Poland—those are experiences that give you an appreciation for having been there and having been given the opportunity to do these things,” she said.

Cynthia dove into diverse Short Term courses, too. Not fancying herself a dancer, she chose a modern dance class. She studied mountain instruments

and made her own dulcimer, and she spent a month playing tennis in Florida with her best friends.

“There is the knowledge that when you go to learn at Berea, you’re not just passing through until graduation,” Cynthia said. “You are there intentionally to do the job of going to school and learning at a high level. And when you finish, you are well prepared to pursue more.”

When she graduated in 1979, Cynthia was ready to tackle even more. She earned a master’s degree in elementary education from Eastern Kentucky University and a doctorate in educational leadership, curriculum and instruction. She has served as an elementary teacher in both West Virginia and North Carolina for 37 years. She has also worked as an adjunct professor in early childhood education, and has fulfilled a call to mission outreach, working with her church youth missionary group for 34 years.

Cynthia returned to Berea for the 1983 Homecoming festivities, where she met James Hicks ’76, a track and field Berea alumnus who had graduated during Cynthia’s first year and lived in Charlotte, N.C. The two have been married for 32 years and have four children.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Nancy Hairston Abasiekong '74, Ann Hairston Hill '75, Cynthia Hairston Hicks '79 and Susan Jones English '02 hold up their family position, the order in which they attended Berea College.

Jay Buckner

## Strive for excellence

Six years passed before the sixth Hairston sister would step into the tradition and high expectations at Berea. Vivian began forging her own path in high school when she fell in love with an accounting class. Taking advanced math classes, primarily filled with male students, Vivian's intrigue with the business industry sparked her sister, Cynthia, to orchestrate Vivian's first labor assignment in the Accounting office.



"All that history came with some privileges with the connections my sisters had," Vivian said. "All of that helped to pave the way for what was next in my educational career."

Vivian aspired to be a successful business woman in a Fortune 100 company. Majoring in business, she spent four years in the Accounting office connecting her major and her interest with practical work experience.

Vivian also desperately wanted the opportunity to sing with the Chapel Choir as all of her sisters had before her. But in 1980, Dr. Rolf Hovey handed over the choir reins to young, energetic Dr. Stephen Bolster.

"Some of the tradition and natural order of what you got involved in when you came to Berea was music and singing," Vivian said, recalling her nervousness trying out for choir.

But her nervousness was unwarranted, as she blew Bolster away right from the start. In fact, when the auditions for solo pieces came up that year, Bolster said Vivian's voice was so fine that he picked pieces especially for her and did not hold typical auditions—a decision so rare he wouldn't do it again for 36 years.

"She sang so extraordinarily beautifully that we kept that piece all year; we performed it many times, and she always shone," Bolster said.

Vivian sang with the choir four years and was part of the first Chamber Singers ensemble. She performed at the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, Tenn., and participated in numerous spring tours, performing for audiences all over the country in communities big and small. The people she met in those singing groups became her closest friends.

"What an opportunity to be a part of the beauty and excellence of music through the music programs, and the directors who strove for excellence, helped us to be excellent," she said.

Her first year, Vivian met senior basketball star, Vance Blade '82. Vance's sister Valerie (Thomas '84) was Vivian's RA in Pearsons Hall, and he played ball with Vivian's cousin, Donald Hairston '84, and another former Williamson classmate. Those connections brought the two business majors together and, as Vivian recalls, 'magic just struck.' The two were married at Berea Baptist Church and have been married for nearly 31 years. They have two children.

After graduation, Vivian attended Eastern Kentucky University and earned a master's degree in business administra-

tion. From there, she completed a management intern program that put her on a leadership track with Fortune 100 companies. She spent eight years with Humana and nearly 13 years at GE, giving her the foundation for her consulting firm. As a professional development trainer and coach, Vivian now helps "organizations develop incredible leaders and individuals to fuel incredible careers." She also is an adjunct professor at the University of Louisville, preparing her students to be successful and add value in the workforce.

"We don't just come through Berea with an educational degree," Vivian said. "We come through with strengthened values, purpose and desire, and a strengthened passion to give back, to help others and share opportunities—and share Berea as well."

Not only do Vivian and Vance support the College financially, Vance is in his third term on the Berea College Board of Trustees. Vivian returns to Berea to speak to, inspire, mentor and encourage current students.

"Our legacy is taking what Berea has to offer and what life has to offer and working with that," Vivian said, "Trying to not just go to work, but to help make the world a better place."



LEFT TO RIGHT: Vivian Hairston Blade '85, Ann Hairston Hill '75, Sue Hairston Jones '72, Cynthia Hairston Hicks '79, Nancy Hairston Abasiakong '74 and their brother, Elbert Hairston, sing together at Susan Jones English's wedding in 2017 at Union Church, while Willene Hairston Moore '71 plays the piano.

# Susan & Wayne

Susan Jones English '02 and  
Wayne Jones '15

## The second generation

After six Hairstons spanned 20 years on Berea's campus, a second generation soon followed. Sue Hairston Jones '72 had returned to Williamson and dedicated her career to educating elementary children in her slowly dwindling hometown. Sue raised her children, Susan, Amy and Wayne, in a loving home, grounded in faith, service and music, and infused with Berea.

When Susan '02 began college planning, she knew Berea was where her mother hoped she'd attend. Sue's wish came true, and on move-in day, when Susan and her family opened the door to her first dorm room in Elizabeth Rodgers, Sue instantly recognized the room as the one she and Willene shared in the late 1960s. Coincidence? Probably. But Susan felt comfort in that legacy. But legacy isn't only comfort.

"You realize there is a lot to measure up to when faculty and staff know your family and expect a lot out of you," Susan said.

Susan welcomed the challenge and thrived. She worked at the Log House Craft Gallery, but soon moved on to working with Dr. Libby Jones at the Center for Effective Communication and as a teaching assistant for Jones and Mr. Andrew Baskin. She sang four years with the Concert Choir and two with the Black Music Ensemble (BME).

With Concert Choir, Susan traveled to Rome and sang for Pope John Paul II. On a Kentucky Institute of International Studies (KIIS) program trip to Austria with Dr. Stephen Bolster, he and Susan met the 100-year-old Hungarian composer, Ferenc Farkas, whose music they were studying and performing, in his home.

"These experiences are just invaluable," Susan said. "The exposure is one of the most meaningful parts of my Berea experience."

Susan rode to church with Dr. Kathy Bullock every Sunday. "She went



Sue Jones '72 (right) was thrilled when her children, Wayne and Susan, were admitted to Berea. The three stand in front of Elizabeth Rodgers dorm where Sue and her sister, Willene '71, lived. More than 25 years later, Susan moved into the very same room in ER.

out of the boundary of what I consider a professor to be," Susan said. "I'm really blessed to have professors who don't just look at you as a student whose relationship stops at graduation, but they continue to be respected and cherished mentors and friends."

When her brother, Wayne, came to Berea in 2011, one deciding factor was the opportunity for close faculty relationships.

"It was easy to have great relationships with professors," Wayne said. "Others struggled that first semester, but I hit the ground running."

Wayne also sang four years with Concert Choir and two with BME. When he traveled abroad with the KIIS program, he had an intense one-on-one summer experience with Bolster as the only student in his Vocal Methods class.

"The opportunity to work with someone of such expertise expanded my appreciation of choral music," Wayne said. "Dr. Bolster's personalized instruction developed an excellent student-teacher relationship unique to the Berea experience."

An economics major, Wayne worked in Accounts Payable in the Accounting office for three years. His senior year, he became an RA in Bingham Hall. He served as a peer advisor for the Success

program, meeting with incoming freshman to help them acclimate to Berea.

In April, Wayne completed the Rackham Merit Fellow program, earning a master's degree in public policy at the University of Michigan.

After graduating from Berea with an education degree, Susan earned a second bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in education from Eastern Kentucky University. She taught elementary school in several cities and now works as a technology analyst for the North Carolina Department of Transportation. Susan and Wayne both serve on Berea's Young Alumni Advisory Council. Last summer, Susan married Dennis English in Berea at Union Church, and the two just recently welcomed their first child.

Each member of the Jones family is committed to the success of Berea College. Even the middle sister, Amy, who attended Yale University, sings with the alumni choir and joins her family in financially supporting the College.

The Hairston family hosted the Concert Choir for their spring tour to Charlotte, N.C., in 2017, providing lodging, concert venues and recreational events to the choir during their stay.

# Jenna Hughes Hates RUNNING

By Jason Lee Miller

Jenna Hughes '19 hates running. It might be surprising, then, that cross country and distance track events are her specialties. For the Berea College junior, a miles-a-day training regimen is worth it for the possibility of outperforming her toughest competition: herself.

"I hate the running part of it," she confessed. "It's awful, but I love the feeling of being able to push my limits and see how far I can make it. Every time you PR (set a personal record), it's worth it."

The technology and applied design/computer science major trains for cross country and track events six days a week. "Easy days" are five miles. The rest are six to eight miles.

Jenna's best event is the 800 meters, for which she holds a personal record of 2:23, a success that made the suffering fade to the background.

"When I ran my 2:23," she said, "my body was dead. I was destroyed, but there was still so much energy because I realized I finally did it. I don't even know if I placed. I was just focusing on not blacking out. I did do a lot better than my ranking, though."

"She's very clutch," said Shawn Jakubowski, head coach for the men's and women's cross country and track teams. "She loves the competition. Once she's on the track, it's like a switch, and she's ready to go."

Hughes calls Jakubowski her "second dad" and notes an incident

where he assisted her when she had car trouble. Her "first" dad is Tom Hughes, who attended Berea College for the 1984-85 academic year and also ran cross country and track.

"My dad got me into running," said Jenna, noting that her two sisters also ran growing up and they would run road races as a family. "Most of the T-shirts I own are running shirts."

Tom, who has coached track at the local high school in Osgood, Ind., for the past 12 years, says dislike of running is common among young athletes.

"I see former students out running now," Tom said, "and I'll say, 'what are you doing running? You hated track.' They say they enjoy it now because they don't *have* to run."

Tom and Jenna aren't the only ones in the Hughes family to have run for Berea. Tom's brother, Mark '90, also ran cross country and track while he attended. Like Tom and Jenna, his specialty was the 800 meters. During his tenure, Berea College went to nationals, an experience Jenna shared 30 years later.

The youngest of 16 children, Tom and Mark took to running because, as Tom says, "some things come easier for some families." According to Mark, that's easy for Tom to say, as running came naturally to him. Mark said he had

to train constantly. Both passed on their love of running to their children, and Tom believes it has been a beneficial family tradition.

"Sports, in general, have helped Jenna not settle for second or third best," Tom said. "She's always trying to be the best she can be. I'm proud of her. All three of my girls have

been successful in what they do."

Jenna echoed that sentiment, remarking that she sees her track teammates as a second family who are "all suffering together."

"I'm all in it for the competition," she said. "Opponents are there to push me, but really I'm all about what the stopwatch says."

Jenna feels the same about college. Enduring the homework to make the grades, the ends justify the means. If she applies the same philosophy to life, she's sure to go the distance.

I hate the running part of it... but I love the feeling of being able to push my limits and see how far I can make it.  
— Jenna Hughes '19

I'm all in it for the competition. Opponents are there to push me, but really I'm all about what the stopwatch says.  
— Jenna Hughes '19

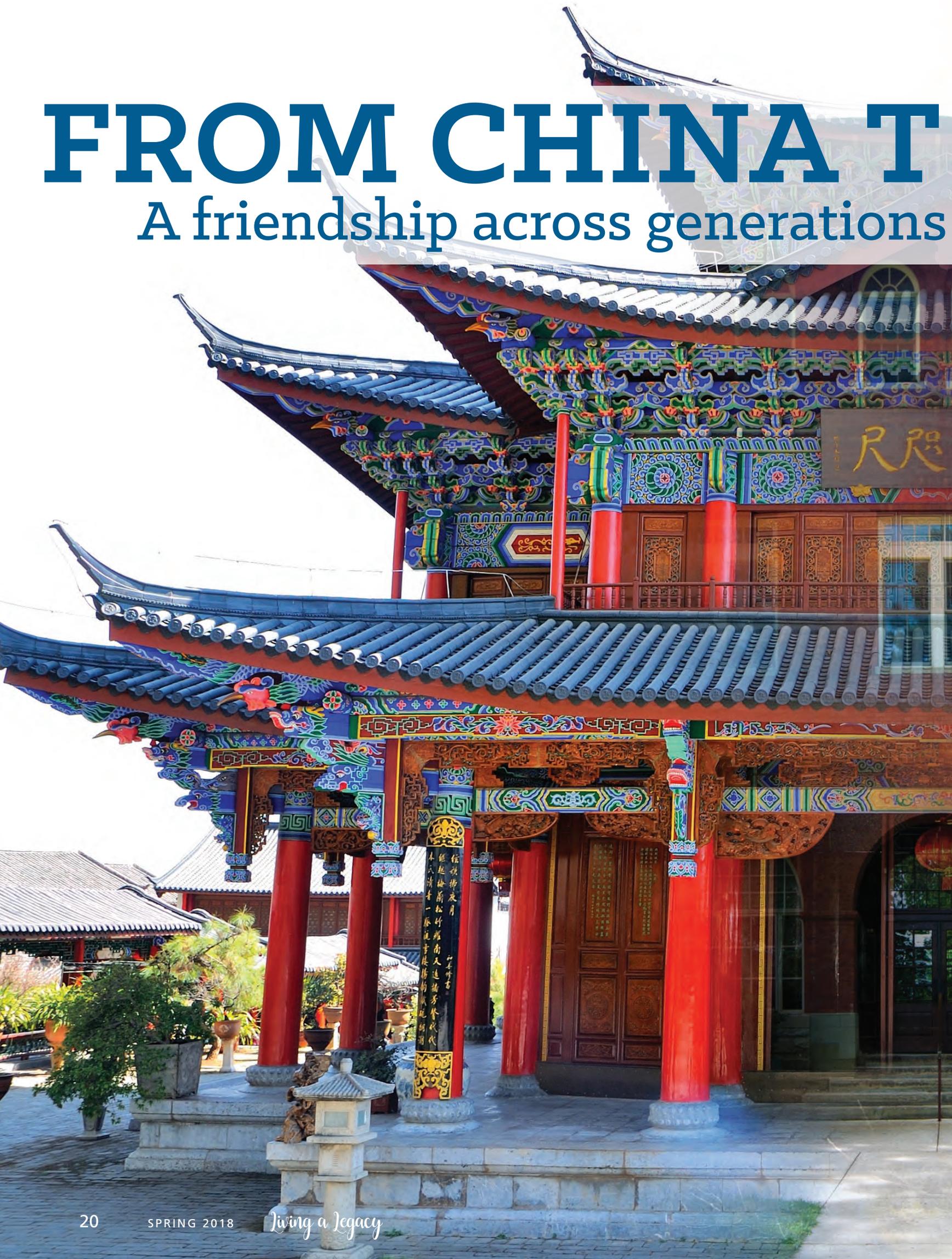
Jenna Hughes '19 and her father, Tom Hughes, stand on the Berea College track just before time trials this spring. Tom attended Berea during the 1984-85 school year. Jenna, Tom and Jenna's uncle, Mark Hughes '90, all ran the 800 meters for the College.



Deajah Baskin '21

# FROM CHINA T

A friendship across generations



# O APPALACHIA

continues to impact Berea College

By Abbie Darst '03

**T**wo idealistic Yale alumni—one Chinese, the other American—met in China nearly a century ago. They sparked an enduring friendship, laying the foundation for a three-generation legacy that stretched from rural China to Berea College in the hills of Appalachia. It all started during one of the most fascinating events in China's history: the Boxer Rebellion.

In 1900, a secret group of Chinese rebels that became the Order of the Righteous and Harmonious Militia rose up against foreign emissaries, foreign missionaries and Chinese Christians. Dubbed “Boxers” by the foreign powers because of their style of martial arts, which they believed made them invulnerable to bullets, these rebels besieged China's capital city. An international force of eight nations—led by Russia and Japan, and including the U.S.—ultimately defeated the Boxers, and China had to pay more than \$330 million in reparations. The U.S. used the excess portion of its share of the reparations to establish a scholarship fund to educate young Chinese students in America.

photo illustration by Charlie Campbell

One of the first students chosen for this scholarship opportunity was Fu-Liang Chang, grandfather of Berea College Trustee and Vice Chairman Robert Yahng '63. In the early 20th century, Chang left China to attend Yale University on a Boxer's Rebellion Indemnity Scholarship. That journey became the start of his family's more-than-six-decade connection to Berea. While at Yale, Chang met his future wife, Louise Harriet Huie, a half Dutch/English and Chinese New York native, and decided on his life mission—to assist his countrymen in rural China in achieving a better life. Chang wanted to help restore hope and a more rewarding way of life to his people.

“As a result of revolution, civil wars and World War I, poverty, misery, famine, deprivation, sickness and death had become the lot of the Chinese people,” Yahng said about the condition of China during that period.

In 1915, Chang graduated from

Yale, married Louise Huie, and together they moved to China. Believing education was the key to rural reconstruction, he joined Yale-in-China as a professor of botany and forestry and later served as dean of the middle school department. Yale-in-China was an organization started in the late 1800s by Yale graduates interested in mission work. By the early 20th century it had become focused on education and development.

In the 1920s, he met Francis Hutchins, who was also on the Yale-in-China faculty. Hutchins had graduated from Oberlin in 1923 and later would also attend Yale, earning a master's degree there in 1933. The two struck up a friendship that would last for decades. As China deteriorated from years of turbulence, Hutchins was called to leave the war-torn country and return to the United States to lead a small, liberal arts college in the heart of Appalachia, a college where his father William had been serving as president.

“Throughout 1938, the enemy [Japanese] planes visited Nanchang daily and sometimes twice a day, and we learned to live with them,” Chang wrote in his memoirs. “In fact, we even entertained visitors with the enemy screaming overhead. My friend and former colleague at Yale-in-China, Francis S. Hutchins, visited us before he returned to America to accept the presidency of Berea College. In the course of a nuisance air raid one night, one enemy plane flew over the city for more than two hours before dropping its load of bombs. I suggested to Dr. Hutchins that we go to bed as it was already rather late. After pondering what would be the safest place in the house, we all slept underneath our beds. No one could escape injury by a direct hit, but shrapnel would probably not touch us underneath an iron bed covered with mattress and blanket.”

In the coming years of World War II, China would be a major theater of action, as the Japanese invaded the country, causing chaos and disruption of society. After the end of the war, communists began the takeover of mainland China, resulting in continued upheaval.

“It is so difficult to reconstruct and help people when there is little structure or order in the nation,” Yahng said of the position in which his grandfather found himself during the late 1940s.

In 1949, Chang left China and accepted a fellowship at Yale Divinity School for the 1950-51 school year. While there, Hutchins invited his old friend to join the faculty at Berea College. Chang accepted the offer. He taught sociology and served as College host and counselor to international visitors from 1951 to 1969.

## A Life's Mission Redirected

Chang's mission did not change when he joined the Berea faculty—it was just redirected. Having fled China, he realized that serving Appalachia—with its poverty and lack of resources—was well aligned with his life's mission.



Berea College Trustee Robert Yahng's grandparents, Fu-Liang and Louise Chang, moved to Berea at the invitation of President Francis Hutchins in 1951. Chang moved his focus on rural reconstruction from China to Appalachia and taught at the College until 1969.



Berea College Trustee Robert Yahng's parents, Daniel and Louise Yang, moved to Berea in 1957. Daniel served as the College treasurer and then as a professor in the economics and business department. Louise joined the College as a librarian at the Hutchins Library and also taught general studies.

## Two Generations, One Berea

In the U.S., Daniel furthered his education, earning an advanced degree in accounting and working for industrial companies as an accountant. Louise was a librarian at Yale's Sterling Memorial Library. In 1957, at the invitation of Francis Hutchins, Daniel and Louise joined Louise's parents, Fu-Liang and Louise Chang, at Berea College. Daniel first served as the College treasurer for several years and then as a professor in the economics and business department. Louise joined the College as a librarian at the Hutchins Library. She also taught general studies.

In Berea, the Yangs had found a refuge from the tribulations of war and social upheaval they had experienced in China.

"My mother was surrounded by family, close friends and colleagues. She found fulfillment in her work at the library," Yahng recalled.

"My father truly loved being in Berea," Yahng reminisced. "He had friends in Berea. Walking across the campus to collect his mail at the College post office would take a long time because every few steps he would meet a friend who would engage him in pleasant conversation. He took pleasure in flipping pancakes on Election Day morning. He enjoyed his involvement with Union Church."

In 1980, when Daniel Yang passed away, flags in Berea flew at half-mast, and Francis Hutchins gave the eulogy at his funeral, which drew such a large crowd it had to be held at Union Church instead of in Danforth Chapel on Berea's campus. Thinking back, Yahng says without the friendship between Hutchins and his grandfather, his family never would have been part of Berea College.

In 1959, Robert, the oldest of Yang's four boys, began his personal Berea College journey as a first-year student. His brother, Huie, also went to Berea, graduating in 1966. Another brother, Chris, attended Berea Foundation School, and later graduated from the

Instead of helping farmers in rural China, he turned his attention to the similarly challenged population in Kentucky. Hutchins asked Chang to study the Pine Mountain Settlement School in Harlan, Ky. After his study report, titled, "Whither Pine Mountain," Chang taught a course at Berea called Rural Reconstruction of Underdeveloped Areas. He continued to believe that investing time and resources in educating people is the best way to effect change. Berea's mission became his mission.

Through Hutchins' and Chang's friendship, Robert's parents, Louise Chang Yang and Daniel Teh-en Yang, met and formed their own close bond with the Hutchins family. Daniel had earned his law degree from Soochow University Law School and a doctorate in juridical science (the equivalent of a Ph.D. in Law) from New York University. Louise graduated from Vassar College and earned a master's degree from the University of Michigan. She spoke fluent English and Chinese and had proficiency reading French and Burmese. By the late 1940s, they had established themselves in China, as well. Daniel started his own law practice in Shanghai, only to have his office destroyed by Japanese

bombs. When WWII ended, the civil war with the Communists resumed. He found work in the government of Nationalist China. In 1949, he was in charge of rationing for the capital city of Nanjing at a time of hyperinflation, deprivation and instability.

Daniel's in-laws left China first, followed in 1950 by his wife, Louise, and their four sons—Robert, Huie, Chris and Michael. They all left for the U.S. as immigrants after the fall of Nationalist China. Daniel would remain in Taiwan for three years before joining his family in the U.S.

"All his life, he was in a situation where life and property could be and were easily lost," Yahng recalled of his father. "My parents' philosophy was simple: when everything is stripped from you, one thing that is very difficult to take from you is your education."

When the Yang family arrived in the U.S., they had little material wealth, but their education and faith allowed them to survive. Yahng said his grandparents held tight to their Christian faith and values, and believed in Berea's motto: God has made of one blood all peoples of the earth.

University of the South. Michael, the youngest of the four brothers, graduated from Knapp Hall and followed his grandfather's example by earning his undergraduate degree at Yale University.

Apart from his family, Francis Hutchins was one of the biggest influences on Robert Yahng's teenage and later years. The same man who had befriended his grandfather more than three decades prior took to sharing his knowledge and insight on life with Yahng.

"President Hutchins was a mentor," Yahng said. "I learned a great deal from him and was guided by his wisdom."

Much of Hutchins' shared wisdom revolved around making good life choices.

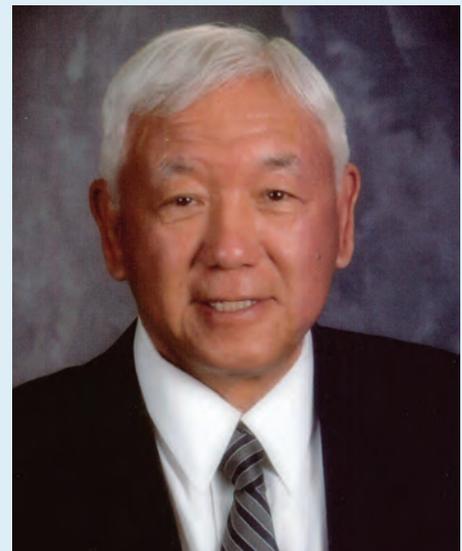
"An example may be illustrative," Yahng said. "He told me about his reunion in the early 1970s with an old Chinese friend whom he had not seen since leaving China in 1938. During the reunion, President Hutchins asked his friend how he had survived the decades of turmoil in China – WW II, the

Chinese Civil War, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. After some thought, the friend replied, 'My secret was, I never left a job I couldn't return to.' I have always remembered that.

"To me, it meant that life is all about options, and to exit situations gracefully preserves not only relationships, but options for survival, and success," Yahng elaborated.

### Continuing the Legacy

After graduating from Berea in 1963, Yahng received a juris doctor degree from the University of Kentucky College of Law in 1967. He then served in the U.S. Air Force, attaining the rank of captain before receiving an honorable discharge in 1972. In the years following his military service, he became a capital and managing partner for the international law firm of Baker & McKenzie. Yahng served 17 years as the chairman of the board of the pre-eminent civil engineering and construction company,



Berea College Trustee and Vice Chairman Robert Yahng '63 hopes his family's connection to Berea will continue in the following generations.

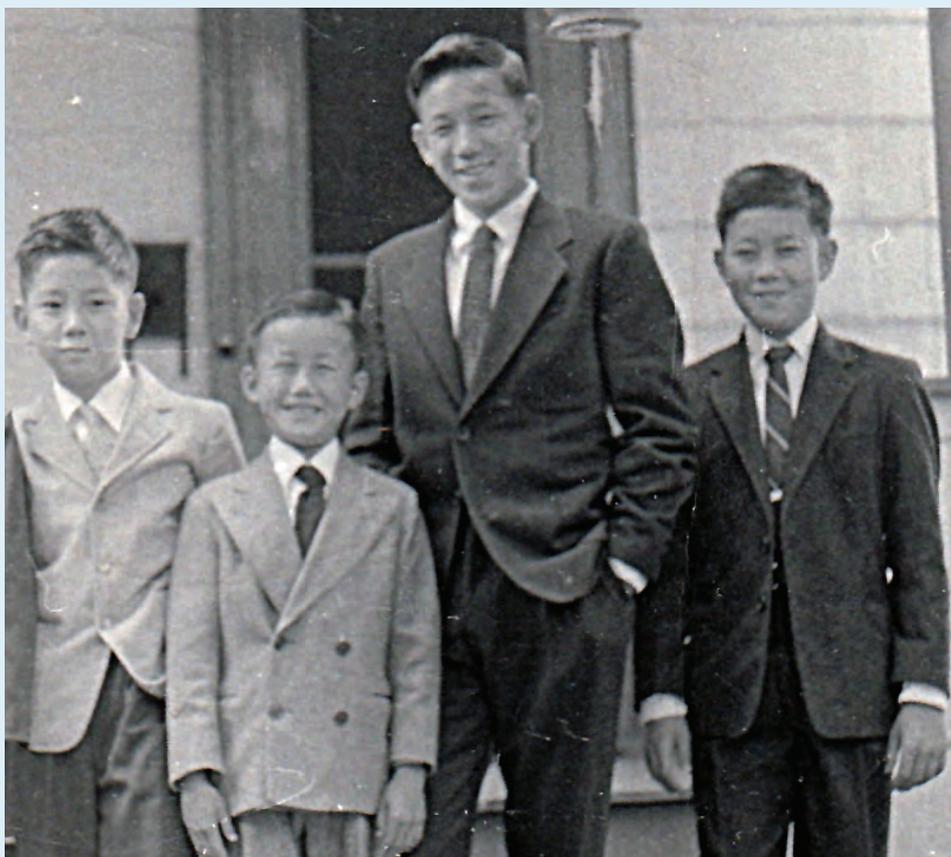
American Bridge, a firm that has built a number of very well-known bridges. A current project is the replacement of the Tappan Zee Bridge over the Hudson River, just north of New York City. He continues to pursue his love of education both through his Berea service and by teaching (for the last 20 years) and serving on the board at Salesian College Preparatory in Richmond, Calif., a school that, like Berea, serves a highly-disadvantaged population. A member of both the Kentucky and California Bar Associations, Yahng is also the co-author of several textbooks on U.S. history and government.

"I enjoy the interaction with my students and watching them learn," Yahng said. "It gives me a great deal of satisfaction."

Yahng's connection to Berea expanded in 2003 when he joined the College's Board of Trustees. In his 15

#### WHY THE CHANGE?

In the 1960s, Robert and two of his brothers changed the spelling of their last name, Yang, to Yahng. The family name is "楊" in Chinese, but, in order to write it in English, there are several transliteration systems that can be used. With their father's support, Robert and his brothers chose to use a different spelling from their parents because "Yahng" is phonetically more accurate and closer to how the surname should be pronounced.



Berea College Trustee Robert Yahng's family moved from China to the U.S. when he and his three brothers were young. Pictured from left to right: Chris, Michael, Robert and Huie.

years on the board, he has worked together with the leadership of the College to ensure the institution can survive and remain viable and meaningful for all it serves.

“The board dynamic has been one where everyone pitches in in a team effort,” Yahng said. “There is a congeniality and spirit of constructive help.

Education impacts the lives of people, who, in turn, impact others in making the world a better place for all.

– Robert Yahng '63

Everyone shares the same goal of making Berea College a better place.”

Yahng and his family are making Berea College a better place by supporting a new academic building under construction on campus. In memory of his parents, Yahng and his wife, Tina, have funded the Yahng Discovery Center in the Margaret A. Cargill Natural Sciences and Health Building, which is set to open this fall.

“I think the Discovery Center lends itself to the idea of being creative, being innovative and pursuing solutions to problems,” Yahng explained. “In this case, it’s a science building, but the idea of discovery isn’t limited to the sciences; it really extends to the social fabric of the whole world.”

It is important to Yahng that he maintains a close relationship to Berea for his family. He hopes that his family connection to Berea will continue in the following generations.

His broader hope is that more alumni will foster a multi-generational legacy with Berea, even if their own children and grandchildren do not attend their alma mater.

“Education impacts the lives of people, who, in turn, impact others,” Yahng said, “in making the world a better place for all.”

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# GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

Alumni entrepreneurs developed through their Berea experience give back to current Bereans

By Benjamin Willhite '18

Whether running unique campgrounds, a bourbon distillery or a venture capital company, six Berea alumni agree the College played an integral role in the success of their lives and businesses. Almost in unison, these business owners credit their coursework and experience in the Labor Program for enabling their visions.

## Hiking on a farm, sleeping in a treehouse

Jessa Turner '07 followed her dream of owning a farm. Turner graduated with a degree in sustainability and environmental studies (SENS) with a focus on sustainable building design. Just two short years after graduating, she and her husband, Nathan Turner, officially opened the gate to their business, HomeGrown HideAways—a farm, campground and event facility just a few miles east of Berea.

In her search for the perfect farm to facilitate her dream, Turner faced several conflicts and setbacks. She was looking



**ABOVE:** HomeGrown HideAways offers unique camping experiences in yurts, treehouses and a tipi. Located just a few miles outside of Berea, owner and alumnus Jessa Turner '07 relates much of her business's success to her start at Berea College. **BELOW:** HomeGrown HideAways is home to several pets, making this nature getaway feel even more like home.

for a farm that provided 100 acres, 80 of which would be wooded with hiking trails, and was located within 20 minutes of Berea. She and Nathan spent the majority of her college years renovating their house in Berea as an investment to sell when they found just the right farm. They did classwork on weekdays and





Abi's Arboreal Abode and Hammock Haven is one of the accommodations available at HomeGrown HideAways, a 100-acre farm owned by Alumna Jessa Turner '07.

spent their weekends completely remodeling an old duplex into a single-family home. The five-year farm search finally came to an end on their seventh wedding anniversary, when they purchased the farm of their dreams in April 2009.

Turner relates much of her success to Berea College. The combination of coursework, a summer internship at Vermont design school YesterMorrow, her labor position in the SENS program and writing the HomeGrown HideAways business plan as a fellow in the Entrepreneurship for the Public Good (EPG) program all culminated in growing a sustainable, eco-tourism venture from the ground up.

"I think the biggest success of HomeGrown HideAways is that we had the vision, wrote it down into a business plan, and have seen that vision become reality through a combination of both baby steps and giant leaps of faith," Turner said.

After eight years of working full-time and operating HomeGrown HideAways, Turner was able to transition away from her day job in 2017 and commit her time exclusively to the business. Today, her farm offers unique lodging opportunities in treehouses, yurts and a tipi. Guests can request farm-to-table meals from Nathan, a trained chef, and participate in a variety of workshops and retreats offered throughout the year. HomeGrown

HideAways also hosts large events such as weddings, festivals, fundraisers and reunions. In 2017, their lodging facilities hosted almost 600 guests, and 1,200 people came from all over the country for the four-day PlayThink festival that happens every June.

"If I had not had my labor position, done an internship through Berea College and participated in the EPG program, HomeGrown HideAways would not be here today," Turner said. "Berea College gave me the outlook of being able to succeed."

## Oil, gas and horses

Bill Daugherty '76 opened his current business, Blackridge Resource Partners LLC, with Bill Barr in 2011. Daugherty graduated from Berea College with a degree in agriculture. He started his first business, NGAS, in 1984, which was an oil and gas company. However, after being listed on the Nasdaq as a publicly-traded company, he decided to leave and start Blackridge. Blackridge has two components, the first being oil and gas prospect generation. The second component of their company is Blackridge

Stables, which breeds and buys horses. This is a medium for individuals to invest in race horses.

Daugherty used to own an oil and gas company that employed around 140 people, whereas now his firm consists of fewer than 10 workers. Since their cash flow has decreased from their original business, Daugherty said the company had to find its niche market and learn to operate on a much smaller scale.

Despite these new struggles, Daugherty's business has experienced many successes. He has served on the board of the Kentucky Oil and Gas Association. Through his accomplishments, Daugherty has been able to affect the community around him by creating tax revenue in Kentucky. Building a natural-gas infrastructure led to creating more long-term jobs.

Daugherty points to Berea College as part of his success. Several faculty members helped him during his time at Berea. One person in particular was Bob Johnstone, the head of the Agricultural department.

"Bob Johnstone did everything he could to help me get a job," Daugherty said. "The work culture at Berea College

gives you a strong incentive to continue that through your life."

Daugherty continues to be involved with Berea College. He received a 2017 Distinguished Alumnus award and has participated in Great Conversations, where he talked to students about lessons learned in his life so far.



LEFT: Bill Daugherty '76 is a serial entrepreneur. His latest business venture combines oil and gas and race horses.

## Venture capital



“At Berea College, I developed a strong work ethic, especially through the work-study program. Overall, I developed courage in a safe environment.”

– Esfandiar Lohrasbpour '74

Esfandiar Lohrasbpour '74 invests in companies as the co-owner of the venture capital firm, Novirian Capital in San Francisco, Calif. He started Novirian in 2012 after previously being a partner at Invesco Private Capital, a venture capital firm. His firm invests in small companies with the potential to increase in value and one day go public through an initial public offering (IPO) or be acquired by another company at a price that is higher than cost. After earning a mathematics degree at Berea College, Lohrasbpour focused on operations research in his post-graduate studies.

The main challenge he has faced within his business is making sure the right people invest in his firm's funds.

“Investors have to know that we buy illiquid shares of private companies,” Lohrasbpour said. Illiquid shares are stocks that are not yet easy to sell for a profit. “Liquidity requires patience,” he said.

So does investing. Throughout his life, Lohrasbpour has experienced a variety of successes. His business has

helped several companies go public and has sold other companies through acquisition. In both cases, the investor usually receives a profit on their initial investment.

While Lohrasbpour does not directly tie his success in venture capital to Berea College, he recognizes the values the College instilled that guided him toward his accomplishments.

“At Berea College, I developed a strong work ethic, especially through the work-study program. Overall, I developed courage in a safe environment,” he said.

Like Daugherty, Lohrasbpour also has participated in Great Conversations, a networking event that brings together alumni and students in roundtable discussions about topics dealing with careers and life in general, and he routinely looks for ways to support and encourage students.

## A shot of Kentucky

Deciding to mix business with pleasure, David Meier '83 began making the golden elixir of Kentucky—bourbon. He started Glenss Creek Distilling in 2015.

“The process of bourbon fascinated me,” Meier said, “and the Old Crow distillery I bought has a lot of history in it.”

Fascination and history aside, opening a distillery presents its own unique challenges.

“Creating a distillery is a capital-intensive business, and anticipating demand is very difficult,” Meier said. “I have to be able to sell my product and estimate how much I need to sell several months ahead of time.”

Meier was successful in reducing his capital costs by building most of his own equipment. Intimately learning how all the equipment worked to ensure it functioned properly helped him learn even more about the distilling process, he said. Besides bourbon-making, Meier also travels the world providing his consulting services in lean manufacturing. This skill played a critical role in crafting the distilling process for his small-scale bourbon operation.



David Meier '83 stands in the barrel room of Glenss Creek Distilling. While studying for his degree in industrial technology management, Meier learned how to TIG and MIG weld, welding skills that he used to create stills for his distillery.

“Almost everything I learned from Berea can be applied here at Glens Creek Distilling...I have tried to give back to Berea because I really appreciate the opportunity Berea gave me.”  
 – David Meier '83

Being small has afforded the company some successes.

“We know so much about distillation, because we do every step of the process,” Meier said. “When we come up with a new product, we can experiment more, because our batches are much smaller. It is one of the advantages of being small. Bigger companies want to produce the same profile. We want our bottles to taste good, but to have a different profile. We provide a different experience because every barrel is a little different.”

Through technical skill development and mentoring, Berea College played an important role in Meier’s business venture. While studying for a degree in industrial technology management, Meier learned how to TIG and MIG weld, welding skills that he later used to create stills for his distillery. He also uses his knowledge of graphic arts to design and print his labels.

“Almost everything I learned from Berea can be applied here at Glens Creek Distilling,” Meier said.

One thing from his time at Berea that has stuck with Meier was a quote from a professor, Dr. Don Hudson: “You make time in life for the things you want to do.”

“From then on, I decided to not tell people I don’t have time, I’m just going to do it, or not do it,” Meier said.

In an effort to give back, Meier provided two internships to Berea College students at Glens Creek Distilling in summer 2017.

“I have tried to give back to Berea because I really appreciate the opportunity Berea gave me,” he said.



The exterior of a house designed by Darin Brooks '95 through his company Brooks Design Works.

## Designing a new life

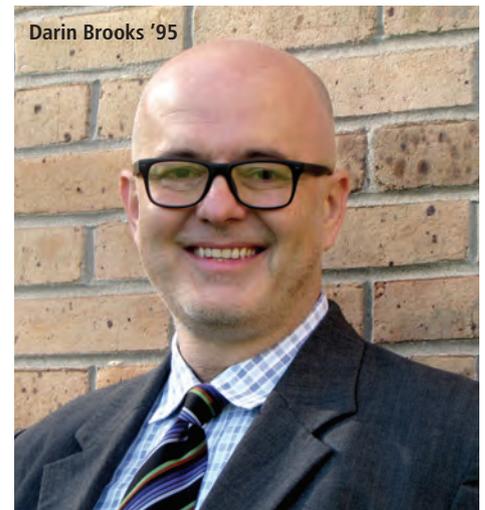
Darin Brooks '95 graduated from Berea with a degree in theatre, which is completely unrelated to the business he currently runs. He attended Pratt Institute after Berea College for his passion—design. In 2002, Brooks created an architectural design firm with a partner, but in 2010, he branched off to start his own business. Houston-based Brooks Design Works provides graphic design, architectural design and brand identity, as well as graphic publishing.

“I was a storyteller,” Brooks said. “In the world of residential design, I get to be intimately connected with people and their lives once they go home, which I find to be really inspiring in the design world.”

One of Brooks’ main struggles was hiring the wrong people and mixing work and personal life.

At one point, Brooks lived and worked inside the same building with his business partner. In the end, this lack of separation led him to break off and create his own company—one where he was the sole owner.

“The work-life balance is really important for entrepreneurs,” Brooks said. “I learned some very valuable and expensive lessons.”



Brooks has done interior design work for restaurants and condos. Beyond just running a successful business, he places great importance on community.

“Much of what I do professionally is to create a community, and that attribute of mine can be traced back to my time at Berea,” he said.

Brooks said Berea taught him that you have to keep going, or as they say in theatre, “the show must go on.” For him, Berea College felt like a community, especially as a residential college.

“Community was very important at Berea College,” he said. “I got along with classmates despite their different views or backgrounds.”

Although Berea College didn't directly influence his career, there have been aspects that have carried over and helped him. To reconnect with Berea, Brooks attended one of the Great Conversations held at Berea College. He saw it as a beneficial event for him and the students who attended.

"I have maintained close mentor relationships with a couple of Berea students I met that night. We shared book lists, inspiration, confidences and life-planning explorations," Brooks said.

## Creation

John Harmon '95 graduated from Berea College with a degree in studio art. Harmon spent 10 years as an environmental scientist/inspector, but desiring a more creative career, he started Harmon House in 2008. This initiative has become a successful business offering fine art, event photography, original music and broom craft.

Harmon crafts songs for the bands "John and the Time Traveling Bicycle" and "Carriage House Saints." He also commits to some website design as well.

On all of the "John and the Time Traveling Bicycle" albums, Harmon is



The experience forced me to gain self-confidence to do things independently and not let fear paralyze me.

— John Harmon '95

the sole songwriter and musician. He records all instrument sounds and vocals, mixes the tracks and designs the album covers.

An admitted perfectionist, Harmon said his biggest challenges were staying focused and being too self-critical.

"A huge success to me has been that I sit down and think about my failures and say, 'It's OK to fail; just try again or try something else,'" he said.

Harmon says he has often struggled with self-criticism, but he has realized over time that accepting his mistakes has been instrumental in his lifelong learning. He has stressed that looking at tasks objectively and achieving a balance in life can remove many of life's pressures.

Entering the business world was much simpler for Harmon because of the effective time management skills he learned while preparing his own schedule as a student at Berea. A key turning point in his life was the opportunity to study abroad in Florence, Italy in 1992.

"That trip was an amazing crucible that really changed the entire course of my life," he said. "The experience forced me to gain self-confidence to do things independently and not let fear paralyze me."

Harmon held a round table at Great Conversations through Berea College in 2013. Much of the talk at the table was about giving yourself room to make mistakes and move on.

Harmon and his wife, Amy Harmon '99, have always been involved alumni. While living in San Diego, Calif., they were part of arranging alumni chapter meetings. John and Amy recently moved back to Berea, where Amy has taken a position working for the College as a major gift officer—so that they can continue their close engagement with the College.

"We're very happy to be back in Berea and to be involved with the



John Harmon's business, Harmon House, creates fine art, such as this painting titled, "Becoming."

community," he said.

These six entrepreneurs are wonderful examples of how the Berea experience shapes an outlook, instills confidence and resiliency, provides an opportunity to acquire work skills, like time management and working with people different from oneself, and prepares students for whatever the future brings their way. Berea alums are able to turn the challenges of creating a business into learning opportunities. They have been successful through their own vigor and determination, yet acknowledge how their alma mater continues to support their professional attainments and enrich their personal lives.





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# Now, When You Go TO SCHOOL...

By Jason Lee Miller

Jessie Reasor Zander's name appears along the campus sidewalk on one of many banners honoring notable Berea alumni. Say the name out loud on campus, and the likely refrain is as follows: Jessie Zander was the first African American to graduate after the segregationist Day Law was set aside.

Chances are, though, not much else will be said. Such is the case with certain names. John Fenn won the Nobel Prize. Sam Hurst invented a kind of touch screen technology. For Jessie Zander, there is more to her story than that, and we aim to tell some of it.

Graduating in 1954, Zander took her place at an integrated commencement, the likes of which Berea hadn't seen in 50 years. The 1904 "Day Law" is infamous in Berean lore. It was the state legislation that segregated private colleges in Kentucky, an action taken in direct response to Berea's founding commitment to interracial education. The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately sided with the State of Kentucky in 1908, and Berea College would not admit another student of color until Zander became one of a small number that matriculated in 1951.

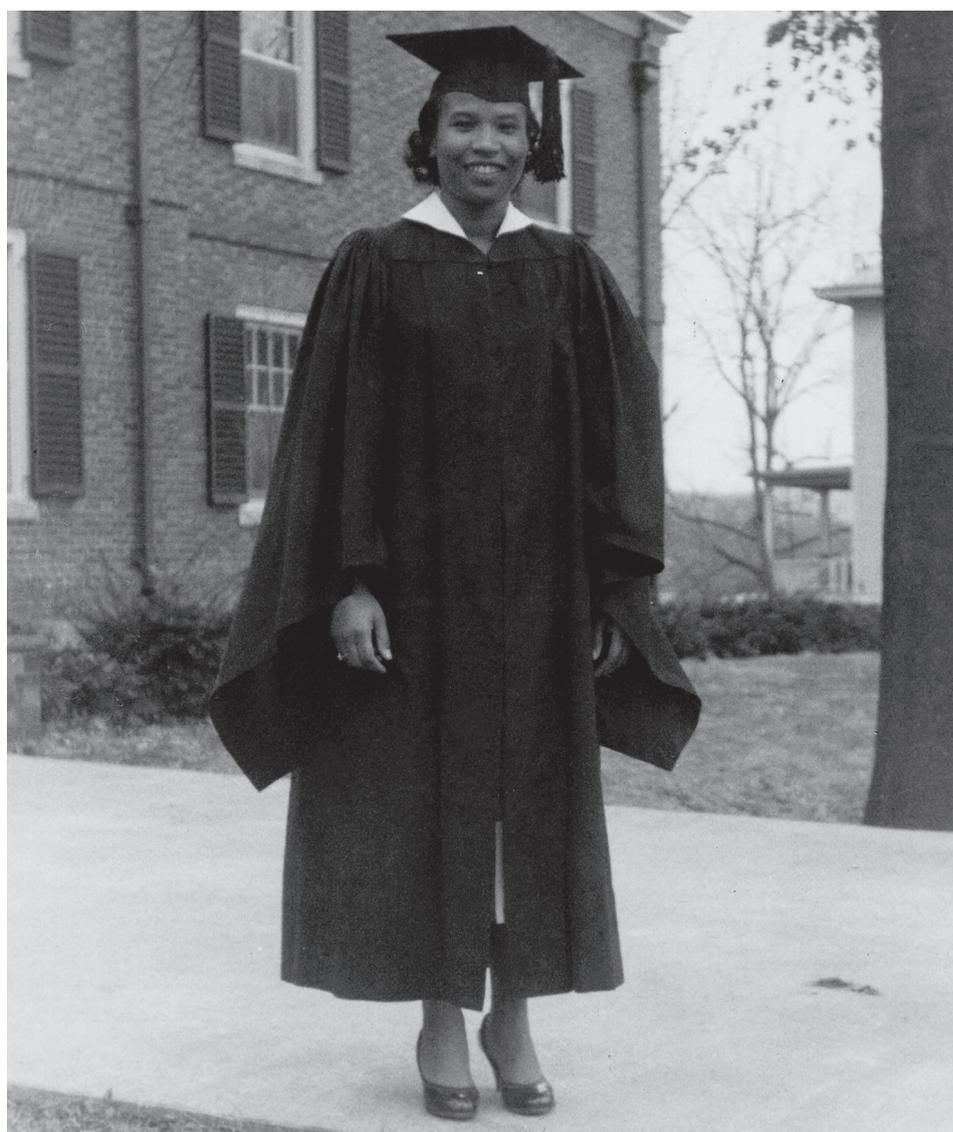
Previously, Zander attended Swift Memorial Junior College, a Presbyterian school for African Americans in Rogersville, Tenn., about 60 miles from her childhood home in Appalachia, Va., where segregation was an unfortunate fact of life. Zander describes the time period as having a sharp line between

racess that wasn't crossed.

"You didn't question it," she said. "You didn't know that there would ever be a change in it."

Zander's family moved to Virginia

from Alabama to seek work in the coal mines and with the railroads, a step up from working as a domestic in people's homes in the Deep South. They lived among a row of homes built for black



Berea College Special Collections Archive

Jessie Reasor Zander '54 came to Berea College from the segregated town of Appalachia, Va. She holds the distinct honor of being Berea's first African American to graduate after the Day Law was rescinded.

families, with property ownership enabled by her grandmother, Cherrie.

“I observed her continuing on regardless, a fifth-grade educated woman out of Alabama, who didn’t rant and rave about her position or what was occurring, who used her wits and bought land or assisted her children in buying land,” Zander said.

Separated from her mother at a young age, Zander was reared by Cherrie, who instilled in her the importance of education early on. Zander recalls “a beautiful, smiling, dark-skinned woman” who prayed her granddaughter would be educated despite the lack of financial resources to make it happen. To implant the idea permanently in her granddaughter’s mind, Cherrie kept the phrase “now, when you go to school...” in regular use.

At the little Baptist church nearby, Zander considered her grandmother’s admonitions as she developed her talents. “I learned to be who I am today by going to the church on the end of my street,” she said. “I learned about how to work with people in that little church. I learned in that little church how to get up in front of a group and speak and sing and work with children younger than I.”

It was amidst this backdrop that she overheard her Sunday school instructor tell Cherrie that Jessie would make a fine teacher. Zander recalls, too, that it seemed the only career options for African-American women at the time were teaching or nursing. Because of influential teachers in her life, she was inclined toward education. What remained was finding an answer to her grandmother’s prayers of school for her granddaughter.

One day at Swift Memorial, a recruiter from Berea College visited Zander’s class and told them about the school. “I was quite surprised such a



Jasmine Towne '16

Jessie Reasor Zander '54 is not only a Berea alumna, but she also earned two master’s degrees and had a rewarding career as a principal in Tucson, Ariz. She is a poet who has traveled the world and has received numerous awards and recognitions. She embraces a humble appreciation for all she has accomplished in her more than 80 years of life.

place existed,” she said. “That motto of Berea is very strong: God has made of one blood all peoples of the earth.”

Her religious background allowed her to absorb the words and note that though people expressed a belief in equality, they did not behave as though they did. “It was already in place in my heart and mind, the equality of people, even though I wasn’t experiencing that.”

The recruiter asked the students to raise their hands if they were interested in attending. Zander was the only student to do so.

Until Berea, Zander had never attended classes with white students. She often found herself the only African American in her classes.

“Not having had close interaction [with white people], I felt like a fish out of water,” Zander said. “I was welcomed by people, treated kindly, but it took time, both for me as an African-American student and for whites who had not lived with African Americans. So we were wary, but kind enough.”

Though wary, Zander says the overall experience of being surrounded

by people interested in interracial living was positive. Also, it was good experience for her future career as a principal of integrated schools.

“I could not have done these jobs in Arizona (where she now lives) where I was in a large minority if I had not had that experience,” she said.

The road to becoming a principal, though, was bumpy. Outside of the College, 1950s Kentucky was not a welcoming place. When it came time to do her student-teaching, she was presented an opportunity to work at a nearby school with other future teachers. However, she had a hunch that because she had not met the principal who hired her in person, he may lose interest once he

#### STILL COMMITTED

Interracial education is Berea’s fifth Great Commitment. (Explore the Great Commitments at [www.berea.edu/the-great-commitments](http://www.berea.edu/the-great-commitments).) That commitment requires a community characterized by diversity and inclusion. Earlier, diversity in our country and region primarily centered around the black/white divide. Now that historical commitment is foundational for building community among “all peoples of the earth,” so that Berea’s inclusive community includes persons of all the major ethnicities in our country and international students as well. Learn more about diversity and inclusion at Berea College at [www.berea.edu/diversity-and-inclusion](http://www.berea.edu/diversity-and-inclusion).

Keep moving forward.  
Connect to people who  
can assist you. There’s  
always a way.  
— Jessie Zander '54

discovered her race. Zander called to inform him and ask if the job was still hers.

“The person said no; they did not wish to have me,” Zander recalled. “I was disappointed because I would have wanted to go with the ones who were going to have this experience. It probably would have been a very different experience from teaching in a black school.”

Her Berea mentor, Dr. Robert Menefee, made sure to let that principal know his school missed out on a fine young teacher. Through some other African American connections, Zander completed her student-teaching at Middletown School in Berea, a school for black children.

Thus was the beginning of her teaching career. Eventually, Zander landed in Arizona, where racial tensions continued, especially as attempts at integration meant busing in students of color from their neighborhoods to be educated alongside white children.

Zander, who presided over these tensions as principal, believes many of the teachers were not trained well enough on how to handle the new situation. She tells stories of inappropri-

ate, racially tinged gifts and of teachers sending black children to her for disciplinary situations that could have been handled in the classroom.

“Something was amiss,” Zander said. “You cannot look at me as black and think that that child can only be cared for by me because my care is for all the children.”

Decades later, Zander views race relations in America as something that progresses little by little.

“Despite our uneven progress,” she said, “so much about black/white relations is still unsolved. It’s like a layered cake, with some seams still

unfound. Each century seems to uncover another layer of racial unrest that is still unexplored. We find another level, then another one.”

When asked if she had advice for today’s African American college graduates, she responded that she had “nothing so profound. Keep moving forward, whatever forward is for you. Forward for each person is following the desire you have for yourself. Keep pushing forward for those desires, and don’t get to the point you say, ‘I can’t do this. It’s impossible. It’s too hard.’ Connect to people who can assist you. There’s always a way.”

#### ZANDER’S MUST READ LIST

Zander spoke about her frustration at modern school curriculum. The retired principal noted the lack of African-American and female authors required in public education, and then she provided her top-five, all-must-read list:

1. *The Complete Collected Poems* by Maya Angelou
2. *Here I Stand* by Paul Robeson
3. *Forced into Glory* by Lerone Bennett Jr.
4. *A Hand to Guide Me* by Denzel Washington
5. *Elder Grace: The Nobility of Aging* by Betsy Kissam and Chester Higgins Jr.



Hear Jessie talk about her first Pinnacle hike at age 80 at [www.berea.edu/magazine](http://www.berea.edu/magazine)

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# A Weekend with Jessie Reasor Zander

By Jasmine Towne '16

History can be a blessing or a burden. One's place in the annals of time—intentional or incidental—can be a point of pride or a reason to retreat. For Jessie Reasor Zander '54, sometimes, it's both.

"Whenever I visit Berea," she explained in a phone call last June, "the introductory statement is, 'This is Jessie Reasor Zander; she is the first African American to graduate after the Day Law was rescinded.' That repetition—over and over in the course of a day—was nice, but exhausting and somehow embarrassing."

To distance herself from that repetition while still embracing her role as "the first," Zander retired to Tucson, Ariz., in 1992, rather than to her beloved Berea.

I spent a weekend with the retired school principal and poet and learned there is more to this youthful octogenarian than her watershed moment at Berea College 64 years ago.

When I arrived at her home, Zander gathered me in a warm embrace. "Come," she said, holding my hand. "I'm looking forward to our time together."

As she led me around her home, I observed how spry her gait was for a woman in her 80s. She showed me to my room for the next few days. Her late husband, Johnny, had slept there. Photos of him covered the top of the dresser. The two had been married for 35 years, and planned to travel the world together in retirement. Zander retired in 1989; Johnny was to retire soon after.

"It didn't work out the way we thought," she said, explaining that Johnny passed away on his next-to-last day of work in 1989. "It was catastrophic."

Between 1989 and 1992 Jessie was invited back to Berea—first, to work with Kathryn Akural and student-teachers in education studies, and later with the Carter G. Woodson Center, where she joined Dr. Joyce Bickerstaff and William Turner to work with African-American high school students.

"Those experiences," she reminisced, "in this special, communal atmosphere were just the therapy I needed to come to terms with his passing."



Thankful for the free therapy Berea provided, Zander returned to Arizona, where she leads/has been active with the Arizona-Berea alumni group for 20 years.

Before long we were in the kitchen, where she presented me with a menu of the down-home food she had prepared just for our visit. Both surprised and touched that she went to such lengths to be an accommodating, generous host, I looked it over: salmon patties, pinto beans, rice, chicken and fruit were some meals that stood out. I explained that I was a vegan.

"Not another vegan!" she laughed infectiously. "My godchild's daughter, Christine, is a vegan; I'm a southern cook. I guess you can't eat most of this."

We worked side-by-side in her small kitchen, each preparing our meals and snacks, laughing and talking.

The next day we awoke early. In the living room, I scanned her books, all well-known African-American authors. We bonded over Maya Angelou, one of my favorites, and we connected in other ways, too, mainly in regard to our shared experiences as African-American women.

We got down to the business of why I was there: to catalog in some way the musings of this beloved Berean. Her responses revealed all that I have to be grateful for in this day and age. As I listened, I thought about how fortunate I am to have never once had a professional opportunity denied me because of my skin color, and how interesting it is that not one of my classes at Berea had ever enrolled only fellow black students.

We sat at the kitchen table, a laptop between us and a tape recorder beside it. I looked at her with keen interest as she shared her wisdom.

"Having money," she said, "doesn't give progress to the world. Interacting with each other and sharing do, but we're still stuck on what we can do to make the most money. That needs to be recognized at the highest level to encourage community acceptance and assist people in interacting and sharing."

She walked me to a room filled with boxes

containing memorabilia she wanted to donate to Berea's archives. We pored over various awards and recognitions—the Alpha Kappa Alpha Educational Advancement Foundation scholarship in her name, the University of Arizona Black Alumni Women's Award presented by the YWCA, her dedication speech at Knapp Hall and other Berea recognitions. She pulled out a stack of cards, sharing how she saves the ones she receives from Berea.

"This one's from Lyle and Laurie (Roeffs)," she noted. They are so precious to me. At Christmas and birthdays, I get a slew of them from Berea."

Zander, a poet, shuffled through some old poems and read one aloud. Titled, "Unifying Symbol," and published in the July 1975 edition of the "Appalachian Independent," the poem speaks to the need for our cultural exchanges to promote better understanding of one another's unique backgrounds and differences.

*I'd like to join you./In a trip toward healing, toward harmony and wholeness. ... Say the word and I'll join you/In a walk toward exchange/ Toward a new consciousness and understanding.*

She is putting together a book of her poems to share with loved ones, and although I complimented her, she remained humble. She focused mainly on her numerous service awards. Each award brought with it a story. Later over lunch at a place called Sweet Tomatoes, Zander shared more stories about her travels to South Africa, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Germany and more.

Our visit carried with it the power of belief in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. Buoyed by her grandmother's faith, Zander also earned two master's degrees. Her life is a testament to the fact that we are each powerful beyond measure. Only by moving forward and allowing ourselves to be seen, to really show up, can we move in the direction of a future that is inclusive of folks of all different backgrounds, in every area.

*Zander dedicates this story to Dean Allen and Dr. Robert Menefee, mentors who settled her into the Berea way.*

## Berea College Board of Trustees Elects Three New Members

Diane A. Wallace, Miriam (Mim) R. Pride and Ken Koh were elected to the Berea College Board of Trustees at the Board's April meeting. Their new terms will begin July 1, 2018.

**Diane Wallace '80** is an independent contract editor for Kinesis-Cem, a market research company with which she has worked since 2001. Much of her career has been associated with the Social Security Administration.

Wallace earned her Bachelor of Science in business administration from Berea College. In addition to her professional career, she actively has served her alma mater as an executive committee member of the College's Second Century Club and a member of the Alumni Executive Council.

**Mim Pride** is president emeritus of Blackburn College, for which she was president for 22 years. Most recently, Pride consulted on work and service learning for the College of Wooster (Ohio) and was interim executive director of the Pine Mountain Settlement School. Earlier in her career, she was employed by Berea College and served as manager of Boone Tavern Hotel.

A graduate of the Berea College Foundation School, Pride earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in English and secondary education from The College of Wooster and her MBA from the University of Kentucky.

Pride is a member and the current chair of the Berea Human Rights Commission, and she serves as a panel member of the Madison County Panel of the Kentucky Foster Care Review Board.

**Ken Koh** is the Group CEO of Yang Kee Logistics Pte Ltd, which is headquartered in Singapore. He is a graduate from Nanyang Technological University with a degree in electrical and electronic engineering. Prior to joining Yang Kee, Koh was involved in business development in Hewlett Packard.

Koh serves as a council member of Singapore Logistics Association, a trade association that collaborates with logistics companies and professionals, institutions and academia, industry organizations and partners, government agencies as well as international organizations and businesses. As a representative of the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) community, Koh was appointed a member of the Pro Enterprise Panel, a public-private partnership set up in 2000 to help businesses overcome rules and regulations by Ministry of Trade and Industry Singapore (MTI).



Diane Wallace '80



Mim Pride



Ken Koh

## Berea College Student Wins Prestigious Thomas J. Watson Fellowship



The Center for International Education announced that Berea College nominee Sunaina Sherchan won the national competition for the 2018-19 Thomas J. Watson Fellowship. The Watson includes a cash prize of \$30,000 to provide a year of international discovery for select graduating college seniors in many disciplines.

Sherchan's project, "Exploring Identity Through Folktales," will include travel to Japan, New Zealand and Finland. Sherchan explains that folktales provide a window into the past and examine the cultural and moral reasons behind a community's beliefs. Her Watson year will explore the relationship between folktales and identity formation in Japanese, Maori and Sami communities. Documenting traditional storytelling practices, Sherchan will seek to understand how these communities preserve their cultural and ethnic identities, and where their commonalities and differences lie.

Berea College is the only school in Kentucky from which The Watson Fellowship accepts candidates. This year, which marks the 50<sup>th</sup> class of Thomas J. Watson Fellows, includes student winners from eight countries and 17 states who will travel to 67 countries exploring topics ranging from foster care to opera; from the Cambrian Explosion to human augmentation; from threatened big cat species to spoken word. Fellows use their cash award for 12 months of travel and college loan assistance as needed.

## Dr. Kennaria Brown Recognized for Work in Police Diversity

"Empathetic, strong and fearless" were some of the words describing Dr. Kennaria Brown, associate professor of Communication at Berea College, in a feature article by Rachel James Clevenger published in the January issue of *Private University Products and News* magazine.

For the past five years, Brown has assisted Berea City Police Chief David Gregory in diversity training to improve community and police communications, particularly related to cultural, racial and social differences. Brown is adamant that the Berea police officers were "not reflective" of what was happening across the nation, such as in Ferguson, Mo.

This past year, Brown included two of her students in the diversity training project through Berea College's Undergraduate Research and Creative Projects program, a summer mentor-apprentice program designed to enhance student learning through collaborative, challenging, directed programs with a faculty member.

Chief Gregory appreciates Brown's passionate and professional approach.

"Brown is special, one of the best educators [I have] met in more than 20 years of policing," he said. "Dr. Brown is great at communicating and worked a lot of hours in making her police department one that believes in respect and understanding its community."



## Reynolds Named Dean of the Chapel at Berea College

Dr. Loretta Reynolds has been appointed Dean of the Chapel at Berea College. Reverend Reynolds' experience in the work and mission of Berea College began in 1998. Since then, she has served as Title IX coordinator, a member of the Residence Life Team, a professor in General Studies and, most recently, as senior College chaplain and interim director of the Campus Christian Center. Reynolds is trained in first responder emergency pastoral care and in brief pastoral counseling. She is also a Berea College Green Dot trainer.

"Reynolds has become a spiritual leader and a key pillar of our community in her 20 years of service at Berea College," said Berea College President Lyle Roelofs. "Under her

leadership, the Student Chaplain program has made great strides in serving students and our community. Loretta, as we all know her, is widely appreciated for all she has done in emergency response and pastoral care in our community."

Reynolds has a bachelor's degree in music education from the University of Southern Mississippi; a Master of Divinity from Golden Gate Theological Seminary; a Master of Theology from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; and a Doctor of Theology from the Melbourne College of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia. Her professional experience includes work with youth and young adults in Zambia, the British Virgin Islands, California and Botswana.

## Berea College Student Honored as 2018 Newman Civic Fellow

Berea College student Hunter Malone was named a Newman Civic Fellow by Campus Compact, a Boston-based, non-profit organization working to advance the public purposes of higher education. Malone, a junior sociology major with a history minor, was one of 268 students from colleges across America who made up the organization's 2018 cohort of Newman Civic Fellows.

"Hunter is a creative and collaborative student leader who is actively involved in mentoring and training others," said Berea College President Lyle Roelofs. "He is also committed to developing opportunities for others to learn and take action on the issues that are important to them. Hunter is particularly interested in exploring intersections of human rights and social issues."

Malone has worked for three years in Berea College's Center for Excellence in Learning through Service (CELS). He trained and supervised first-year students who have committed to making service and civic engagement an integral part of their college careers, too. He developed trainings about diversity for other student civic engagement leaders and provided leadership for a large-scale refugee simulation on campus.

"Although I was involved in service work prior to coming to Berea College, it wasn't until then that I began to fully understand why I served," Malone said. "Serving others opens my mind to think critically about policies and the people that

are affected. I have been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to serve my community through being involved with training first-year college students to engage with the community and serve in the areas they feel called. It is my belief that everyone has something to offer."

The Newman Civic Fellowship, named for Campus Compact co-founder Frank Newman, is a one-year experience emphasizing personal, professional and civic growth. Through the fellowship, Campus Compact provides a variety of learning and networking opportunities, including a national conference of Newman Civic Fellows in partnership with the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate. The fellowship also provides fellows with access to apply for exclusive scholarship and post-graduate opportunities.



## Jessie Ball duPont Fund Extends Grant to Berea College, Supports Berea's Latino Male Initiative

The Jessie Ball duPont Fund (Jacksonville, Fla.) awarded a grant to Berea College to extend the Jessie Ball duPont Fund Postdoctoral Fellowship in Latino Male Academic Success. The grant of \$54,060 supports Berea's Latino Male Initiative, a program to enhance first-to-second-year retention and encourage a sense of belonging among Latino male students at the College.

The renewed grant funding allowed Berea to retain a postdoctoral position and continue to explore the effectiveness of a combined academic and co-curricular approach in supporting male persistence through college. The Latino Male Initiative addresses gaps in retention and graduation that can otherwise disproportionately impact male students and

students of color, both at Berea and nationally.

A previous grant in 2017 allowed Berea to hire a faculty member to teach and mentor Latino men in their first year of studies at Berea. This initial grant included support for programming, provided a point person for DACA-related concerns and bolstered campus-wide efforts to create an even more supportive environment for Latinx students.

The Jessie Ball duPont Fund is a national foundation that works to expand access and create opportunity by investing in the work of organizations that were important to Jessie Ball duPont. The Fund uses its resources to build the capacity of organizations it supports; build the assets of people, families and communities; and promote civil society.

## Alumna Geraldine Baker Receives Berea College Service Award

The 2018 Berea College Service Award was presented to alumna Geraldine "Jeri" Baker '62 in March during the annual Berea College Service convocation. The Berea College Service Award honors persons who exemplify Berea's Great Commitments in their daily lives and service to humanity. The award honors practical service by persons in all walks of life.

After graduating from Berea College, Baker earned a master's degree in human services from George Washington University. Her career as a social worker spanned more than 30 years and focused on advocacy for children. In her retirement, she has collaborated with residents of the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, where she started a non-profit organization called One Spirit. The organization's programs address hunger and other basic

human needs, and it promotes Lakota cultural initiatives that honor traditions and develop opportunities for Lakota youth.



## 83rd Annual Mountain Folk Festival at Berea College Celebrated History of Folk Dance

The 83rd Annual Mountain Folk Festival took place in Berea on April 6 and 7. The Festival trains dancers and dance leaders to carry on the cultural folk traditions of the region. Musicians and dancers began the performance with a processional, or parade dance, welcoming the coming spring season in a centuries-old tradition of "dancing in the branches of May."

The Mountain Folk Festival began in 1935 as part of Berea College's outreach to young

mountain people. The event brings together students who participate in dance groups in their local area—ranging from fourth grade through high school—to participate in traditional dances from the British Isles, Denmark and Appalachia. The Festival included groups from Berea and Louisville, Ky.; Flat Creek, Tenn.; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Portland, Ore.

## Berea College Professor Publishes Book Exploring New Facet of African American History

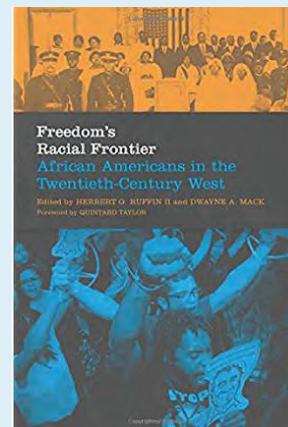
Dwayne A. Mack, the Carter G. Woodson chair in African American History at Berea College, has collaborated on a newly published book, *Freedom's Racial Frontier: African Americans in the Twentieth-Century West* along with Herbert G. Ruffin II.

Between 1940 and 2010, the black population of the American West grew from 710,400 to 7 million. That growth has prompted a burgeoning interest in the history of the African American West—reflected in the remarkable range and depth of the works collected in *Freedom's Racial Frontier*. Editors Ruffin and Mack have gathered established and emerging scholars in the field to create an anthology linking past, current and future generations of African American West scholarship.

The West as revealed in *Freedom's Racial Frontier* is a place where black Americans have fought—and continue to fight—to make their idea of freedom live up to their expectations of equality; a place where freedom is still a frontier for most persons of African heritage. The book is published by the University of Oklahoma Press.

Ruffin is an associate professor of History and chair of African American Studies at Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y., and author of *Uninvited Neighbors: African Americans in Silicon Valley, 1769–1990*.

Mack is a professor of history at Berea College, author of numerous articles on African American history and co-editor of *Beginning a Career in Academia: A Guide for Graduate Students of Color*.



## Weatherford Awards for Best Appalachian Books Announce

Winners of the Weatherford Awards for the best books about Appalachia in 2017 are *The Last Ballad* by Wiley Cash (fiction), *Palindrome* by Pauletta Hansel (poetry), and *James Still: A Life* by Carol Boggess (nonfiction).

The Weatherford Awards honor books that best illuminate the challenges, personalities and unique qualities of the Appalachian South. Granted by Berea College and the Appalachian Studies Association for 47 years, the awards commemorate the life and achievements of W.D. Weatherford Sr., a pioneer and leading figure in Appalachian development, youth work and race relations, and his son, Willis D. Weatherford Jr., who was Berea College's sixth president (1967-84).

These winning authors were recognized at

the 2018 Appalachian Studies Conference in April.

### Fiction Award

Set in North Carolina, Wiley Cash's historical novel *The Last Ballad* re-examines the tragic events of a 1929 textile union strike. Cash serves as the writer-in-residence at the University of North Carolina-Asheville and teaches in the Mountainview Low-Residency MFA program.

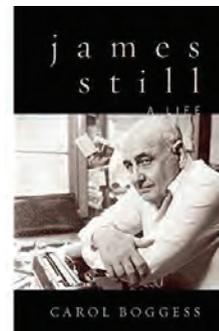
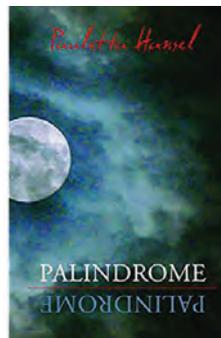
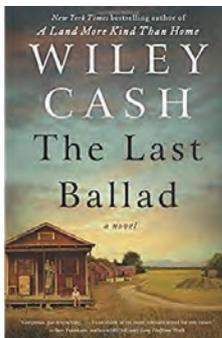
### Poetry Award

*Palindrome*, Pauletta Hansel's sixth poetry collection, follows the title's vision by balancing her experience as a daughter while being a caregiver to her mother who is suffering

dementia. Hansel is a poet, memoirist and teacher who resides in Paddock Hills in Cincinnati, Ohio. She is Cincinnati's first Poet Laureate and leads writing workshops and retreats in the greater Cincinnati area and beyond.

### Nonfiction Award

James Still, one of the most beloved and important writers in Appalachian literature, is most easily recognized by his seminal novel *River of Earth*. Carol Boggess writes the definitive biography of Still in *James Still: A Life*. Boggess serves as the president of the Appalachian Studies Association and professor emerita of English at Mars Hill University. In 1995, Boggess wrote her dissertation on Still's *River of Earth*, leading to a long-term interest in the author.



Save-the-date

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