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# USC AT 200

## FAMILY

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interest.

It's a family history interweaved with USC's. The thread is not continuous — there have been a few defectors to Clemson, for example, and the family suffers those with happy forbearance — but it is a history not unlike many across the state in this momentous year.

Today, almost 40,000 students attend the USC system, including 26,000 on the main campus in Columbia.

### SAM AND HUGH BARKLEY

The S.C. Legislature authorized the creation of South Carolina College in 1801, but it would be 1805 before the first 30 students enrolled.

Sam and Hugh Barkley, the brothers of Eliza Jane Barkley, were among the college's first students. Their leather-bound books are battered and browned with age and bear inked notations of the men's names as well as the dates they attended school.

Sam Barkley's mathematics book is two inches thick and needs its entire frontispiece to accommodate its title:

MATHEMATICS
COMPILED
FROM THE BEST AUTHORS,
AND INTENDED TO BE THE
TEXT-BOOK
OF THE COURSE OF PRIVATE
LECTURES ON THESE SCIENCES
IN THE UNIVERSITY AT CAMBRIDGE.
SECOND EDITION.
BY SAMUEL WEBBER, D.D.,
A.A. et S.P.A. SOC.
PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
1808.

The Barkleys' grammar book gives a flavor of the times, listing the conjugation of the verb "to love" as "I love; thou lovest; he loves. We love; ye or you love; they love" and says "a verb is a word which signifies to be, to do, or to suffer; as 'I am, I rule, I am ruled.'"

### OSMOND R. THOMPSON

The husband of Eliza Jane Barkley, Thompson became a judge and lawyer in Winnsboro. His college papers also show he was a member of USC's first debating society, the Euphradians.

### WALTER LOWNY THOMPSON I

Walter Lowny Thompson I, son of Osmond Thompson and brother of Mary Grey Thompson, also attended USC.

### JOHN JACKSON NEIL I

Thompson's sister, Mary Grey Thompson, married John Jackson Neil, another USC grad.

Neil, too, became a lawyer after his graduation in 1867, studying under his uncle Osmond. His diploma bears the Euphradian Society ribbon and the date "Millesimo octigentesimo et sexagesimo septimo."

At the time of Neil's graduation, students also received diplomas for each school or discipline they had studied.

Neil won parchment scrolls from the School of History, Political Philosophy and Political Economy; the School of Ancient Languages; and the School of Natural and Mechanical Philosophy.

ERIK CALPOS/THE STATE

Mildred Neil has collected many items over the years that trace her family tree through USC.

### CHARLES HENRY NEIL

John Jackson Neil's son, Charles Henry Neil, graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1903, becoming an English professor and academic, mostly in Hawaii.

Charles Neil was in Honolulu when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, ducking into a doorway. He later suffered a heart attack and had to be evacuated back to the mainland, a journey that took 11 days because of wartime security concerns.

### ROBERT BRUCE NEIL, CHARLES MCKEOWN NEIL

When Robert Bruce Neil, a nephew of Charles Henry Neil, graduated from USC in 1940, his 287-member graduating class was the largest in USC's history. Still, all of the names still fit on a 5-inch-by-7-inch trifold commencement program.

A newspaper article noted the size of the class and said President J. Rion McKissick "spoke briefly to the graduates, reminding them that 'each and every one of you is under heavy obligation to serve South Carolina in her upbuilding. . . . The state has a right to expect from you the leadership for which you have been trained here.'"

Neil earned a bachelor's of science in commerce, which sister-in-law Mildred Neil says "qualified him to dig ditches for the highway department for the first summer after he graduated." Neil then entered the military. When he left, he took two more courses and headed for medical school at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston.

Charles McKeown Neil, another nephew of Charles Henry Neil, took classes at USC after World War II but did not earn a degree. He and his wife, Mildred, however, produced three Gamecocks. They were:

### ANN ELIZABETH NEIL BALLENTINE, REBECCA FRANCES NEIL ABRAHAM, AND CHARLES JOHN NEIL SR.

If you ask Ann Ballentine to remember one standout day at USC, she'll tell you about the day when she had to catch the city bus from home, carrying a fetal pig she was dissecting for biology class. She remembers distinctly having no trouble getting a seat to herself that day.

Ballentine began her stint at USC in 1959 and finished in 1962 — after two years and eight months — with a teaching degree, a Phi Beta Kappa key and a new husband, Charles Ballentine Sr., who'd graduated from USC in 1957. Ann Ballentine also received her master's degree in education from USC in 1965.

She and her husband, Charles, have gone to USC football games "religiously" for 41 years.

Ann Ballentine's sister, Rebecca Neil Abraham, received a bachelor's in education in 1972. She, too, married midway through her college career — her boyfriend went to Vietnam, and she quit school.

> "My dad said he would pay for any school I wanted to go to, as long as it was Carolina."
>
> — *Chip Ballentine, who graduated from USC in 1989*

"When he came back, I finished," she says.

Among Becky Abraham's memories: the tennis courts, hamburgers at the Dairy Bar and food in the Russell House, which she ate only if she had to.

"I was there when Scotty Ward was shooting baskets in the old field house," she recalls. "He was blind in one eye, and he never missed."

Brother Chuck lived at home and worked his way to a degree in mechanical engineering in 1980. He married Susan Mann, who earned an associate's degree in secretarial science from USC in 1974.

When the two weren't studying, Mann would watch Neil tinker with his car.

Neil remembers some of his professors but says he would just as soon forget others. One odd moment he recalls occurred when he was ushering a Jackson Five concert at the Carolina Coliseum:

"I almost tripped over Michael Jackson, because he was coming out of the dressing room when I was going down the hall. He was about 6 or 8, and his brothers were chasing him."

### CHARLES WILLIAM BALLENTINE JR., ELIZABETH NEIL BALLENTINE GIERHART AND CHARLES JOHN NEIL JR.

Chip Ballentine, the son of Ann and Charles Ballentine Sr., earned an accounting degree from USC in 1989. He married fellow graduate Claudia Beck, who earned a bachelor's degree from USC in applied professional sciences.

"My dad said he would pay for any school I wanted to go to, as long as it was Carolina," Ballentine says.

Ballentine's sister, Elizabeth, also earned an accounting degree from USC — in 1992. Her mother says that since Chip, Beth and her husband all earned accounting degrees, she's the family's "no account" member.

John Neil, the son of Susan and Charles Neil Sr., is a freshman at USC this fall. Though he loves the school, he isn't really sure he has "garnet and black disease" yet.

And he doesn't remember receiving any long, rah-rah speeches intended to persuade him to choose the school.

It just seemed the place to go.

As his Aunt Becky would say: "We just grew up with Carolina."

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