



Golden Grads Forever Club History

Background

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

The Beginning

There was never a specific date when someone said, "Let there be a Forever Club!" Classes as early as 1932 had reunions every 5 to 10 years. Maud Schaub and Roneo Lefort were involved in the Class of 1932. Skeet Atkinson and Dr. Ralph Cummings were active in the class of 1933. In the 80's when these 1930's classes began having their 50th reunions, the thought was, this is good and we should do this Forever. As part of the annual University Reunion Weekend, class presidents and leaders organized these Forever reunions. Though not formal or documented, these reunions were recognized by many as the Forever Club Reunions. This continued through the 90's and 2000's. Then the Golden Grads Forever Club did evolve by a general recognition that the time had come to formally honor those celebrating 50 years as an NC State graduate.

Formative Years

Things began to coalesce in the 2007 – 2009 time frame. Some time prior to 2008, though still undocumented, Fleet Suggs was identified as the first President and Bill Lamm as President-Elect. Also prior to 2008, Brooklyn Winters, Director of Constituency Planning, held an official Forever Club reunion / luncheon and medal ceremony even though no medals were presented. In May 2008, the class of 1958 held its 50th Anniversary with a dinner on Saturday, a worship service at the Raulston Arboretum on Sunday morning, and the honor of throwing out the first pitch at the NC State baseball game at Doak Field against Boston College that afternoon. That honorary first pitch would establish that class forever in NC State history. Around that same time, other alumni spoke of the possibility of a more formal alumni group that could be known as the Forever Club. The question arose as to what such a club would do and how it would fit into the overall membership of the NC State Alumni Association.



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2010

With the approval of the Alumni Association Executive Director, an Alumni Association staff member was assigned to work with a group of alumni led by Bill Collins '54, Lynn Eury '59, and Darrell Dail '59. This group worked to develop and formalize the Forever Club. The NC State Alumni Magazine helped get the word out about the "newly established" Forever Club, which listed Bill Collins '54 as the first President and Lynn Eury '59 as the first President-Elect of the group in the Spring 2010 issue. The Class of 1961 held its 50th Anniversary Banquet in April 2011 headed by Charles Russell '61, former 1961 Class President. In 2013 the class of 1953 celebrated their 60th reunion. Additional classes continued to celebrate with reunions throughout the decade.

"Docents" to "Governance"

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

NC State Memorial Bell Tower

At the 2013 Reunion Weekend the Forever Club made the unanimous decision to adopt a \$250,000 fundraising project to finish the Memorial Bell Tower. The campaign started and contacts were made to class presidents and all Forever Club members soliciting their help in reaching this goal. In a subsequent STATE Magazine "What started as a grassroots effort to purchase bells for the Memorial Bell Tower has become a \$4 million fundraising campaign that will encompass a major renovation of the 115-foot-tall tower and its foundation".



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The Forever Club was part of initiating something big. For their part the Forever Club members raised over \$182,000 and contributed it to this major renovation project. After a major donation by the Bill and Frances Henry family, the final renovation costing over \$7 million was completed and dedicated during Graduation Weekend 2021.

We Are Official!

2015

The Forever Club officially adopted “Guidelines for Operations” in 2015. In 2017, under the leadership of Ronald Sneed ‘59, ‘71, By-Laws were created defining the purpose of the Forever Club, Board of Directors meeting dates, and Officer and Board selections. The By-Laws have since been in place with amendments being made as the group progresses. Since its inception, the Forever Club has partitioned and gained representation on the Alumni Association Board of Directors and has a special “Forever Club Life Membership” dues rate of \$350 for an alumnus and \$450 for an alumnus and their spouse. These 2018 milestones were made possible by then President, Hugh Liner ‘56, ‘57, ‘67 and his Executive Committee - Past President, Perry Grady ‘62, ‘67, ‘73 and President-Elect, Ronald Sneed ‘59, ‘71.

The Roaring 20’s

2020

COVID-19 shut down the country in 2020. In-person classes were canceled, athletic events were canceled, 2020 and 2021 graduations were canceled and in-person activities for the Forever Club were also canceled. “Zoom” became the word of the 20’s. The Forever Club did however continue functioning via Zoom technology. In 2022, in-person meetings, tours and seminars returned with zoom options. Engagement through in-person outreach to Eastern and Western North Carolina and a quarterly Newsletter were initiated and this Forever Club History document was created. In 2023 the Forever Club name was changed to Golden Grads Forever Club, providing meaningful recognition. Back to business as usual with renewed optimism.

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Golden Grads Forever Club Recognitions

Under Bob Kennel's leadership the Golden Grads Forever Club has recognized individuals who distinguished themselves in their leadership roles while at NCSU and those who made NCSU proud by their accomplishments and acts of heroism. Bobby Purcell was recognized for his leadership of the Wolfpack Club and Randy Hamm was recognized for his longtime support role while at the Alumni Association. Elliot Avent and the 2021 Baseball Team were recognized for his leadership and team accomplishments. John Cerqueira was recognized as a 9/11 World Trade Towers Hero. And Ralph E. "Benny" Suggs was recognized for his outstanding leadership of the Alumni Association as Executive Director. Each was well received and much appreciated.

In 2023, under the leadership of Dr. Ron Sneed, the Golden Grads Forever Club decided to make this a formal recognition. After much study it was decided to make this an annual event and have two recognitions for which individuals could be nominated to be honored by the Golden Grads Forever Club. These are: **Golden Grads Forever Club Recognition Award** and **Golden Grads Forever Club Distinguished Service Award**.

The **Golden Grads Forever Club Recognition Award** is to be presented primarily to non NCSU alumni who have supported NC State in some significant way (i.e. employee, mentorship, philanthropy, volunteerism, professional commitment). NCSU alumni can also be considered.

The **Golden Grads Forever Club Distinguished Service Award** is to be presented only to Golden Grads Forever Club members, who by their actions have supported NC State in a significant way (i.e. club activities, mentorship, philanthropy, volunteerism, professional commitment).



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Our Leadership Team

Although it should not be surprising, the Golden Grads Forever Club leadership has been universally outstanding with its Executive Committee (President, President-Elect, and Past-President), Board of Directors and Emeritus members. The group also has been augmented by excellent support from the Alumni Association Staff, who has provided much needed notes, minutes, meeting hosting, and event planning.

Presidents

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

PRESIDENTS:

2007-2007 – FLEET SUGGS
2008-2009 – BILL LAMM
2009-2011 – BILL COLLINS
2011-2013 – LYNN EURY
2013-2015 – DARRELL DAIL
2015-2017 – PERRY GRADY
2017-2019 – HUGH LINER
2019-2021 – RON SNEED
2021-2023 – I. MILLER WARREN
2023-2024 – JOHN BARTELME
2024-2027 – ANN LICHTNER

KEY AA STAFF:

BROOKLYN WINTERS
JASON GIPE
JASON GIPE
ALLISON DODSON
ALLISON DODSON
MATTHEW WILLIAMS
MATTHEW WILLIAMS
KELLY WRIGHT
KATE FURINESS
ELIZABETH STONE
ELIZABETH STONE