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George Johnson

Ky - Morehead State College  
Johnson Camden Library  
Morehead State College  
Morehead, Kentucky

THE CHRONICLES OF MOREHEAD STATE COLLEGE  
1887 - 1963

The year eighteen-hundred-eighty-seven witnessed the arrival from Midway Junior College of Mrs. Phoebe Button and her son, Frank C. Button, in the Eastern Kentucky town of Morehead--a town with no streets, no sidewalks, no electric lights, no churches, and less than 1,000 people.

The period of fuedin', fussin' and fightin' was nearing an end in Rowan County and it was in an atmosphere of great educational and cultural void that Mrs. Button and her son enrolled an orphan girl, Anna Page, as the first student in the Morehead Normal School, housed in their small home located where the Doran Student House now stands.

Among the first students were a young man named George Johnson, who now lives in Ashland and is the father of former Morehead State College coach and athletic director Ellis Johnson, and another young fellow named Herb Bishop, who is the uncle of Roberta, Marguerite and Bob Bishop--residents of Morehead.

For 13 years the school was under the control of the Kentucky Christian Missionary Convention and on July 31, 1900, was placed under the control of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions, St. Louis, Missouri.

Three wooden structures and Burgess Hall, a brick and stone building costing \$10,000 to construct, formed the nucleus of the campus. Hodson Hall one of the three wooden structures, still stands on College Street South of the campus opposite Thompson Hall.

Mrs. Button died in 1892 and her son carried on the operation of the Normal School until 1911 when J. M. Robinson became principal. Dr. J. Wesley Hatcher served as principal from 1913 to 1919 and his protégé, Harlan Hatcher, an outstanding student in the Normal School, went on to become president of the University of Michigan--a position he still holds.

W. O. Lappin, the father of our own Dean Lappin, became principal in 1919 and served until the school closed its doors in 1922 when only three persons received diplomas at the last graduation exercises: Miss Hildreth Maggard, now a member of the Morehead State College faculty; Mrs. Christine Gearhart, Lexington; and Mrs. Mary Riley Roach, Greenville, Ohio.

In the meantime, at its regular session in 1920, the General Assembly of Kentucky authorized a study of the educational needs and facilities of the Commonwealth. The Commission appointed to make the study recommended that two new normal schools be established--one in Eastern Kentucky and one in Western Kentucky.

On March 8, 1922, Governor Edwin Morrow signed the act of the General Assembly providing for a special commission charged with the task of locating the two new normal schools. The members of the commission, appointed by Lt. Governor S. Thurston Ballard of Louisville and Speaker of the House James H. Thompson of Bourbon County, consisted of:

E. C. O'Rear, Frankfort  
Thomas P. Combs, Lexington  
W. S. Wallen, Prestonsburg  
Earl W. Senff, Mt. Sterling  
Sherman Goodpastor, Owingsville  
J. L. Harman, Bowling Green  
Alex G. Barrett, Louisville  
Arthur Peter, Louisville

The Commission, after investigating various sites, located the two new normal schools in Morehead and Murray. Several court suits were filed challenging the authority of the commission but in August of 1923 the Court of Appeals decided in favor of the commission and the town of Morehead prepared to accept and establish the new school.

Senator Allie W. Young, who ably served as a State Senator from the 31st District during the period from 1924 to 1935, contributed immeasurably to the decision to establish a new college in Eastern Kentucky and to locate

it in Morehead.

The doors of the Morehead State Normal School opened for the first time on September 23, 1923 and all that remained of the "Old Normal School" were the products and memories of an educational enterprise which for 35 years had served the young people of the region and had made a major contribution to advancing the cause of Christian education for democratic citizenship in the Commonwealth.

## THE 1920'S

Dr. Frank C. Button was named the school's first president and the Morehead State Normal School began operations during the period of post-war prosperity in what was later labeled the "Roaring Twenties."

The sum of thirty-thousand dollars was appropriated by the 1922 Session of the General Assembly to hire a faculty, provide the necessary supplies and "put the school in working order." Using the buildings which had formerly housed the old Normal School, Dr. Button began the 1923 year with eight faculty members--Dean Charles D. Lewis, C. O. Pieratt, Miss Inez Faith Humphrey, Miss Evelyn Royalty, Ruby Vansant, Miss Emma Shader, Henry C. Haggan, and Dan Holbrook. Miss Anna Carter served as Dr. Button's secretary and Warren C. Lappin joined the faculty in the spring of 1924 as baseball coach.

Three college students and 70 students in the secondary school greeted the original faculty. By the end of the decade, the enrollment had grown to over three-hundred-fifty college students representing thirty-one Kentucky counties and two states.

In 1925, the first college newspaper--the Morehead Light--was published and two years later the name was changed to The Trail Blazer, a name it proudly bears today. In 1927, the first yearbook--The Raconteur--was published and in that same year, Morehead's first three graduates--Russell Williamson, S. M. R. Hurt and Mrs. Dudley Caudill--went out into the world with proudly earned diplomas.

During President Button's administration, five buildings were constructed. The old administration building (now the Education-Social Studies Building) and Allie Young Hall were built in 1926 followed by Thompson Hall and Fields Hall in 1927. The President's home was started in 1929 and completed in 1930 and Button Auditorium was constructed in 1929.

Allie Young Hall was named for Senator Allie Young to whom the main share of the credit goes for establishing this college in Eastern Kentucky, and Thompson Hall for James H. Thompson who served as Speaker of the House of Representatives at the time the bill was passed which authorized the establishment of the college.

Fields Hall was named for Mrs. William J. Fields, wife of the governor who was in office when the first Board of Regents was organized and the first woman appointed to the Board of Regents. The Auditorium was named in honor of Dr. Frank C. Button.

In 1926, Morehead Normal School became Morehead State Normal School and Teachers College by an act of the General Assembly and was admitted to membership in the Kentucky Association of Colleges.

Dr. Button resigned the presidency on July 24, 1929, but remained on the staff as chaplain and assistant field representative for a year before being named President Emeritus.

John Howard Payne who was serving as superintendent of Maysville City Schools was named the college's second president on August 1, 1929.

The "Roaring Twenties" came to a close with the dark clouds of the great economic depression casting their shadows over the entire nation which had enjoyed the fun-filled days of post-war prosperity.

And so the stage was set for the Morehead State Normal School and Teachers College to begin its second decade of operation.

## THE 1930'S

The stock market crash of 1929 spread a thick economic pall over the decade of the 30's.....Mussolini and Hitler spread terror throughout the world..... Kamakaze Japanese troops pushed the Chinese government to the far interior of the Republic.....and in Kentucky the 1937 Ohio Valley flood lay waste to a great area and the 1939 flash flood in Morehead claimed the lives of 26 persons.

The Morehead State Normal School and Teachers College became Morehead State Teachers College in 1930, by an act of the General Assembly and graduated 11 seniors that year. Sixty-five different courses were offered, the faculty numbered 22 at the beginning of the decade and the total student body numbered 256. By the end of the decade the enrollment had grown to 585 and the faculty had increased to 58.

During the 30's, Morehead State Teachers College was admitted to the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, the American Association of Teachers Colleges, and the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association.

The sabbatical leave program was initiated on the campus, correspondence courses were offered, off-campus teaching programs were organized, industrial arts and commerce courses were added, and the debating team won all 25 of its scheduled meets in 1935.

The Campus Club brought the "Hawg Rifle" onto the scene in 1936 and Tim Wyant raced 99 yards with an Eastern kickoff to give Morehead possession of the rifle in the first year of its existence. The rifle is still in the hands of Morehead State College as the result of a 6 to 0 victory last Saturday over Eastern.

Earl King Senff's "Fight Song" caught on and became the official college fight song and the music department got its first practice room in the basement of Fields Hall.

John Howard Payne left the presidency on September 13, 1935. William H. Vaughn, Dean, served as acting president from September 13 to October 7

prior to the election of Harvey Babb as the institution's third president on October 7.

Four major buildings were constructed during the decade of the 30's as well as Jayne Memorial Stadium. Buildings constructed were: the Johnson Camden Library, 1930, named for former United States Senator Johnson Camden; the Breckinridge Training School, 1931, named for Robert J. Breckinridge, the sixth State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Kentucky; Lappin Hall, 1937, named in 1958 to honor Dr. Warren C. Lappin, Dean of the College, who has served as a member of the college staff since 1923; and East Men's Hall was constructed in 1937.

Jayne Memorial Stadium was named for W. L. Jayne, a member of the faculty from 1924 to 1930.

And so ended the 30's. Morehead State College was soon to welcome its fourth president, World War II was lurking on the horizon, and the college was yet to face its darkest day during the decade of the '40's.

### THE 1940'S

Morehead's fourth decade has been styled by some as the dormant period of the forties. Morehead State Teachers College began the decade with a new president when Dean William H. Vaughn took over the reins on April 30, 1940.

The enrollment in the fall of 1940 was 588 and the college's first foreign student came to the campus from Cuba in 1941. The curriculum was reorganized in 1942 under the quarter system and continued under this plan until 1948.

It was in the early forties that terrifying world events took every able bodied male on the campus into the armed forces as the basic freedoms of all Americans were challenged on the battle fields. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Congress to recognize that a state of war with Japan existed in 1941, events moved rapidly.

Many students and male faculty members joined the armed services and enrollment dropped to 255 in the fall of 1942. In the spring of 1943-44, only nine male students were enrolled and the enrollment hit a record low of 166 in the fall of 1944.

Morehead's contribution to the war effort included the training of the United States Navy personnel as the college facilities were made available for an electrical training school which kept 600 Navy officers and trainees on the campus at all times between 1942 and 1944.

When the war ended in 1945, most of the faculty members returned and many students re-enrolled under the GI Bill of Rights.

On August 6, 1946, William Jesse Baird became Morehead's fifth president. Dean Warren C. Lappin served as acting president for the second time from July 1 to August 6.

Enrollment for the fall of 1946 had reached 614 and the college appeared to be on the way up during a period of post-war prosperity. But such was



not to be the case.

In December of 1946, charges were filed with the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools against Morehead because of political interference in the administration of its affairs. The College was removed from the Association's list of accredited schools and the darkest days in the School's history were ahead.

The enrollment dropped to 435 students in the fall of 1947--179 fewer than the previous fall term--and the college faced a gigantic rebuilding program.

The Governor of the Commonwealth named a new Board of Regents composed of outstanding business and professional men from the region and the Association was convinced that the days of political interference had ended, thus the College was re-accredited in 1948.

An act of the General Assembly changed the name of Morehead State Teachers College to Morehead State College in 1948, and by the end of the decade, the enrollment was hovering at the 600 mark - a mark which had been established previously in 1940.

The decade of the 40's ended with the college static--the enrollment had not increased, no new buildings had been erected and the academic programs remained relatively unchanged.

The "Dark 40's" saw Morehead State College survive occurrences which might have ruined a less courageous and less dedicated institution of higher learning and the "glorious 50's" were just around the corner.

### THE 1950'S TO PRESENT

The decade of the 50's has been aptly labeled the "Breakthrough" period at Morehead State College--a time in the history of the college which has seen a phenomenal growth in enrollment, a great increase in the number of faculty, construction of \$10,000,000 worth of buildings, legislative appropriations increased from a quarter of a million dollars in 1950 to one and one-half million dollars in 1960 to an all time high of two and one quarter million this year, and expanded services to the people of Kentucky.

On January 9, 1951, Dr. W. J. Baird was granted a leave of absence for health reasons until September 1 and Dean Lappin was named acting president. Dr. Baird died on February 19, 1951 and Charles Spain was named the college's sixth president on May 28, 1951.

Dr. Spain officially resigned the presidency on April 6, 1954, and Dr. Adron Doran was named on the same day as the seventh president of Morehead State College and is currently serving his tenth year as president, longer than any other Morehead president ever served.

The 1950's witnessed the Korean Conflict and the growth of Communist influence throughout the world. In Kentucky, the passage of the foundation program for education and the development of a sound plan for financing education aided by the passage of the general sales tax were the big items of news affecting education at all levels.

The mid-fifties saw Morehead State College truly break through in a dramatic fashion. An enrollment at the beginning of the period of just over 600 doubled, then tripled, then quadrupled--until today's enrollment of 3,238 is five times the enrollment of just a decade ago.

During this period, modern facilities have been provided for programs in business, foreign languages, music, industrial arts, home economics, and special education. Programs in pre-forestry, pre-veterinary medicine,

medical technology, nursing, foreign languages, and philosophy have been added.

Off-campus student teaching and the professional semester have been developed in the teacher training program and the guidance and testing services have been integrated with the total social, recreational and educational program.

This decade saw Morehead State College become one of the first institutions in the South to fully integrate and become the first state-supported college or university in Kentucky to have integrated dormitories.

Marshall Banks became the first Negro to play on a varsity athletic team in the Ohio Valley Conference and Howard Murphy, who finished his fourth year on the Morehead football team this year, was the first Negro to play football in the OVC.

During the past decade the faculty has increased to over 160 and the library now has 85,000 volumes. A Director of Graduate Studies was named for the first time in 1957, an alumni director was named, and the administrative organization of the college was modernized in 1960 with the arrangement of seven academic divisions as the result of a comprehensive self-study.

The sound philosophy of service to the region was greatly strengthened by an action program during this period and Morehead State College has become the center of regional activities for many varied and diverse groups and organizations.

During this period Morehead State College received recognition as a major college by the National Collegiate Athletic Association and today Morehead's basketball teams play a major schedule and are the proud holders of several national scoring records.

The total athletic program reached an all-time high last year when Morehead's football, basketball and baseball teams captured co-championships

in the rugged Ohio Valley Conference.

The Baird Music Hall, constructed in 1953, became the first major structure to be built on the campus in seventeen years and is part of a \$10-million dollar building program which has mushroomed between 1953 and 1963.

Other buildings constructed since 1953 are: the Fieldhouse in 1956; Doran Student House in 1957; Lakewood Terrace in 1960; Waterfield Hall in 1960; Butler Hall in 1961; Bert T. Combs Classroom Building in 1961; drama addition to Button Auditorium in 1961; Industrial Arts and Home Economics building in 1962; Wilson Hall in 1962; Mignon Hall in 1963; new administration building in 1963; and 11 faculty duplexes from 1957 to the present.

The Doran Student House was named for President Adron Doran and Butler Hall for Wendell P. Butler, who has served two terms as State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Waterfield Hall was named for Harry Lee Waterfield, twice Lt. Governor of Kentucky, while the Combs Classroom Building was named for Governor Bert T. Combs, whose term will end on December 10, 1963.

Wilson Hall was named for Roger L. Wilson, Dean of Students since 1953 and Mignon Hall for the beloved Mignon Doran, wife of Morehead's President.

During this period, a 25-bed infirmary has been built, the Palmer House, a 12-room home management house has been purchased, and there has been extensive remodeling and redecorating of numerous buildings.

Such was the past decade!

Morehead State College experienced a breakthrough which lifted this awakening college from a period of dormancy into the "Golden Sixties."

She has taken her rightful place among the great colleges and universities of the state, the region, and the nation.

Long may she live and reign in the hearts of boys and girls and men  
and women in this great region and Commonwealth.

This is Morehead State College!