

BRYANT SOCIETY



By Steve Irvine

Johnny Johns' love for The University of Alabama can be traced back to a specific afternoon. On the surface, though, that afternoon didn't seem very special.

It was 1957. Johns sat next to his father inside Legion Field. Not only was it raining but a strong north wind blew the rain into their face. On the field, Auburn dominated the Crimson Tide and claimed a 40-0 Iron Bowl victory.

In this case, though, love couldn't be measured by a scoreboard.

"On the way out, I was holding my dad's hand, he asked me what I thought," Johns said. "I said 'Dad, I loved it. Roll Tide.' From that moment on, I've been a big fan."

Johns made that comment in a video played at a Crimson Tide Foundation special event honoring an incredible group of athletic supporters two days before Alabama's 19-14 victory over Tennessee at Bryant-Denny Stadium. The event was held to formally induct 16 individuals and organizations into the Bryant Society, which is the pinnacle of The Lifetime Giving Society at The University of Alabama.

The Lifetime Giving Society was created to recognize the generosity, loyalty, pride

athletics department and student-athletes.

"Tom and I are both givers at heart," said Carol Patterson. "To be able to do that and see the effects of what we were doing was a tremendous opportunity. These kids, to me, their athleticism is important and their talents are important. But the education that they get at this university is what is going to sustain them for the rest of their life."

Katherine Luttrull, who represented her late father, James Fail, during the induction, said the giving is what made her father happy.

"Giving is a way for him to give back," Luttrull said. "He did not have a scholarship. He got to Alabama on the GI Bill. I think that he wanted to give people an opportunity that he had – other people from humble beginnings. He loved giving money to scholarship programs. He loved the athletic program."

All the private gifts contribute directly to the needs of our student-athletes, coaches and staff. Private support enables UA Athletics to increase its standing, in both athletics and academics, over competing universities. The Lifetime Giving Society, was created by the Crimson Tide Foundation to recognize donors based on their cumulative lifetime giving to the Foundation. As previously stated, the

athletics program at the University. It also states that the Crimson Tide Foundation provides a venue through which loyal alumni, fans and friends can give financial support to the Athletics Department, while capturing all the current tax benefits allowed by the IRS.

At the forefront is a special group of people, the members of The Bryant Society, who have not only opened their checkbooks and pocket books but also their hearts to The University of Alabama and its student-athletes.

"Anybody can write a check," said Judy Livingston, whose contribution includes an endowed scholarship for the UA Women's Basketball Program. "But when you really invest in a child's life, you care and you mentor and you check on them, then you're vested. That has been the gift that gave back."

Helping build championship programs is certainly part of the mission but helping build strong futures is equally important.

"We have two crucial missions – be competitive on the field and provide an opportunity that will prepare them for the rest of their life," John McMahon said.

Many of the donors highlighted the contributions, encouragement and vision of the late Coach Mal Moore in influencing their

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- BRYANT SOCIETY MEMBER ED LABRY

and passion displayed by donors to the UA Athletics Department. The Crimson Tide Foundation recognizes the lifetime contributions of donors by placing them into one of four levels. The Bryant Society distinguishes individuals and organizations who have made overall contributions of at least \$1 million.

The 2015 inductees consisted of current UA athletics director Bill Battle, Paul Bryant, Jr., Angus Cooper, II, the late James M. Fail, Johnny Johns, Edward Labry, III, Judy Livingston, John McMahon (The Pleiad Foundation), Beverly and Larry Morris, Carol and Thomas Patterson, Barbara and John Plott, Ann Rhoads, the late Phillip Shapiro, Jr., Sarah Frances Smith and Steven D. Smith and Sallie and Warren Williamson. The A-Club Alumni Association was also inducted.

Each has their own unique story on the beginning of their love for The University of Alabama. All also have the similar desire to give back to university, particularly the UA

Bryant Society is for donors who have contributed at least \$1 million. The other three tiers making up the Lifetime Giving Society are Crimson Legacy (\$500,000-999,999), Crimson Alliance (\$100,000-499,999) and Crimson Circle (\$50,000-99,999).

"I don't think anybody wakes up today saying 'Hey, I need to give a big, significant dollar amount to The University of Alabama,'" Ed Labry said. "There has to be an awareness of the need. That's what brings people to react."

The Crimson Tide Foundation was established in 2005 to help provide the awareness and help maintain the level of excellence forged over the years. Its purpose, as stated on www.crimsontidefoundation.org, is to promote and encourage a continuing interest in, and loyalty to, the intercollegiate athletic programs at The University of Alabama; to support the staff of the University's Department of Athletics in their efforts to coordinate, develop, maintain and improve a superior intercollegiate

desire to financially support the university. Moore, who spent more than 40 years at UA, became the university's athletic director in 1999 and oversaw more than \$240 million of capital improvements to athletic facilities.

"He had a vision and he had a plan to get there," Larry Morris said. "Somebody who has a vision and a plan to get there, I generally have made it my practice to try and be a part of it."

At the center of all the contributions is making the university's athletic program the best it can possibly be in all areas.

"It is part of a society within itself that we belong to," Ed Labry said. "I think it's creating the awareness of where we need to get to, as a university, to attract the student-athletes to make us competitive on the national level. Whether it is women's swimming or women's soccer or men's basketball (or any other sport) we're all pulling for the Crimson Tide."

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