"To pledge or not to pledge," that was the question for many, while others begged for the prick of Cupid’s arrow as they gripped the door to the Commons on the day of check-in 2002. For some, Fall 2002 would bring an inaugural step towards higher education and new beginnings, while returning Unionites simply looked forward to sharing summer stories around the fountain at the annual Howdy Party. Some of the new faces to the campus would spend their first night in the United States right here at Union University, but whatever their circumstances, attitudes, or birthplaces, these students became not just students, but Union students. With varying motivations, diverse backgrounds, and unique stories, Union students swarmed the campus, filling cold dorm rooms with computers and photographs and calling it home while parents filed back into their cars, discussing how they would remedy the empty nest.

There is something beautiful about starting a new year of classes. Students get to wipe their slates clean and begin afresh as they prepare for the daunting tasks demanded by college life. Lying down on their dorm beds, students close their eyes knowing they will soon begin another year of making memories—some of them fond, and some not so ideal. Amidst the many joyful and special moments of the semester, such as Chuck Colson’s visit to the campus and James Baker III’s address at the annual Scholarship Banquet, Fall 2002 wouldn’t come without some unexpected bumps and twists, and although many fond memories would stand out, one night in particular would give the students and faculty of Union University a dose of reality they wouldn’t soon forget.

“Plato”

“The beginning is the most important part of the work.”

——— Plato
Music department chair Dr. Richard Joiner led music during Union’s December graduation ceremony. (ID: 689)

Melissa Hopper, Safety and Security Secretary, took a student ID picture during Freshman Pre-Registration. (ID: 388)

Renee Jones, Special Events Coordinator, taught students the right way to interview over lunch at an etiquette event held by Career Services. (ID: 1011)

Brandon Boylan, Assistant Director of Wellness, demonstrates flag football techniques. Along with other responsibilities, Boylan managed the intramural sports program at Union for the school year. (ID: 1313)

Ben Mandrell (left) and Mark VanderHaar gave it their all while on clean-up duty at The Case Center during Martin Luther King Jr. service day. (ID: 1318)

Brandon Boylan, Assistant Director of Wellness, demonstrates flag football techniques. Along with other responsibilities, Boylan managed the intramural sports program at Union for the school year. (ID: 1313)

New Union employees Ronnie Smith, Charlie Agnew, and Richard Joiner participated in the removing of the stones from the altar of the September 11 Memorial Environmental Installation. (ID: 201)

The Fall 2002 class of new faculty at Union is a talented group of educators,” said Union University Provost Carla Sanderson. “Some bring research expertise while others bring years of experience in higher education. Each one brings to Union a fresh perspective and new approach that will complement the work of our faculty body and stretch our students in exciting ways.”

New faculty members were Randy Shadburn (Education), Nan Thomas (Associate Director of the Center for Faculty Development), Richard Joiner (Music), Elizabeth Vaughn-Neeley (Education), Julie Bowman (English), Jenny Cowell (Business), Darren Michael (Theatre), Victoria Romero (Language), Andy Madison (Biology), Gene Fant (English), Donald Christensen (Business), Jeannette Russ (Engineering), Mark Dubis (Christian Studies), and Charlie Agnew (Art).

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Director of University Communications Todd Starnes (far left) gave instructions before the Union-sponsored Brown Bag concert in Franklin, Tenn. Director of News & Media Relations Chris Allen (fourth from left) is also pictured. (ID: 1247)

New staff members for 2002-2003: Dr. Kina Mallard (Director for Center of Fac. Dev.), Randy Shadburn, Nan Thomas (Director for Center of Fac. Dev.), Richard Joiner, Elizabeth Vaughn-Neeley, Julie Bowman, Jenny Cowell, Darren Michael, Victoria Romero, Andy Madison, Gene Fant, Donald Christensen, Jeannette Russ, Mark Dubis, and Charlie Agnew. (ID: 1317)

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If you happened to drive by Union University’s campus early the morning of Saturday, August 24th, the campus was a picture of peace. A few cars were scattered along the edges of the parking lots while their drivers were sleeping, not yet thinking of the freshmen set to descend upon the campus. As the sun rose and 10 a.m. arrived, the calm scene of early morning rest suddenly became a hive of activity as parents and students began to arrive and begin a new phase in their lives.

Families came from all across the country and beyond, some here for the first time and some moving in their second or even third child. Not only were there parents, but siblings and friends. Together they joined in on the family festivities planned as a part of the first day of new student orientation.

After settling into their dorm rooms, new students and their families attended a Saturday evening worship service to wrap up the first day of New Student Orientation. Todd Brady, minister to the university, delivered a message to the students.

At the FOCUS show on Sunday night, the FOCUS leaders presented a short skit on ‘The Roommate You Never Want to Have.’ The examples varied from the perky morning roommate to the one who refuses to do any room-wide chores. Amazingly, many rooms come together so well that God’s hand is obvious in its presence.

Students had a chance to mingle at the Ice Cream Social hosted by President and Mrs. Dockery on Monday night. While some students chose to visit, others played an exciting game of elbow tag which brought together many who had not yet had a chance to meet.

Other Monday night activities included capture the flag led by SGA president Keelan Cook and sophomore John Reed. In the student lounge, the Open Mic Night drew quite a crowd as well, as students shared in melody and comedy and whatever else they wished.

Under the lights of the courtyard and around the fountain, students of all years and majors gathered to bring in the new school year with the annual Howdy Party, signifying the close of New Student Orientation. The party was a good ending to the last long, structured day of the freshmen’s start at Union.

Freshman Class Statistics:
- 7 National Merit Finalists
- 31 valedictorians and salutatorians
- class ACT average of 24.3
- high school GPA average of 3.5
- more than 29 states and 11 countries represented
Union University held a special service remembering the victims of 9/11 on Wednesday, Sept. 11 at 10 a.m. at the G.M. Savage Memorial Chapel. The service was open to members of the Jackson community.

Those attending participated in a symbolic tribute to the victims by picking up stones that had been part of an outdoor art memorial created the previous November by Union art students. While scripture was read aloud, participants deposited the rocks on available trucks to be taken off the campus property. Union President David S. Dockery spoke. A tree was planted in place of the memorial as a permanent reminder of the Sept. 11 tragedy.

“The opportunity for corporate remembrance is important for all of us,” said Union President David S. Dockery. “It will provide a time for reflection and a time to seek strength and hope from God.”

The service was held by the university as part of American Character Week, sponsored by the Leadership Council of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a nonprofit, nonpartisan partnership of more than 500 different organizations across the country.
President David S. Dockery and Chuck Colson conversed following the Red Carpet Banquet. (ID: 381)

Chuck Colson delivered his address to a full house of Union students in a chapel service on Sept. 27, 2002. (ID: 377)

Senior Naomi Dodd and freshman Kristen Merrill played the clarinet in the Symphonic Band during the Chuck Colson chapel. (ID: 385)

Charles Colson sought out Freshman Kevin Pratt following the Red Carpet Banquet. Kevin spoke at the banquet about his experience at the Wedgewood Baptist Church shootings in Fort Worth, Tex. (ID: 375)

Sophomore Christian Ethics major Josh Howerton and Junior Theology major Marc Glass visited with Chuck Colson shortly before his chapel address. (ID: 386)

President David S. Dockery congratulated Dr. Hal Poe on receiving the position of Charles Colson Chair of Faith and Culture. (ID: 380)

Proclamation, under the direction of Dr. Richard Joiner, performed at the Red Carpet Banquet. (ID: 374)

Former White House “hatchet man” during the Nixon administration and Prison Fellowship founder Charles Colson spoke at Union University, Friday, Sept. 27 at 11 a.m. in the G.M. Savage Memorial Chapel. The university honored Colson with the induction of an academic chair in his name. Hal Poe, a professor in Christian studies, was the first recipient of the Charles Colson Professor of Faith and Culture chair.

After experiencing a conversion to Christianity in 1973, Colson served seven months of a one to three-year sentence for pleading guilty to Watergate-related charges in 1974. After his release, he launched Prison Fellowship, the world’s largest prison outreach which recently celebrated its 25th year of serving the spiritual and practical needs of prisoners around the globe.

Now one of America’s leading authorities on the causes of and responses to crime, Colson was awarded the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion in recognition of his work. The one-million-dollar prize was donated to Prison Fellowship’s Endowment Fund. An internationally known syndicated columnist and daily radio commentator, Colson has authored thirty-eight books and has sold more than 5 million copies in the U.S. alone, the royalties of which are donated to Prison Fellowship.
James Baker, former White House chief of staff, spoke at the university’s Sixth Annual Scholarship Banquet this year featuring keynote speaker James H. Baker, former secretary of state under President George H. Bush, held Tuesday night, October 1. An additional $402,000 was raised by the university since the announcement was made last spring that Baker would be speaking, bringing the total amount raised for scholarships to over $802,000, the most ever raised for one scholarship banquet at Union.

“How grateful we are for the generous support by the friends of Union University,” said Union President David S. Dockery. “These generous gifts will help keep the excellent education provided by Union accessible to numerous quality students in coming years.”

Baker, the former Secretary of State under President George H. Bush, has served in senior government positions under three United States Presidents including the Ford, Reagan and Bush administrations. He spoke on the era of transition the United States has seen in over the last quarter of a century in international relations and the economy, pointing out the lessons we can learn from the past.

“More important to us as Americans than our disagreements is what we have in common – the underlying consensus about fundamental issues,” Baker told the large crowd in attendance.

He touched on dynamic changes of the economy during the 1970s as well as international relations.

Baker met earlier in the evening with a small group of Union students and faculty members on campus. Union assistant professor of political science Sean Evans and his students Matt Oshel and Greg Wilson enjoyed hearing Baker’s perspective on Iraq. Baker served as secretary of state during the first U.S. invasion of Iraq.

“It’s not often you get to hear from someone with his expertise on the issue that is the issue of prominence today, which is whether we should go into Iraq,” said Evans.

Baker told Evans, and repeated in his speech, that President George W. Bush’s policy of preemption is not a new policy. It follows what the U.S. did in Panama and Granada.
Union University hosted its sixth annual Family Weekend, Oct. 11-12. The traditional weekend is sponsored by the Student Activities Counsel and is designed to help students’ families get acquainted with the Union family. “This is a great opportunity for families to come and visit Union’s campus and see what their students are involved in,” said Mark VanderHaar, director of wellness and student programs. “Family Weekend helps build positive relationships between parents and Union faculty and staff.”

The weekend had something for everyone in the entire family to participate in. Activities included informative and enjoyable workshops ranging from learning about study abroad opportunities and global awareness to making old boxes into photo keepsakes, the annual campus variety show, a banquet featuring entertainment by the Gospel Choir, and families were also given the chance to see “Lilies of the Field,” the current offering of Union’s communication arts department. More than 400 people were present for the President’s Brunch on Saturday morning.

“This year’s Family Weekend was a special time for all who attended,” said Union President David S. Dockery. “The positive encouragement and helpful suggestions from parents will strengthen the work of Union University in days ahead. It was great to have so many family members on campus.”


Freshman Emily Boecking enjoyed a meal together with her family during Family Weekend 2002. (ID: 444)

Freshman Jill Hickman shared some time with her family in her dorm room. (ID: 446)

Nursing major Crystal Box got a piggyback ride from her father during Family Weekend 2002. (ID: 441)

Senior Tara Stover performed a comedy routine entitled Reality Check during intermission of the SAC Variety Show. (ID: 484)

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Early Sunday morning, Nov. 10, time stood still at Union University. That's when, according to student eyewitness accounts and the National Weather Service, an F1 tornado formed above the campus, creating 110-mile-an-hour winds which blew dumpsters and picnic tables through the air, knocked down trees and power lines, and broke and shattered glass windows in cars and buildings. The time on the clock of the university’s Miller Tower read 12:05. It would stay that way for the next 18 hours.

The administration moved quickly. Arriving on the scene minutes after the storm hit, facilities management worked fast to assess initial damage of all buildings on campus while student services staff accounted for the whereabouts of all students who had been on campus. By 1 a.m., Union President David S. Dockery and his team of administrative leaders stood between the Hurt and Watters commons, assessing the situation and making decisions on temporary arrangements for student housing.

“Our first and primary concern was the students,” said Dockery. “We needed to make sure everyone was accounted for, and we were amazed and grateful that there were no injuries.”

“I am amazed and so thankful for the incredible leadership provided by our residence life teams, our student service teams and our facilities management staff,” said Dockery. “They protected and guided our students while working through the night to get us past those first crisis hours. They are to be commended.”

The morning of Nov. 10 brought a sharp contrast to the darkness and storminess of the night before, and while students slept, resting from the terror of the storm which had occurred only hours before, administrators and staff continued to work, organizing a command center in the Watters commons which had not been damaged as extensively as its sister building.

A walk around the campus revealed that the tornado and subsequent storm had left extensive damage to all residence life complexes but minimal damage to the rest of the campus.

“Things are replaceable – people aren’t.” The phrase seemed to echo throughout Union’s campus in the first daylight hours of Monday morning, Nov. 11, as faculty, staff, students and volunteers from the community met bright and early to begin an all-day cleanup effort.

Union President David S. Dockery and Provost Carla Sanderson had worked quickly that morning to assign faculty team leaders to more than a dozen teams, focusing each group in a different area on campus. With more than 100 trees knocked down throughout the campus, the buzzing of chainsaws could be heard throughout the day, as volunteers worked to remove the heavier limbs.
Dr. Richard Joiner directed “A Union Christmas,” a production he hopes will become an annual tradition. (ID: 923)

Nathan Robertson, Daniel Davis, Nathan Michael, and Keelan Cook shared a moment of laughter at the president’s open house. (ID: 929)

Proclamation joined with the University Singers to present musical selections at “A Union Christmas.” (ID: 924)

Union employees and trustees enjoyed finger foods and fellowship at the annual Christmas open house held at the home of President and First Lady David S. Dockery. (ID: 927)

First Lady Lanese Dockery welcomed former Union trustee John Dickinson to her home for a Christmas Open House on Dec. 6. (ID: 930)

Freshman Andy Morris played his trombone in the Symphonic Band during “A Union Christmas.” (ID: 933)

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Despite the damage suffered to their fraternity house, Union University students belonging to the Beta Tau chapter of Alpha Tau Omega remained committed to a special cause – making Christmas brighter for needy children through their work with Operation Christmas Child, a worldwide ministry that delivers shoeboxes filled with toys and essential items to needy children around the world which is a project of Samaritan’s Purse.

“The tragedy that’s happened to us is nothing in comparison to what these children face on a day to day basis,” said Derek Jones, a junior from Houston, Texas who is majoring in family studies. “The poverty, the sickness and suffering they’re experiencing – even though we’ve had this disaster happen to us, we have so much we can still give.”

More than six million children on six continents received gift-filled shoe boxes this year as part of Operation Christmas Child, the world’s largest children’s Christmas project. Since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has hand-delivered more than 18 million shoe box gifts via plane, boat, helicopter, even donkey and dog sled to children suffering from disease, war, terrorism, natural disaster, poverty, and famine.

A new Christmas tradition also began this year with the introduction of “A Union Christmas,” which was held at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 3 in the G. M. Savage Memorial Chapel.

Richard Joiner, chair of the music department, hopes that this program will become a popular staple every year. In his first year at Union, Joiner joined the Union community this past August after a twenty-year career at Mississippi College in Clinton, Miss.

“We want it to be a campus-wide celebration, but we would also like to see it become a tradition in the community, where our guests would expect a worshipful setting, great music and outstanding performances of classics as well as carols,” said Joiner.

The celebration offered performances by the Symphonic Band, Children’s Choir, Choral Union, University Singers and Proclamation.
The December air was chilly outside but hearts and smiles were warm as Union University seniors walked across the stage at West Jackson Baptist Church, Saturday, Dec. 14 to receive their diplomas from Union President David S. Dockery. Approximately 210 students graduated on Saturday, with one of the largest crowds in attendance for a winter graduation, requiring the necessary move to the auditorium at West Jackson.

Preceding the graduation ceremony, a brunch for the graduates was held on Union’s campus where faculty, students and families mingled and shared last-minute best wishes. Raymond and Ann Boston, longtime supporters of the university as well as alums, were honored by Union with the Craig Service Award for their faithful service to the university.

“Raymond and Ann Boston have been models of faithful alumni service to the university,” said Union President David S. Dockery. “They have volunteered their time, encouraged students to attend, given of their gifts, and represented the university well by serving West Tennessee Baptist churches for over 40 years.”

The featured speaker at this year’s graduation event was O. S. Hawkins, president and chief executive officer of the Southern Baptist Convention Annuity Board, who encouraged the graduates toward a life of faithfulness.

Hawkins, a native of Texas, holds degrees from Texas Christian University and from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

“Today was a fitting conclusion to a great semester,” said Dockery. “Dr. Hawkins’ words and the excitement among these 200-plus graduates and their families is satisfying to behold. We thank God for His ongoing goodness to Union University.”

Academic Excellence Awards

- Economics: Emily Rachael Lean
- Management (International Management): Emily Rachael Lean
- International Business: Sarah Lindsay Webster
- Marketing (Advertising): Margaret Leigh Malone
- Biblical Languages: William Martin Cherry
- Christian Studies: William Marin Cherry & Jonathan Carl Stonecipher
- Youth Ministry: Daniel David Chamberlain
- Theatre/Speech: Cassandra June Schumacher
- Mathematics: Caroline Marie Ellis
- English: Cassandra June Schumacher
- Family Studies: Rachel Joelle Hurst
- Spanish (Language & Culture): Nicole Joy Leeber
- History: Lee Andrew Stanfill
- Learning Foundations: Lori Michelle Powers
- Liberal Studies: Johanna Hope Burke
- Special Education: Allison Hope Walker
- Music (Management): Amy Nolen
- Music: Barry L. Britt, II
- Nursing: Kelly Lynn Ubel Harrell
- Organizational Leadership: Kirk Breidlove
- Psychology: Letitia Nicole Wilks & Rebecca Anne Wilson
- Physical Education: Brandon Lyles Moore
- Sports Medicine (Exercise Science & Wellness): Sara Katrina McWhorter