

{Madison Traditions}

Alumni Candle-lighting ceremony is JMU's oldest tradition

The Classes of 1963 and 2013 join in candle-lighting inductions BY JAMES IRWIN ('06)

JMU's storied student rituals include sneaking into the Quad's underground tunnels and jumping into Newman Lake, but Madison's longest-standing tradition is a bit more formal—and nearly as old as the university itself.

In spring 1912, on the night before commencement, the newest graduates of the State Normal & Industrial School for Women were inducted into the Alumnae Association at a ceremonial banquet. More than 100 years and 110,000 Dukes later, that act of inducting new graduates into the alumni community continues in a candle-lighting ceremony on the last day of classes.

On April 26 students from the Class of 2013 gathered at Alumni Centennial Park to celebrate their induction into the JMU Alumni Association. They were joined by nearly 30 members of the Madison College Class of 1963, on campus for their 50th reunion.

Larry Caudle ('82), president-elect of the JMU Alumni Association, presided over the ceremony. "Tonight's event has ties to Madison's earliest days," Caudle said. "And it is my hope that you will continue to foster your relationship with Madison and remain an active member of the university community."

Citing ways graduates help shape Madison's future as volunteers, advocates and donors, Caudle and 2013 Class President Meredith Wood ('13) provided a roadmap for alumni involvement. "There are endless ways to stay involved in the Madison community," Wood told students. "Subscribe to *Madison Update*, join your



Members of the Class of 2013 and the Class of 1963 sing the university *Alma Mater* as the Class of 2013 is inducted into the JMU Alumni Association. Ceremony host and JMU Alumni Association President-elect Larry Caudle ('82) told the Class of 2013, "You are alumni for life, and because of that, your Madison Experience can last forever."

local alumni chapter, give back to JMU, or simply come back for Homecoming."

Caudle and Wood received cheers during their remarks, but one of the loudest ovations occurred when Caudle invited Jo Ann Bogan Smith ('63), co-chair of the Class of 1963's 50th reunion committee, to the podium. Smith congratulated the Class of 2013 and spoke of the friendships she and her classmates have maintained since their graduation. She also provided a little inside knowledge about one of JMU's campus features. "I want you to know that, yes, those tunnels do exist, because we used them!"

Caudle, Smith and Wood lit the first candles, and then passed

the flame to 2013 and 1963 graduates. The base flame emitted from the alumni association's Bluestone Candle, used every year to induct Madison College graduates into the Bluestone Society on the occurrence of their 50th reunion.

"There was incredible energy that night; you could really feel it," said Betty Reid Coghill Somloi ('63), Smith's co-chair. "I think the graduating class appreciated our class being there to share the light of the alumni association. Even with 20,000 students today, Madison is still a close-knit community, which is what we had 50 years ago."

Wrapped in all the symbolism, Somloi says, was a tangible connection between the classes — one Caudle emphasized as candle-light spread throughout Alumni Centennial Park. "These two classes, which span 50 years of JMU's rich heritage, will forever be linked by tonight's induction ceremony," he said.

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More than 200 attend 2013 Bluestone Reunions

In addition to their participation in the Alumni Candle Lighting Ceremony, members of the Madison College Class of 1963 enjoyed a busy weekend celebrating their 50th reunion. They joined more than 200 alumni and guests on April 26-28 for reunions for the Classes of 1948, 1953 and 1958. The weekend included tours of the Forbes Center for the Performing Arts, Wayland Hall and Carrier Library Special Collections; a perform-

ance from the Madison Singers, and a presentation from JMU students on Madison's Alternative Break program.

"The reunion was fabulous — meaningful, inspirational and fun," says Betty Reid Coghill Somloi ('63), co-chair of the Class of 1963's 50th reunion committee. The Class of 1963 presented a check for \$27,639.63 to JMU. Somloi and her classmates were inducted into the Bluestone Society in a ceremony featuring a

keynote address from JMU President Jonathan Alger and hosted by JMU Alumni Association President Jamie Jones Miller ('99).

"Almost 90 percent of the graduates in 1963 went on to be teachers," says Somloi. "JMU's growth has been tremendous. The fact that JMU has an engineering school just blew me away. JMU has become such a first-class university that it makes me really proud to be part of the institution."

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