

'Full circle'

Six Ninety Veranda honors history of Phi Delta Theta house

By Chris Starrs (ABJ '82)

When Ivester Hall was dedicated in 2019, the Terry community celebrated the completion of a historic building project. For alumni of the Phi Delta Theta fraternity it brought back memories of their time on campus living in that location near the corner of Lumpkin and Baxter streets.

With the construction of the Business Learning Community, two Phi Delta Theta brothers, who also happen to be Terry alumni, saw an opportunity. They decided to dedicate a space to commemorate the old fraternity house, which was built around 1955 and razed in 2009, when the fraternity moved to River Road.

Last year, the Board of Regents approved the naming of the balcony on the east side of Ivester Hall as Six Ninety Veranda, in honor of Phi Delta Theta. The fraternity is now approaching its 150th year on campus and spent more than five decades in the house at 690 Lumpkin Street.

Led by Mark Chandler and Bill Beckham, 10 brothers donated \$400,000 to name the veranda.

For Phi Delta Theta's Terry alums, the announcement of the BLC project was reflective, admits Chandler (AB '81). "But now it's this beautiful facility sitting at the crossroads, the center of the whole UGA campus, and what awesome facilities they are.

"It was the right thing to do for everybody," he says. "I like to think that this was full circle. We're happy where we are, and the (BLC) is higher-use and benefits thousands of students."

Six Ninety Veranda was dedicated in November, hours before the eventual national champions thumped Missouri 43-6 in an SEC East battle. A plaque on the site honors the fraternity and the Phi Delta Theta brothers who donated the funds.

"It really means a lot to our undergrads that are in school now," says Beckham (AB '78). "There are more Terry undergrads in the chapter than any other college. A number of them came to the dedication, and we were told by multiple students that they go into Ivester Hall and show their friends the plaque."

Chandler, an Atlanta native who is president of Habersham Properties and a UGA Foundation trustee, said his first visit to the veranda was a strong reminder of his undergraduate days.

"I walked around on the veranda and I said, 'This is unbelievable.' I felt like I was literally in the living room of the old fraternity house looking out the windows," he says. "This is the footprint of the old house, really, and nothing could be greater than dedicating it in the name of the fraternity."

"I felt good about it, and there's no doubt in my mind that the 10 guys (who donated) were elated and happy to be part of it," adds Beckham, a Miami native who has been a titan in the South Florida insurance business for decades.

"But even more than that, the better part to me was when other people came to the dedication and I saw how it gave them pride of bringing our fraternity back. That made me feel good. I know we did something good, something that's going to last and something simple."

Phi Delta Theta alumni joined Dean Benjamin C. Ayers to celebrate the naming of Six Ninety Veranda (top). Terry alums Mark Chandler (center) and Bill Beckham (second from bottom) spearheaded the fundraising effort. Photos by Brian Powers

