

Literary Societies: rich history, hopeful future

Eu's, Phi's played large role on old campus

By SHANNON BOTHWELL AND EMILY BREWER
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER AND ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

They are a tradition more than 160 years in the making, dating back to some of the first days on the old campus in Wake Forest. They sought then and now to bridge the gap between intellectual and social life.

Two literary societies, the Euzelians and the Philomathesians, are enjoying a revitalization and upsurge on campus. With a growing membership and increasing interest in the societies, the future looks hopeful for the budding organizations.

On the old campus, the two literary societies had the responsibility of pro-

viding for the extra-curricular entertainment of students. They fielded baseball and football teams for recreation, but the societies were the main form of entertainment for the men of the college.

As the principal literary concern of the societies, the Friday night debates centered around many varied topics, ranging from historical to political to philosophical, and the discussion was never anything less than lively. Although they primarily debated topics such as "Was the Noachian flood universal?" they also examined issues important to students in the mid-19th century, such as "Ought the Bloomer costume be adopted (for women)?" and such practical issues as "Should the Euzelian Society pur-

chase a carpet?" Contests occurred primarily within the societies, in their grandly appointed rooms on the second floor of Wait Hall at the old campus.

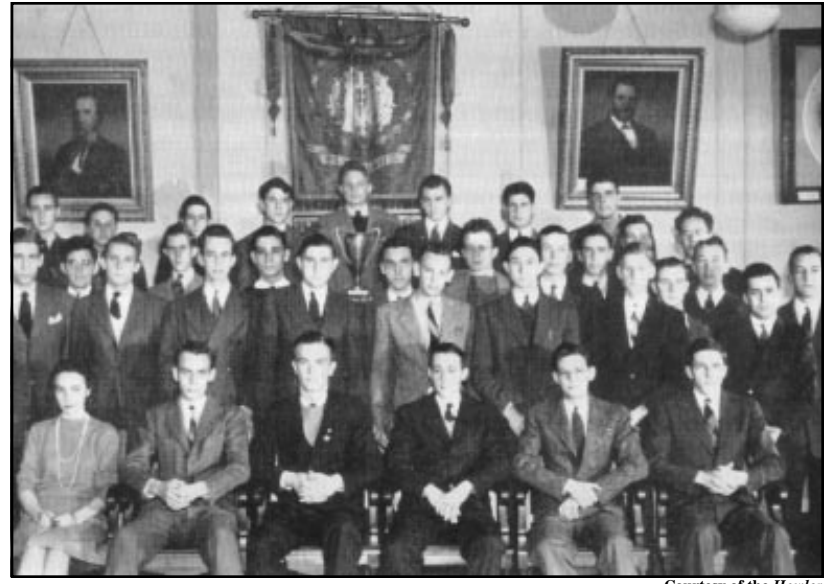
Virtually every student at the college belonged to one of the two societies, and they served as the cornerstones of the political and social life of the college.

The leaders of the societies even aided in the administration of the college. One important way the societies were integral functions of the university was in housing and maintaining the book collection of the college. Instead of having a central library, the dean of the college divided the books between the societies to be kept in their meeting rooms. Even today,

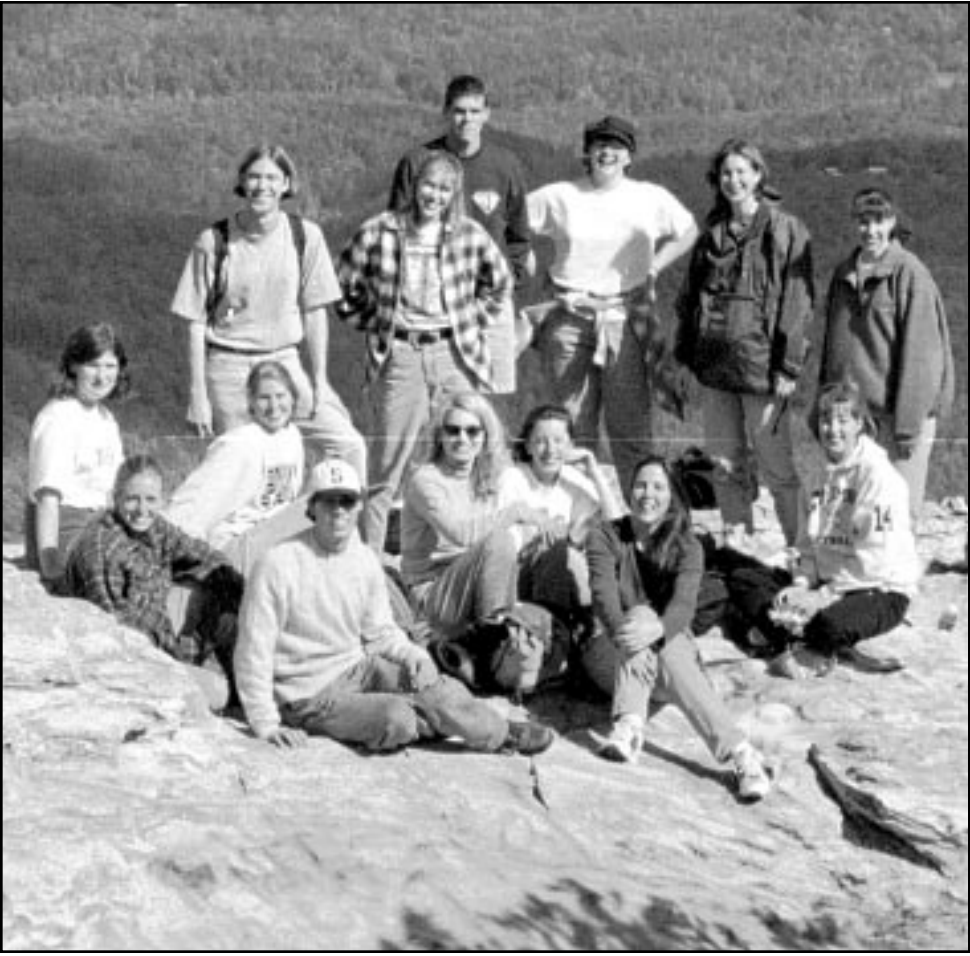
some of the older volumes in the Z. Smith Reynolds Library bear traces of this. Underneath the pencilled-in call numbers on the fly leaf are the letters "P.S." or "E.S.," standing for Philomathesian Society and Euzelian Society.

The societies were a force in college life until around World War II, when diminishing interest and competition from fraternities sent them into decline.

Finally, an editorial in the *Old Gold and Black* dated May 18, 1959, said, "Let's forget the whole thing ... Let's forget the cup. Let's forget the Society Day. Let's forget the (literary) societies. ... They serve no other purpose than to take up room on the second floor of Reynolda Hall."



While still located on the old campus, the Philomathesian Society, shown here in a 1942 photo, engaged in spirited debates under the leadership of co-president Ed Wilson, '43 (pictured on far right).



On a trip to Hanging Rock State Park in October, the Euzelian Society read selections from Plato, Wordsworth and Plath on top of the mountain.

Students revive Euzelian Society

By EMILY BREWER
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

In his sophomore year, senior Brian Bowman read an article written by Provost Emeritus Ed Wilson, a professor of English and a Philomathesian from the old campus, in *The Philomathesian Journal*.

"His article really impressed upon me the history of the Philomathesians and the Euzelians, and the significant role that they played in the intellectual life of our campus, many years ago," Bowman said.

In the process of researching the history, Bowman grew increasingly fascinated and was encouraged to bring the society back. "The first time I held the 1835-36 constitution in my hands—which spoke of the democratic nature of the society which was organized for 'the improvement of our minds,' I asked myself 'how could this have been neglected?'"

Although the Philomathesian Society had been brought back, Bowman embraced the idea of a larger society with a central focus. Bowman decided that the campus today lacked a proper outlet for intellectual development outside of the classroom and he began researching the history of the Euzelian Society and organizing interested students to help him resurrect it as well.

Bringing the society back to campus was a slow and gradual process, which started in the

spring of 1995. Bowman, along with a small, dedicated group of seven people, arranged a discussion series that spring, discussing creationism vs. evolutionism.

In the proceeding semesters, the society started to attract new members while maintaining a regular discussion series, including an in-depth look at the politics, religion and literature of the Middle East and a study of the university, its past, present and future.

"Although our format has changed and we are not as big and pervasive, our basic ideals are the same, those being the pursuit of knowledge, and intellectual pursuits outside of the classroom," Bowman said.

The Euzelian motto, "Inveniam viam aut faciam," Latin for "I will find a way or I will make one," symbolizes the Society's attempt to encourage free thought and spark intellectual curiosity in the pursuit of wisdom.

Current Euzelians are encouraged about the future of the society and are taking steps to see that, now that the society is back, it will not disappear. Having rewritten the old con-

stitution and discussed long-range goals, the society is experiencing a renaissance of sorts as many new faces attend planning meetings, lectures and social events.

Aside from their lecture series, they sponsor a number of intellectually-oriented social events. This semester, they held a poetry slam atop of Hanging Rock, a trip to the opera, and together went to see the Irish epic film "Michael Collins," followed by a faculty-led discussion.

"My goal is to create a forum of discussion about topics students are interested in, and to invite faculty to join in," senior society president John Whitmire said.

To be considered for membership in the society, a student must have attended two-thirds of the semester's events and must demonstrate a sincere interest and loyalty to the society. Members are pinned in a formal induction ceremony at the end of the semester and have a voting voice in decisions.

Next semester's discussion series addresses sex, specifically looking at Freudian views of sexuality; Romanticism and sensuality in art; the marketing of sex in society; sex and the law; civil rights and sex; and the different religious views of sex.

Students interested in finding out more about the Euzelian Society can check out the homepage at <http://www.wfu.edu/~euzelian>. Emily Brewer is a Euzelian Society member.



The Greek upsilon has always been the society's symbol.

Phi's reestablished at university

By SHANNON BOTHWELL
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

The legacy of the literary societies was not consigned to the dusty annals of university history. In 1992, Joy Goodwin, '95, and other students resurrected the Philomathesian Society to provide an outlet for intellectual exploration on campus.

The new Philomathesians are dedicated to the principles of discussion on topics ranging from art to history to politics. To foster this goal of generating discussion and debate, the Philomathesian Society sponsors a variety of activities that are free and open to all students and faculty.

"I think that the function of the old society was different. We seek to serve a more cultural and academic function," said senior Suzie Danks, a society organizer.

One staple of the Society is the film series, in which approximately 35 foreign, classic, and otherwise hard-to-find films are shown over the course of the semester. The Society provides these films in the hopes of increasing appreciation for film-making and starting discussion, shown every weekend in Tribble A-3.

Another component of the Philomathesian effort to spark debate is the weekly lunch lecture series, in which faculty and staff are invited to spend a lunch with interested students discussing their research, world view, or hobbies.

These lectures give professors and students a chance to talk with one another in an informal setting.

In addition to these regular happenings, the



Philomathesian Society members seniors Suzie Danks, Jamie Womack and Caroline Gupton along with juniors Paul Thomas and Andrew Frey hang out.

Philomathesians sponsor events such as a workshop on book-making with Wes Hammond from the Sawtooth Center, which took place Oct. 13, and the Annual Literary Masquerade Ball, co-sponsored this year with the Euzelian society, held on Halloween.

"We hope to continue offering these one-

time events each semester in addition to our film and lunch discussion series," junior society member Andrew Frey said.

Finally, the society cultivates debate on both local and global issues on the pages of *The Philomathesian*, a journal of non-fiction essays by students and faculty that is published each semester.

The journal, currently in its third year of publication, is an extension of the society's debates and discussions on many topics and provides a unique forum for the liberal arts at the university.

In keeping with the Philomathesian Society's tradition of open discussion, all members of the university community are invited to all of the society's events and are welcome at the meetings.

Though the society sponsors events that it hopes are thought provoking, its ultimate goal is to help make the university a place where lively conversation and open discussion of controversial issues are the norm, not isolated to one group of students or to a few events each semester.

The Philomathesian Society prides itself on its lack of confining structure and, as of now, has no definite slated officers.

"Idealistically, there's a strength in how it's organized," Frey said, "though I don't know how long it can continue in that fashion."

"We're trying to be a little less formal," Danks said. "We're trying to provide an alternate to formal events on campus." Shannon Bothwell is a Philomathesian Society member.

Euzelians

Philomathesians

- Hold a discussion series each semester around a specific topic

- Social events include concerts, films, hikes and coffeehouses

- Meet weekly for planning meetings

- Name means "zealous search for wisdom"

- For information: <http://www.wfu.edu/~euzelian>

- Produce a literary journal each semester, *The Philomathesian*

- Sponsor a foreign, classic, and rare film series every weekend

- Hold a lunchbag lecture series

- Name means "love of learning"

- For information: call Paul Thomas, Ext. 6670