



## **What The University of Akron Has Meant to Me**

*Bev Johnson (Warnock)*

In the fall of 1965 I began my Bachelor of Education at The University of Akron. Rush season started, and there was a mad dash to join a sorority. Growing up in Akron and still living at home, the sororities provided us locals with a “college experience” by giving us a “home” on campus even though we could not live in it. Having little money, I had worked for a couple summers so I could have expenses covered after my parents paid for tuition and books. I carpooled with three other Firestone High 1965 grads, so we scheduled similar classes in order to share rides, parking passes, and the like. We therefore decided to join a sorority as a unit, as well. During rush, we were

dazzled by the invitations to open houses, parties, dinners, and finally a pledge invitation. Once we chose Kappa Kappa Gamma, we hooked up with three fellow students who were new pledges and graduates of Buchtel High School, our neighboring football foes. It was a serendipitous occurrence because now, fifty-three years later, we are still in each other's lives.

Like many of our day, we partied thru Schrodgers, The Bucket, and all the Kent bars. We lived through the Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam, and the Kent State shooting. We attended frat parties, double dated and reserved Friday nights for "the girls." We all headed out as future teachers, each on a similar path.

After graduating, we had four weddings in 1969 and two in 1970, where we shared bridesmaid dresses. I left for Washington, D.C., in 1970, then moved overseas and only returned for visits until 1984, while the remaining group moved into homes in Ravenna, Kent, Tallmadge, Hudson, and Akron. Two had husbands who shared an office in Kent while their wives worked there off and on, and one moved back and forth to and from Tennessee, finally settling in Savannah. But we managed each summer to share pregnancies, babies, toddlers, and adventures. Having Akron as our home base, we met at picnics, homes for cards, and restaurants to catch up on the year's events. We watched our children grow and discussed everything from politics to child development. We were blessed with many healthy kids and are now blessed with many healthy

grandkids who heard our stories as we buried a time capsule in 2000. We began meeting for weeklong gatherings in Florida at one woman's home and then in St Simon's, Georgia, one year, and a few of us have met on New Year's Eves in Charleston and Savannah. We were sisters at heart with each other's best interests as top priorities, and we have valued fun and frivolity regardless of time or place. Some of us traveled to Europe together. We nursed each other through death and divorce, health issues, and the aging process. We maintain our closeness through telephone, and now emails and texts, sharing news of each other and spreading it from one person to the next.

The picture I have attached is the six of us this New Year's Eve 2019, beginning our fifty-fourth year together as friends. Having a good friend for life is one thing, but having five has been a joy and a rare gift. I guess I can attribute it to our beginnings at The University of Akron.