

DECEMBER  
2019

ELEVENTH  
EDITION



# FAMILY AND FRIENDS

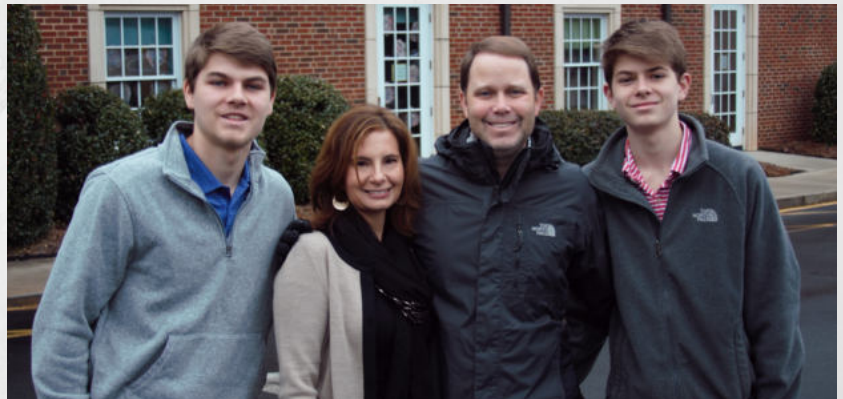
A LAST SAY SO HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER



# HONORING MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Dear family (Ohana) and friends (Rafiki), \* After creating ten editions of this newsletter, I believed it was a nice, even number on which to end. Truthfully, when I began creating them more than ten years ago, I enjoyed using a particular format. When I moved to Tennessee a few years ago, I had to use a different format, which made creating the newsletter cumbersome. This summer, I was introduced to a new system that I really like, so I decided to try again. I hope you enjoy receiving these yearly newsletters, as much as I enjoy creating them. Over the years, this process has allowed me to pause and reflect on the past months and to give thanks for all my family and friends. This year, I've included an insert; having so many photos, I didn't have much room for text. Enjoy and read on! WMG

*\*Ohana is a Hawaiian term for family, and Rafiki is Swahili for friend.*



## DR. CLEMMONS EARNS AN HONORARY DOCTORATE AT SEWANEE

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Mr. François Scarborough Clemmons is one of a kind and has been a close friend of mine since 1999. I met him when I worked at Middlebury College, where he was the Alexander Twilight Artist-in-Residence. To honor his many accomplishments, I nominated him to receive an honorary doctorate degree at Sewanee. Here's why:

François was born in Birmingham, Alabama, and as a young child, he moved with his family to Youngstown, Ohio. He began singing at an early age, and when it was discovered that he possessed a voice of purity and power, he began singing at church functions and at nursery schools.

François earned a Bachelor of Music degree at Oberlin College, and a Master of Fine Arts at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. There, François met Fred Rogers, who invited him to audition for a role on a television show he was creating for children, after hearing François sing at a church where he sang to earn spending money as a graduate student. François earned the part, and for nearly 25 years, François played the character, Officer Clemmons, as he famously is known, and appeared regularly on the Emmy and Peabody Award winning television program, called Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood. He was the first African-American to appear on a recurring role on children's television in America.



François has had to overcome many obstacles, both in the artistic world and in his personal life. From these life experiences, François has dedicated his life to civil rights for ALL people. When he sings the Civil Rights Song, We Shall Overcome, he doesn't sing, We Shall Overcome Someday as it is written, he sings We Shall Overcome, TODAY! "Why wait?" he questions.

Because of the enormous success of the critically-acclaimed documentary, "Won't You Be My Neighbor" and the newly-released Tom Hanks' movie, "It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," François has been in high demand to speak and sing throughout the country. The entire world also awaits to read the untold account of the special relationship between François and his mentor, Fred Rogers, a memoir that will be in book stores everywhere in a few months. The photos to the left chronicle François' time being honored at Sewanee.

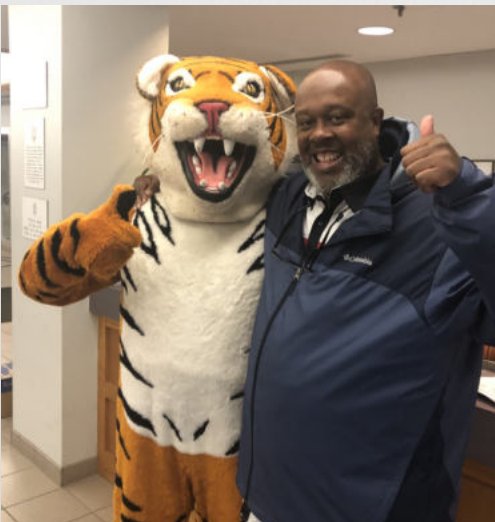


# The Robert Bradford Group

FEATURING MARICHAL



I enjoy going to Chapel Hill, NC as often as possible. When I'm there, I'm either visiting with my long-time friend, Marlon West, and the Men of the 100 Men in Black Male Chorus, or with my friends, Robert and Ann Bradford, whom I've known nearly three decades. My friendship with Robert was solidified when he asked me to be the front man in a band he was forming at Sewanee (Marichal and the Giants). We both moved to North Carolina, me for graduate school, and he to begin working at Duke, and Robert created another band, called Marichal and the Phatback Blues Band. Robert and Ann left North Carolina for California, and a few years ago, they returned, and Robert has started another band. Above, here I am with the members of Robert's new band, The Robert Bradford Group. I was fortunate to play with them this summer to a packed and enthusiastic crowd. Below, I'm posing with the Sewanee Tiger at a first-year Orientation event, and with the members of a spoken word group, called Poets in Autum. More about them in the insert.





This year, Terry, Amy, O'Brien, and Ariona enjoyed the sights and sounds of Washington, DC, New York City, and Durham, NC. In DC, they toured the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture, and took in a Yankees baseball game while in New York City. In North Carolina, they attended the annual 100 Men in Black Male Chorus' annual concert, where O'Brien was awarded a Duke University Medical Center Scholarship. This was a year of many celebrations, as O'Brien graduated from high school, and now is in his first year in college at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and Ariona continues to shine in the classroom, and is earning so many medals in gymnastics that there is hardly any room left to store them all. So proud of them all.





This Ain't No Ordinary Worship, and Kelontae Gavin is no ordinary 20 year-old. Invited as a guest of the 100 Men in Black Male Chorus' annual concert and scholarship program, Mr. Gavin (left) ministered to the audience and sang his award-winning song, "This Ain't No Ordinary Worship." Here I am with Kelontae prior to the concert.

Below, left, is O'Brien with Diana at a family gathering, and in Durham, North Carolina receiving a Duke University Medical Center scholarship from the 100 Men in Black Male Chorus.



### HONORING OUR ELDER

At our family reunion, we honored one of our elders, Ms. Mildred McClain with flowers and her earthly crown/tiara. Here she is with Faye, Kim, Kimberly, Tammy, and Diana.



### KEYNOTE SPEAKER

As a 44-year employee at Sewanee, my longtime friend, Shirley Taylor was invited to be a keynote speaker at an event celebrating 50 years of women at Sewanee. Shirley brought down the house with her inspiring words.



### UNLIKELY ENCOUNTER

I was on my way to Wrightsville Beach with a friend who wanted to stop at a furniture store. We ran into Kenny, Laura, and Jackson Fishler, my longtime NC friends, who also were shopping at the same store.

# Marichal Owns a Baseball Team



This summer, I sponsored the Sewanee Little League Baseball Team. Here I am with the coaches and the members of the team.

Below, I checked off an item from my bucket list. Thanks to longtime friend, Skip Tappy and the hospitality of his family, I went to Charlotte to partake of the NBA All-Star Weekend. It was an incredible experience.

I also was able to see a few of my niece's softball games. She's quite an athlete and a fierce competitor. Her team won the championship this summer, and it was exciting to watch them take home the trophy.



# AND THE WINNER OF THE UGLY SWEATSHIRT CONTEST IS:

**W. MARICHAL GENTRY**

