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## Foundation Honors Warner and Kay Alford with Scholarship

**Former athletics, alumni director continues to attract private funding for alma mater**

SEPTEMBER 5, 2013 BY TINA HAHN



Kay and Warner Alford are pictured during their college days in 1960 and now as longtime contributors to the life of Ole Miss. The University of Mississippi Foundation Board has established a scholarship endowment in their names, and alumni and friends are encouraged to contribute. The endowment's annual income will support Ole Miss Opportunity, which assists students with financial need. Photo by: Jay Leviton - Atlanta

OXFORD, Miss – A full-page photo in a September 1960 issue of Sports Illustrated – accompanying an article on the University of Mississippi and its upcoming football season – captured a beautiful Kay Swayze and the handsome Warner Alford walking hand-in-hand as students. It turned out to be a magical year, as Alford co-captained that SEC and national championship football team.

The couple went on to marry, raise a family and weave their lives into the tapestry of Ole Miss. Alford served in two high-profile leadership positions at his alma mater: athletics director and executive director of alumni affairs. He continues to propel the university forward by

helping attract private gifts for academic programs and scholarships, with wife Kay sharing his commitment.

To honor the Alford's longtime service and lasting contributions, the University of Mississippi Foundation has created the Warner and Kay Alford Ole Miss Opportunity Endowment with a \$50,000 gift and invites alumni and friends to help build the fund. Annual income from the endowment will provide Ole Miss Opportunity scholarships to academically deserving students from lower income families in Mississippi.

Chancellor Dan Jones said the Alford's have opened many doors for the university.

"Warner and Kay Alford have made it their life's work to help strengthen the University of Mississippi through academic, athletics and alumni programs," Jones said. "We are deeply grateful that these two extraordinary individuals have chosen to invest so much of their time, talents and energy into Ole Miss. Just as this scholarship endowment will honor them in perpetuity, the impact of the Alford's contributions will be felt for generations."

Chancellor Emeritus Robert Khayat, who was Alford's college roommate and teammate for four years as well as friend of more than five decades, echoed that sentiment.

"Kay and Warner are in a group of Ole Miss people who are inseparable from the University of Mississippi," he said. "One of the most challenging jobs on campus is serving as athletics director because athletics is the most emotionally charged activity associated with the university. While Warner was serving as athletics director and then later as the alumni affairs director, he and Kay constantly built relationships to keep alumni and friends engaged with their alma mater and graciously opened their home on many occasions. Their friendship has been life-enriching."

Kay Alford grew up in the Oxford community with her father, the iconic Tom Swayze, as head baseball coach and football recruiter. Warner Alford hailed from McComb, playing football for the McComb High School Tigers and planning to continue his collegiate career at Louisiana State University. Swayze persuaded the young man to choose Ole Miss instead. On Alford's first Sunday in Oxford, the Swayze family hosted Alford, Khayat and another player, the late Ken Kirk, for lunch.

"I remember turning to Robert and saying, 'If I had known Coach Swayze had a daughter, I would have committed to Ole Miss earlier,'" Alford said, smiling. "The only time I could see Kay was in church on Sundays because she was a high school senior. Finally, in the spring of my freshman year, I got up the courage to ask her out.

"Ole Miss is home – some of our best memories are here. We have very emotional ties to this

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#### Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children's play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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#### Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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#### Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith's Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith's enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith's 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school's first African-American student.

university. We've always truly felt that our friends and colleagues are family. Being here has never been a 'job.' It is something we dearly love. We are overwhelmed and deeply honored by this scholarship."

Kay Alford said she is pleased the scholarship will give young people the opportunity to enroll at Ole Miss. "I hope that they will take advantage of all the opportunities here. They will reap the results of this experience the rest of their lives, and they will be attaching themselves to a great group of people. It's a wonderful feeling to gather into the fold of Ole Miss. This is a great university whose continued excellence has been stunning."

David McCormick of Pascagoula, an attorney with Cumbest Cumbest Hunter & McCormick PA, is familiar with the Alford's influence.

"As a fan of Ole Miss football, I have known of Warner Alford's contributions to the Ole Miss family since grade school, but my wife, Susan, and I really got to 'know' Warner and Kay when we served as president of the national Ole Miss Alumni Association," he said. "Susan and I can truly attest to the character and generosity of Warner and his family not only to Ole Miss but also the Oxford community."

Jon Turner of Jackson, a partner in the accounting firm BKD LLP, has collaborated with Alford for decades – first when Turner was a student and then when he and other young alums formed the Rebel Club of Jackson, and Warner was the athletics director. Their work together continued.

"The year I served as national alumni president was Warner's first year as executive director of alumni affairs, and we worked together on the Ole Miss First scholarship initiative and The Inn at Ole Miss building campaign," Turner said. "The alumni director role was a great fit for Warner and Ole Miss. "Warner loves people, and he knows almost everybody in the Ole Miss family. His leadership and relationship-building skills are the reason many private contributions have made their way to Oxford.

Dr. Chance Laws of Columbus, a physician who also served as president of the national Ole Miss Alumni Association, recalls the high points of working with Alford. "When we worked together, it took forever to walk across campus with him, as he had to stop and talk with genuine interest to everyone we saw. He could have taught Dale Carnegie much about people skills."

Alford's experience at Ole Miss was marked early by earning three letters as a guard on the football team from 1958 to 1960. He received undergraduate and graduate degrees in business, while Kay Alford pursued a liberal arts degree. They married in 1961 and joined the Alford family retail business in McComb.

They returned to Ole Miss for Warner to serve as a graduate assistant under Coach John Vaught. A 1966 move took them to Laurel, where he coached at R.H. Watkins High School before becoming the defensive coach a year later at Davidson College. He served as assistant coach and linebacker coach of Georgia Tech from 1968 through 1970, when the team won the Sun Bowl.

Alford returned to Ole Miss in 1971 as the defensive line coach of Coach Billy Kinard's staff. His leadership as athletics director from 1978 through 1994 contributed to Ole Miss' tremendous growth in facilities and private funding, an increased emphasis on the graduation rate of student-athletes and the expansion of varsity sports from eight to 15. Alford was inducted into the M-Club Alumni Hall of Fame in 1999 and the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame in 2003.

After a few years pursuing other interests, Alford returned to Ole Miss and held positions with the UM Foundation, Lott Leadership Institute and Ole Miss First, before being tapped to serve as executive director of alumni affairs. His leadership from 2004 through 2008 provided oversight for the \$21-million The Inn at Ole Miss. He continues as a consultant with the UM Foundation and University Development.

The Alford's are the parents of three grown children, all of Oxford and all Ole Miss graduates: Swayze (Melinda) Alford, Phyllis (Darrell) Daniels, and John (Michelle) Alford III. They enjoy their seven grandchildren: Lilli and Grace Alford; Grant, Clayton and John Swayze Daniels; and John Warner IV and Jude Alford.

Anyone interested in making a gift to the Warner and Kay Alford Ole Miss Opportunity Endowment can send a check with the fund noted in the memo line to the University of Mississippi Foundation, P.O. Box 249, University, MS 38677; contact Debbie Vaughn at 662-915-1687 or [dvaughn@olemiss.edu](mailto:dvaughn@olemiss.edu); or visit <http://www.umfoundation.com/makeagift>.

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"James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier," a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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