

Graduates

3rd in the Keepsakes series, originally published May 17, 2006.

A blast from the past...

With May being graduation month, it's time to take a look at the graduates of K-State! The college opened in 1863 with 52 students, 26 men and 26 women, followed by the first graduating class in 1867 when 5 students, three women and two men, earned degrees. After spring commencement 2006, approximately 191,000 students will have graduated from K-State!

Did you know? The first:

- to receive a PhD, Hugh S. Carroll in 1932 (chemistry)
- black male graduate, George Washington Owens (1899)
- first woman, [Minnie Howell](#) (1901)
- to become a college president, [Ernest F. Nichols](#) (1888), Dartmouth College in 1909
- elected to the U. S. Congress, Rollin R. Rees (1885)
- child of a graduate to receive a K-State degree, May H. Bowen (1896), whose mother, Emma Haines, was a member of the first class, 1867
- first death among the alumni, George L. Platt (1878), who died the same year he graduated!

In the last 143 years, countless graduates have made significant contributions to their respective fields, a few are recognized below (sorry if your favorite isn't listed, this is a random sample and a "K-Stater" must have received a degree to be included!).

Government. Current U.S. Senators from Kansas, Pat Roberts ('58) and Sam Brownback ('79).

Entertainment. [Jerry Wexler](#) ('46), co-owner of Atlantic Records in the 1950s who coined the phrase "rhythm and blues"; [Gordon Jump](#) ('59), actor; Velina Houston ('79) playwright & screenwriter.

Education. [Milton S. Eisenhower](#) ('24), first native Kansan and alumnus to serve as K-State president (1943-1950); [John Slaughter](#) ('56), president of Occidental College, 1988-1999.

Military. Richard Myers ('65), former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Journalism. Clementine Paddleford ('21), food editor; [Pete Souza](#) ('79), White House photographer for Ronald Reagan.

Business. [Paul C. Fisher](#) ('39), Fisher Pen Co. and inventor of space pen for NASA; Neil Vander Dussen ('55), retired president of SONY.

Athletics. Olympians in track include Thane Baker ('53) and Steve Fritz ('93); baseball, [Earl Woods](#) ('56), first black player in Big Seven Conference (now Big 12) and father of Tiger Woods; professional football, Veryl Switzer ('54), [Steve Grogan](#) ('75), Gary Spani ('78), and numerous others

from the Bill Snyder era; professional basketball, [Bob Boozer](#) ('59), [Mitch Richmond](#) ('88), and [Kendra Wecker](#) ('05); professional golf, [Jim Colbert](#) ('64); and current Big 12 Conference Commissioner, Kevin Weiberg ('78).