



Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye

Mother Millsaps never asks too much of her children when they leave. Maybe a visit every now and then or a few dewy-eyed mentions of her name. Really, she wants what any mother wants—for her children to go out into the world and make her proud. Our Mother Millsaps gets her fair share of reasons to brag, her children leaving to become everything from bishops to Hollywood big shots. We all recall what she meant to us, how she looked and felt when we would tread upon her campus. Whether we stayed under her tall oaks for years or left after a few short months, the smell of fresh-cut grass, the sound of enlightened conversation, wafts us back to the days we spent with our Mother Millsaps.

Kit Carson was here when her oaks were a little bit smaller and the Bell Tower didn't exist. In its place was his dorm, Founders Hall. He'd walk the dorm's floors performing magic tricks; for 50 cents, he could make your coins disappear forever. His quiet demeanor and playful entertainment were welcomed by his friends on the hall, his fellow V-12 members. The Navy V-12 program was designed to give off-candidates preliminary training during World War II.

On Friday and Saturday nights, they would meet on the roof of the old Heidelberg Hotel to hear Kit play the drums with the Millsaps Swing Band. Underneath the warm, Southern night skies, folks were able to forget their troubles for a while and just listen to Kit Carson play.

The V-12ers stayed around for only the last six months of the year, just long enough to feel the real heat of a Mississippi summer. In January of 1944, they said goodbye to Mother Millsaps and went their separate ways. Some left for their naval assignments to be pilots; some, like Kit, went on to the sea. Kit made it through the war, even after his boat, the *Pennsylvania*, was torpedoed. Somewhere along the line, Kit docked in Hollywood and changed his name to Johnny. He went on to host *The Tonight Show* and become one of the most famous television personalities of our time.

Guess all that fame kept *Johnny* Carson pretty busy, for he never could find the time to come back to visit Millsaps. But that's just fine with her—because *Kit* Carson made her plenty proud. You could almost feel her tall oak branches sink a little when he passed away this January. Mother Millsaps knew that Kit held a little piece of this sweet, Southern lady in his heart, just like every one of us who leaves this place.

—B. D.