Alumnus looks back at Rider University’s football era

By Laura Sass
Executive Editor

In a time when the world was recovering from war, an era in Rider’s history was just beginning. That era began in 1946 with the restoration of the football team and ended in 1951 with its dismantlement.

Although dubbed “the football era,” it was not only a time in which Rider had a successful football team; it was also a time in which Rider University was Rider College.

“Classes were held in a four-story building in Trenton,” Robert W. Kendall, a graduate of the class of 1951, recounted. “There wasn’t the kind of campus that you have today.” Kendall, a past president and current active member of the Alumni Association, came to Rider College in 1947 after spending two years in military service.

“After my two years in the navy, I worked for about a year. But I realized I wanted to do something more,” he said. “I didn’t want to do odd jobs for the rest of my life, so I spoke to some people at Rider and took some tests. It was recommended that I go into accounting because I did very well in math.”

Kendall ended up majoring in accounting with a minor in business. He studied constantly.

“I had to work very hard at it,” Kendall admitted. “It was a difficult subject.

“Another friend and I used to go over to my house at night and study. We would make pot after pot of coffee and stay up half the night trying to figure out our accounting problems.”

The GI bill, which passed in 1944, financed education and training for World War II veterans who served over 90 days after Sept. 16, 1940 and who were dismissed with anything other than a dishonorable discharge. It also made money available for residence.

Many people attending colleges used that to finance their educations, including Kendall.

It paid for his college education as well as giving him an allowance of $75 a week. He did not need to take advantage of the living expenses because he lived at home.

“I didn’t get that atmosphere of living on campus,” Kendall said. “I was involved in the bowling club and the Newman club, which was a Catholic organization on campus. I just didn’t have the time to devote to much else besides studying.”

Although Kendall did not consider himself too involved while he attended Rider, that all changed a few years later.

“I attended my tenth reunion,” he said. “I had so much fun that I started doing volunteer work for the Trenton Rider club, which was an organization that focused on promoting relations between alumni and students. It eventually got abolished because the Alumni Association was trying to accomplish the same goal. So I continued my volunteer work in that organization.”

The Alumni organization is responsible for many events that take place on campus, including the recent Homecoming festivities.

“I’ve done things like stuffing envelopes, calling alumni and fundraising,” said Kendall. “I’ll do whatever needs to be done.”

This past weekend the University celebrated its homecoming weekend, at which the class of 1952 marked its 50-year reunion. The theme was aptly titled “The Football Era at Rider University.”

“The football team had no gym and no field,” Kendall said. “They used to go to the local high schools to practice, and there was no specific home field.”

Kendall served on the Homecoming committee this year and helped to plan many of the events that took place last weekend. He enjoys keeping the connection to his past strong.

“From my experience you just have to work day by day and keep plowing. A lot of times you get setbacks, but you can’t let it stop you. In retrospect, many of the things I thought were problems were not,” Kendall said. “I think that we connected to our past strong.”

Robert W. Kendall, class of 1951, in his senior graduation photo. The alumnus recounted a time in Rider’s history, before the days of University status, during a time when America was bouncing back from World War II and the College actually did have a football team.

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