



Education Support

Rangerettes Reunite

These footloose five get their kicks from staying in touch.

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When Kilgore (Texas) College freshmen Terry Prater, Sharon Bales, Bette Bruce Burke, Pamela Hawkins, and Barbara Kirby first met in 1961, the pressure was on. All were vying to be one of 66 *Kilgore Rangerettes*, who were known worldwide for their high kicks and precision routines during football halftime shows. Their competition was fierce: The *Rangerettes* were--and still are--the *Rockettes* of college dance-and-drill teams.

"In the chaos of trying to remember the routines, trying to look good, and just plain trying to stay alive without being on home turf, we somehow seemed to find each other and bond," recalls Dallas native Pamela Hawkins McClure, one of those who made the cut. "We hit it off and became fast and faithful friends. We definitely were all for one and one for all--through thick and thin."

But like so many college friends, they lost touch with each other. In 1987, it was time for that to change. Bette and Terry arranged for the fivesome to gather at a Dallas hotel for a weekend retreat. Pamela was nervous. "Imagine not having seen your college chums for 24 years," she says. The thought of having a reunion was a little unsettling. Would the chemistry we all had still be there? Would we still have anything to talk about? Should I even go? Why ruin a memory from the past?"

But she, like the others, took that "through thick and thin" leap; soon, it was show time. First came Bette Bruce Burke MacKellar from Oklahoma City, and Terry Prater Curtics from Sapulpa, Oklahoma. Then came Pamela, all the way from Brussels, Belgium (where she lived for several years before returning to Dallas).

"I plunked my suitcase down at the front door and carefully arranged my Groucho Marx disguise," Pamela recalls. "I wanted to see if they knew who I was. They guessed it--hands down." Laughter ensued while the other two arrived and joined in: Barbara Kirby Hauser from St. Louis and Sharon Bales Ward from Fort Worth.

"We were all astonished that we could just pick up where we left off," Pamela says. "Even after all these years, marriage, children, and busy life-styles, we could just be

ourselves with each other--no acts, no facades." They recalled campus and dormitory life experiences, *Rangerettes* dance moves, travel and performances, and they even sang along to their favorite song, "Moon River." They called it their "marathon chitchat." "Somehow we had weathered the late 1960s and 1970s to raise 17 good citizens," Pamela says.

Now, more than 10 years and 10 fun-filled weekends later, The group is closer than ever and still kicking. Most of their reunions are in Dallas, though they have gathered as far away as London. They plan to meet this month in Kilgore for the annual *Rangerette* Revels show. "This reunion ought to be especially interesting," Terry says. "Being on campus always brings back a lot of fun memories. The campus is pretty small, so everyone gets to be like family. We sure did.

