

(BSEd '55), Crawford, June 4. **Ralph Brittain Jr.** (BBA '57), Macon, May 31. **Beatrice Wood Hendricks** (BSEd '57), Commerce, May 18. **Jacob Howard Jr.** (BSEd '58), Augusta, May 10. **Robert W. Whiteway** (DVM '59), Decatur, May 28.

### 1960s

**Egie Hobbs** (BSEd '60), Waycross, Nov. 29, 2002. **Kenneth Williams** (BSCHE '60), Atlanta, June 3. **S. Lee Owens** (BBA '62, MBA '63, PhD '68), Cookeville, Tenn., Dec. 6, 2002. **Bobby Rurk** (BSEd '62), Bahama, N.C., May 16. **Charles Baker** (ABJ '64, MFA '66), Forest Park, April 25. **Harry Cunningham** (BSA '64), Cordele, May 27. **Charles Usry** (BSA '64), Smithville, June 6. **Evelyn Mayfield House** (MEd '65), Decatur, April 12. **Harold Holland** (ABJ '67), Winston, May 23. **Robert Shepherd** (AB '68), Monticello, Fla., Jan. 3. **Bonnie Carnes Dreyfuss** (AB '69), Monticello, May 16. **Barry H. Twilley** (BSPh '69), Tiger, April 30.

### 1970s

**William Forbus Jr.** (MS '70), Athens, May 22. **Richard Johnson** (EdS '70, EdD '79), Lawrenceville, April 23. **Frances Wheeler McBrayer** (AB '70), Gainesville, May 5. **George Sessions** (MS '70, PhD '73), Silver Spring, Md., May 24. **James Schaefer** (BBA '71), Fort Lauderdale, Fla., June 10. **Fornadia Cook** (EdS '71), Dalton, Nov. 2, 2002. **John Battle** (AB '72, JD '75), Savannah, June 1. **Josiah T. Kolluck III** (BSFR '73), Gainesville, June 14. **Judith Northcutt Giles** (MSW '74), Canon, May 7. **Rebecca Brooks Freeman** (AB '76), Atlanta, April 3.

### 1980s

**Rayford Dykes** (AB '80), Midway, June 8. **James Tucker** (AB '81), Saint Petersburg, Fla., July 31, 2002. **Stephen Floyd** (PhD '83), Brownsboro, Ala., May 14. **Allen Heath** (BSA '83, DVM '87), Auburn, Ala., March 30. **George W. Johnson** (AB '84), Fayetteville, April 27. **Jane Carl-Yates** (MSW '86), Marietta, Jan. 5. **Samuel Palmer III** (M '86), Mobile, Ala., May 25. **Joel Pinion** (BSW '88, MSW '93), Villa Rica, May 31. **Melissa Karen Maxwell** (MEd '89), Lavonia, May 20. **Carl Walters II** (BBA '89), Ocilla, May 18.

### 1990s

**Stuart Kennedy** (BBA '90), Atlanta, June 4. **Spencer Jones** (AB '93), Jonesboro, May 3. **Freddie Barnett** (AB '98), Athens, June 16.

### Students

**Robert Deavers**, Marietta, July 1. **Jennifer Gryzinski**, Lilburn, Aug. 21. **Richard Harris**, Buckhead, Oct. 1. **Thomas O'Rourke Jr.**, Alpharetta, Aug. 21. **Angela Christine White** (AB '99, MA '01), Danielsville, Sept. 18. **Marceline Wray**, Doraville, June 8.

## ALUMNI PROFILE

# Say cheese straws!

**Cathy Cunningham Hays' (ABJ '76) contribution to gourmet food aisles is 25 tons of cheese snacks per day**

by Tracy Coley Curlee (ABJ '90)

The idea occurred to Cathy Cunningham Hays as she was unwinding from another long day as a media salesperson in Atlanta. She had just sat down to pay some Christmas bills—glass of wine in one hand, cheese biscuit in the other—when the light bulb went on.

"My eyes shifted to the ingredients on a box of cheese biscuits," says Hays (ABJ '76). "I thought, *These aren't that good. My mom makes cheese straws far better than these! In fact, I could make cheese straws better than these!*"

Nine years later, Geraldine's Bodacious Food Company (named after Hays' mother) grosses \$3 million a year, producing 25 tons of cheese straws (8,000 packages) a day. Which is not to say that the road to success has been entirely smooth. After testing her product on friends and family, Hays quit her job of 18 years to go full-time in the cheese straw business. At the time—this was June of '95—there were only four other cheese straw/biscuit companies in the country. As demand outstripped what she could produce in her home kitchen, Hays hired a local baker and began shipping all over the U.S.

"Are we ever going to see a profit?" her husband asked.

"Probably not," she said.

Realizing she needed to be more aggressive on the marketing end, Hays pushed her product at food shows sponsored by grocery chains. In February 1998, a broker for Kroger approached her, looking for a cheese straws manufacturer to help them begin a new line of foods for their deli section. Kroger chose to sell Geraldine's Bodacious Cheese Straws over other samples, then asked the bombshell question: "Can you have the first shipment ready by September?"

Hays had no production facility and no money to speak of. "Fear was my greatest motivator in all this," she says. "Fear that I would have to go back to work for someone else kept me going."

Hays was turned down by 18 banks before finally convincing a lender she could make a go at it. Husband Dave came onboard as vice president and director of marketing, and the family moved from Dunwoody to Jasper, 90 minutes north of Atlanta, to be near the production facility. This was quite a culture shock for the couple's twins, who were 10 at the time. Jasper has no shopping malls, movie theaters, or amusement parks . . . just a main street and country roads.

The family is now well adjusted to small-town life, and Geraldine's Bodacious Cheese Straws is looking to expand its production facility a second time to accommodate six new product lines, including new dessert flavors.

"You better recognize and embrace luck when it comes your way," says Hays, "because it's the only avenue to offset your mistakes. Couple that with a dream, desire, and determination, and you can accomplish anything you want."

Tracy Coley Curlee (ABJ '90) is an editor for UGA Publications.



SPECIAL  
Three generations of Hays women—mother Geraldine, Cathy, and daughter Lindsey—help with the business.

