Myron G. Sandifer Jr.: 1943 valedictorian and student body president at Davidson College

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Almost 60 years ago, I was a freshman at Davidson College in North Carolina. Occasionally, I would go to the college library but would procrastinate by perusing a list of the annual valedictorians and presidents of the student body. These lists were located on a wooden plaque next to the door of the library. The names each year were different—except in 1943, when Myron G. Sandifer Jr. filled both positions. My mother later told me that Myron was a cousin on my father's side and that my father was an usher at his father's wedding in Chester, South Carolina, which was 7 miles from Myron's home in Lowrys, South Carolina. (I also found that his father, Myron Sandifer Sr., was a pallbearer at my grandfather's funeral in Chester.) A few years later I was a senior at my social fraternity, Kappa Alpha, and was briefly introduced to Myron Sandifer Jr., who was there for his 15th reunion at Davidson and was a physician at the University of North Carolina after graduating from Harvard Medical School.

For the next 56 years, I did not think about Myron until I started remembering his name, thinking of Davidson College. From the Davidson archivist, Jan Blodgett, I received his information and was told that Davidson did not realize that he was the only alumnus simultaneously valedictorian and student body president. I also received information on Sandifer from my cousin Leila Welch from Birmingham and my cousin Bill Marion, an attorney from Chester, South Carolina. Finally, Dr. Myron G. Sandifer Jr.'s son, Myron "Mike" G. Sandifer III from Washington, DC, was significantly helpful in adding numerous stories of his father and their visits in Chester and Lowrys, SC, when he was a teenager. When I talked to Mike about his father's receiving both honors in 1943, he said that his father was very humble and didn't boast about it to the rest of the family. Mike said that the reason his father was so brilliant was that his mother had urged him to read at age 3, especially the book *King Arthur and the Round Table*.

Myron Jr. grew up in the small hamlet of Lowrys (population of about 100), which was 7 miles northwest of Chester, on the borderline between Chester and York counties. His school had only two rooms through the seventh grade, after which he attended Chester High School. In Chester, one of his closest friends was George Gregory Jr. (1921–2001), born in McConnells, SC, who was in the class of 1939 at Chester High

Table. Key events in the life of Myron Guy Sandifer Jr., MD

Event	Location/description	Date
Birth	Lowrys, SC	1922
Education	Chester High School, Chester, SC (president of class, sophomore, junior, and senior)	Graduated 1939
	BS: Davidson College	1943
	MD: Harvard Medical School	1947
Residency	Medicine: Massachusetts General Hospital	1947–1949
	Psychiatry: Yale University Medical School	1949–1950
Service	US Navy	1950–1952
Fellowship	Psychiatry: Beth Israel Hospital, Boston; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge	1952–1955
Teaching appointments	University of North Carolina School of Medicine: Associate professor	1955–1965
	Columbia University: Clinical professor	1965–1966
	University of Kentucky:	
	Professor of psychiatry	1966–1968
	Acting chairman	1968–1969
	Associate dean for academic affairs	1969–1975
	Professor of family practice	1974
Certification	American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology	1954
	American Board of Internal Medicine	1974
Honors	Outstanding junior cadet, ROTC battalion	
	Davidson College: Phi Beta Kappa, Omicron Delta Kappa, valedictorian, president of student body, president of social fraternity (Kappa Alpha), permanent class president	
	Harvard Medical School: senior class president, permanent class president	
Book	<i>Practical Manual of Psychiatric Consultation</i>	1980
Death	Age 81	Sep 2003

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Figure. Myron Sandifer Jr. Photo courtesy of Davidson College Archives.

School. George was also president of the student body as an undergraduate and law student at the University of South Carolina. After working as a lawyer and judge in Chester, George became chief justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court. Despite his personal disability of polio in childhood, Justice Gregory was an avid sports enthusiast and had near-perfect attendance

at USC football and basketball games. He and Myron played golf and together won the horseshoes championship of Chester County! George and Myron were great friends, and both had outstanding careers. Mike spent many hours in his teens visiting the families of the Gregorys and also other families in Chester, Lowrys, and McConnells, including the Wilsons, Guys, Darbys, Loves, and Williams.

Myron's older brother, Dr. S. Hope Sandifer, was a graduate of The Citadel and the Medical College of South Carolina. He practiced cardiology and was a professor at the medical college in Charleston, spending years in research. Myron's maternal grandfather was Rev. Samuel Rainey Hope (1859–1943), who graduated from Davidson College in 1882 and also from Princeton University in theology and was a missionary in Japan for 15 years.

Myron Jr. loved Davidson College and had several friends and colleagues there: Sam Spencer (who graduated in 1940 as student body president and salutatorian and was later president of Davidson College), C. Shaw Smith (who was in charge of the union and student activities), and Chalmers Davidson (who was from Chester and was an author, historian, professor, and chief librarian at Davidson).

Mike sent two letters from 1942 from Davidson College, one written by a freshman from Chester, Heyward McDonald, to his high school math teacher, Maud Bigham, describing Myron Jr. as a "Chester County boy who's made good in a big way. . . . He's never too busy to talk to you for 2 or 3 minutes and he's a wonderful influence." The second letter was penned by Myron Jr. to Miss Bigham in March 1942 to thank her for her letter, commenting that he would try to visit her over spring vacation.

During World War II, Myron Jr. was deferred at Davidson by achieving a research fellowship for his medical education and residency. He later served in the US Navy in the Korean War from 1950 to 1952, especially working on "post-traumatic stress disorder." Mike pointed out that his father was a good teacher in medicine and was an expert on schizophrenia, respected by all of his colleagues and patients. He was certainly an outstanding man and provided great service in his field. He was beloved by all and was a born leader.