Six distinguished communicators were inducted into The Grady Fellowship in a tribute ceremony on Thursday evening, Nov. 19, at the Athens Classic Center.

The 2009 class of Grady Fellows included Furman Bisher, Atlanta; Claude Felton, Athens; Brenda Hampton, Los Angeles; Ray Jenkins, Baltimore, Md.; Gordon Smith, New York City; and Ruth Estes Trager, Atlanta. The six were chosen for their influence, achievements and service to the media professions.

Grady College Dean E. Culpepper Clark served as co-host of the evening along with Tim Mapes (ABJ ’86), outgoing chair of the Grady Board of Trust, the college’s advisory board. Swann Seiler (ABJ ’78), new chair of the Grady Board of Trust, offered an official welcome to the gathering. More than 180 friends of the college attended the tribute event.

Furman Bisher is a recently retired sports columnist for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, where he once served as sports editor, and is a columnist for The Sporting News. Bisher has written for Sports Illustrated, The Saturday Evening Post, and many other national publications. After 59 years at the AJC, his final column was published on Oct. 11, 2009, less than one month before his 91st birthday. Bisher has covered every Kentucky Derby since 1950, and every Super Bowl but the first. He also held seniority for many years over the hundreds of golf reporters and other sports journalists who descend on Augusta each April for The Masters Tournament. Bisher was president of the National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association from 1974-76 and president of the Football Writers Association of America from 1959-60.
Claude Felton (ABJ ’70, MA ’71) has held positions in the University of Georgia’s Athletic Association since 1979, including associate athletic director and sports communications director, a position he has held since July 2004. During his career, he has served as media coordinator for 18 NCAA national championship events and was the host sports information director for the 1977 NCAA Final Four basketball tournament in Atlanta. He served on the press liaison staff for the U.S. Olympic Committee at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles and was the press venue chief for soccer at the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta. In 2008, he was awarded the Bert McGrane Award from the Football Writers Association of America.

Brenda Hampton (ABJ ’73) is creator and currently writer and executive producer of the highly rated and widely-watched ABC teen drama series, *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*. Unable to attend the Tribute, Hampton sent a videotaped acceptance from the set of her hit series. She was also creator, writer and executive producer of *7th Heaven*, the longest running family drama in TV history. She has enjoyed sustained success since moving to Los Angeles in the early 1980s with writer, editor and producer credits in shows such as *Sister Kate, Baghdad Café, Lenny, Blossom, Daddy’s Girls and Mad About You*. Hampton was also co-creator, writer and executive producer of the high profile Showtime series, *Fat Actress*, starring Kirstie Alley. She is the 2003 recipient of the Henry W. Grady Mid-Career Alumnus Award.

Ray Jenkins (ABJ ’51) began his career in journalism in 1951 as a reporter for *The Columbus Ledger*. In 1954, he was one of two reporters who covered the Phenix City, Ala., upheaval, coverage for which the newspaper received a Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. Between 1959 and 1979 he served as city editor, managing editor, executive editor and vice-president of the Montgomery (Ala.) *Advertiser-Journal*. Jenkins was special assistant for press affairs to President Jimmy Carter, 1979-81. After 10 years as editorial page editor of *The Evening Sun* in Baltimore, he retired from daily journalism in 1992. He has written extensively on Southern politics and culture for *The New York Times* and other publications,
and is the author of *Blind Vengeance*, a book about the assassination of a federal judge in Alabama in 1989.

**Gordon Smith** (ABJ ’75, JD ’78) is executive director and chief operating officer of the United States Tennis Association (USTA). In this position, Smith leads USTA’s effort to promote and develop the growth of tennis, and oversees USTA operations. He has long been connected to tennis as both a player and a volunteer, playing competitively at UGA and captaining a team that swept four straight Southeastern Conference titles from 1971 through 1975. After attending law school at UGA, he clerked with the federal judiciary before joining the Atlanta-based international law firm of King and Spalding, where he was a senior partner in the 800-lawyer firm. Smith is a member of the American College of Trial Lawyers and has been listed in the publication *The Best Lawyers in America* for many years.

**Ruth Estes Trager** (ABJ ’47) pioneered the role of women executives in broadcast programming and sales promotion, first with Atlanta’s WAGA Radio, then WAGA-TV. She was also part of the original staff of WLAC-TV in Nashville, Tenn. In 1957, she became a media buyer at the Tucker Wayne & Co. advertising agency where she remained for 21 years. Her next stops were at Pringle Dixon Pringle as vice president, media director, and J. Walter Thompson Atlanta as vice president, associate media director. A mentor to many young women entering advertising, Trager helped shape the parameters of media buying and planning as Atlanta grew to claim its status as a major media market.

"The Grady Fellowship was created in 2008 to recognize individuals whose lives and careers lend measurably to the reputation Grady College enjoys," noted Clark, Grady College dean. "Furman, Claude, Brenda, Ray, Gordon and Ruth inspire students and alumni. We are pleased and honored to receive them into this year's class."
The evening also included a salute to Grady's sports journalism legacy with a panel discussion of "The Status of Sports Journalism in a 24/7 News Cycle." Panelists included Furman Bisher, former sports columnist for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "Mr. College Football" Tony Barnhart (ABJ '76) from CBS Sports, Mark Schlabach (ABJ '96), college football and basketball columnist for ESPN.com, and Charlie McAlexander, former Southeastern Conference play-by-play announcer and assistant to the dean for sports journalism at Grady. The panel was moderated by Conrad Fink, Grady professor of journalism and author of *Sportswriting: The Lively Game*. 