

1981 Recipients of Distinguished Service Medals

GRACE MEWBORN AYCOCK (MSW '69) spent her childhood in a Greene County farm family of nine brothers and sisters. Their horse and buggy rides on a dusty road to a two-room schoolhouse gave her a later appreciation for North Carolina Governor Kerr Scott's statewide rural road paving program, she recalls.

Later, as a student at Snow Hill High School, she entered several essay contests sponsored by the North Carolina Cotton Association and was twice a state finalist. Her experience in orally delivering these essays was valuable training, she remembers, for her extensive civic work and public speaking activities in later life.

After a year at Duke University, she transferred to Women's College—now UNC at Greensboro—where she was her dormitory's house president, served on the YWCA board, and was chosen for the May Court.

With a degree in secretarial administration, she went to work for the National Youth Administration in Raleigh. There she met a co-worker, William Brantley Aycock, who became her husband. Shortly after their marriage, World War II changed their lives temporarily and she became an Army wife, following her husband to various Army posts. Col. Aycock went to Germany as a battalion commander with the 87th Infantry Division, and she remained behind.

At the end of the hostilities, the Aycocks came to Chapel Hill where he enrolled in Law School. They lived in Victory Village with their two children—William, Jr. and Nancy—both of whom attended the University here. Among their neighbors and Bill's fellow law students were some young men who would meet often in later life—William Friday, Terry Sanford, and John Jordan.

When her husband joined the faculty, Grace Aycock adapted well to the role of faculty wife and became deeply involved in community, church, University and public activities. In addition, she earned a master's degree in social work from the University at Chapel Hill in 1969, and has since been a professional counselor with the Family Counseling Service agency in Durham.

When Bill Aycock was named Chancellor of the University in 1957, his was the first family to occupy the chancellor's official residence on Country Club Road. Grace Aycock then assumed the hostess role with charm and poise. She has a deep love and concern for people. Her qualities of efficiency and quiet strength have been such that her contributions have gone frequently unnoticed. As a way of saying "thanks" on behalf of the University and its alumni for her seven years in this official role, the General Alumni Association is proud to present Grace Aycock with its Distinguished Service Medal.