

Mebane Moore Pritchett

"We have tried to take his vision and carry it forward, and that vision has nurtured some magnificent people."

Mebane M. Pritchett said that two years ago, describing his work, as director of the Morehead Foundation, with the beneficence of John Motley Morehead. The vision, of course, was to locate and bring to Chapel Hill young men of academic excellence, leadership, strength of character, and physical vigor—for their benefit and for Carolina's—and to pay their way fully.

It was a nurturing vision: bring into the University the finest young people we can find and let the University offer them guidance, inspiration and a chance at wisdom.

Roy Armstrong carried the vision forward as director until 1972 when Mebane succeeded him. In these intervening 15 years, the Morehead Program has continued its hunt for the finest to bring to Carolina. Now there are women, too. And black students. And students from England, of all places, where the Rhodes Scholarships, on which the Moreheads were modeled, had their beginning.

The nurturing these young people receive here far exceeds anything imaginable to that first class of Moreheads—the class of 1957, Mebane Pritchett among them. The program now gives summer opportunities of the broadest range to these fortunate scholars.

The original vision was John Motley Morehead's. The fruition in the past decade and a half has come under the leadership of Mebane Pritchett. And the work has not gone unnoticed. The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation Inc. has taken him away from us, to begin in Atlanta a new program for nurturing another group of gifted young people, the Coca-Cola Scholars who, beginning in 1988, will receive Morehead-like awards for study at schools around the country.

Coca-Cola will bring to Atlanta a Carolina gentleman. His wife, Elizabeth Bost Pritchett, graduated with him in the class of '57. At Carolina, Mebane distinguished himself with many honors including membership in Phi Beta Kappa.

After earning his degree at Harvard Law School and four years in law practice in New York City, Mebane came home to Carolina as associate director of the Morehead Foundation in 1967.

In that position, and then as director, he sat at the bridge between high school and college, uniquely qualifying him for his greatest outside challenge, chairmanship of the State Board of Education. He assumed that post when C.D. Spangler stepped aside to become President of the UNC system.

Words of praise for the work of Mebane Pritchett from distinguished people have been abundant as we prepare for him to leave. We have chosen to repeat here the thoughts of one young man who came to know Mebane as a member of the Class of '82, J. Eric Elliott, now living in Philadelphia:

The most wonderful tastes, sights and feeling of life at Chapel Hill follow me every day. One of the most pleasant memories is of the extraordinary kindness, genuine concern, and inspiring standards that you at the Morehead Foundation set before me and my fellow students. You will remain the symbol of what I understand Mr. Morehead's goals to have been: searching for the best in people and helping them achieve their best.

For the moments of personal counsel and social good humor you will stay in my warmest thoughts.

I sure hope that, for you and your wife, things go better with Coke. I just know that for Chapel Hill, we've seen the best—and that's been you.

Mebane Pritchett should know that favorite sons are always welcome back home.