

Ralph Nichols Strayhorn, Jr. (B.S. '47, J.D. '50)

“If you could design the ideal alumnus, you’d probably come up with someone a whole lot like Ralph Strayhorn.”

That’s how Ernie Williamson of the Educational Foundation describes his long-time friend and former football teammate. And, indeed, Ralph Nichols Strayhorn, Jr. has devoted much of his adult life to the University, serving as a member and chairman of the Board of Trustees, counselor and immediate Past President of the Educational Foundation, and counselor and a past president of the General Alumni Association. Ralph holds the distinction of having chaired the Search Committee that recommended the selection of Dr. Christopher Fordham as Chancellor and also served on the Search Committees for Carolina’s two most recent football coaches.

This afternoon at three p.m. we invite you to help us celebrate yet another Strayhorn achievement on the Alumni Association’s and the University’s behalf. After years of false starts, construction begins on the \$12 million George Watts Hill Alumni Center, a magnificent new home for all Carolina alumni and friends. And it’s likely this point would not have been reached if Ralph hadn’t taken charge of the fund-raising drive three years ago and steered it to a successful completion.

“You can always count on Ralph Strayhorn to unselfishly and thoughtfully serve his University,” says GAA Executive Director Doug Dibbert. “The Alumni Center is a prime example. It’s been talked about for 30 years, but it was Ralph’s relentless commitment and leadership that were crucial in finally turning this dream into a reality.”

Ralph has also left his mark on North Carolina’s legal profession. After graduating from UNC Law School in 1950, he returned to his hometown of Durham to practice law. He was a founding partner of what became one of Durham’s top law firms. In 1978, he was recruited by Wachovia Corp. as chief corporate counsel, stepping down last year after completing a 10-year commitment. While living in Chapel Hill, he now works in the Raleigh office of Petree, Stockton & Robinson.

Ralph came to Carolina in 1941, an all-star lineman recruited out of Durham High School by “Sunny” Jim Tatum. As a boy, he was a Duke fan, but he overcame this childhood affliction, and has been a loyal Tar Heel ever since. Ralph co-captained the 1946 squad that compiled an 8-2-1 record, losing to Georgia in the Sugar Bowl on a controversial lateral. Carolina fans still maintain: “We wuz robbed.” That was the start of the Justice years at Chapel Hill, but the end of the Strayhorn era.

Fiercely loyal, hardworking, and well respected, Ralph’s solid judgment and impressive achievements make him nearly every organization’s first choice as a key volunteer leader.

As Chancellor Emeritus Chris Fordham recently said, “Ralph Strayhorn is an effective professional person who gets the most out of groups and individuals. One never doubts his commitment. He is an outstanding example of what an alumnus should be. We would be a different institution without him.”