

Roscoe Drake McMillan, Jr. '34

In the earliest days of the 1963 session of the North Carolina General Assembly, R. D. McMillan '34, Democrat of Robeson County, then entering his third term, wrote to long-time General Alumni Association Alumni Secretary J. Maryon "Spike" Saunders '25:

"Thank you for that list of distinguished alumni who are members of the 1963 General Assembly. I just hope that I shall not discredit them or the University."

Standard R. D. McMillan! Not discredit the University! By the time he wrote those words, reflecting a sincere courtly modesty, he had already become a credit to his University through public service as a town commissioner of his home-town Red Springs (1947-53), as mayor of Red Springs (1953-59), and, in the legislature, as a member of the Education and Higher Education Committees.

And just a few short months later, as the infamous Speaker Ban Law sailed to passage in the closing moments of the 1963 General Assembly, R. D. McMillan was the only member to speak against it.

Over the next decade, as his auto and farm machinery dealership prospered (and as he became president of the North Carolina Auto Dealers Association), R. D. McMillan continued to reflect credit to alma mater. He served as chairman of the legislative committees on education and on higher education. The governor appointed him vice-chairman of the 1967-68 state public school study commission. He became a trustee of The University of North Carolina and of Pembroke State, among other educational and charitable institutions. And in 1969, having stepped aside from his position as leading contender for Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives, he was appointed State Purchasing Officer.

Then, at a time when many men begin contemplating their retirements, R. D. McMillan began his most challenging work and his greatest service to The University of North Carolina: in 1973 President William C. Friday '48 appointed him as chief lobbyist for The University of North Carolina System. Thirteen years later, at age 73, he retired, one of the most respected "legislative agents" (in the quaint terminology of the General Statutes) ever to work for the public good—or for private interests—in the halls, committees, chambers, and social affairs of the legislature.

As one observer at the time remarked: "Hats off to R. D. McMillan, Jr., the most skilled of lobbyists and one hell of a fine fellow. He has got the job done for UNC. You can look it up."

His tenure was marked as much by his modesty and gentlemanliness as by his accomplishments. Many years after his initial enrollment at Carolina in 1930, he recalled as one of his fondest campus memories remarks that autumn by President Frank Porter Graham '09, who said to those dew-faced boys, "We are all freshman together."

He has lived his life with that kind of eager modesty. Discredit to the University! No! It is our honor and good fortune to have been associated with him.