

William Brantley Aycock '37 (M.A.)

Bill Aycock came to us after having earned his undergraduate degree at N.C. State University where he was student body president. He received his M.A. in history at Chapel Hill the next year, 1937, and had a brief career as a high school teacher and coach in Greensboro. He returned from World War II in 1945 discharged from the U.S. Army as an honored lieutenant colonel.

Thus it was that he entered law school at Chapel Hill at the age of thirty, graduating in 1948 first in his class and Editor-in-Chief of the *Law Review*.

Judge J. Dickson Phillips Jr. was a law school classmate and friend of Bill's and was Dean of the School of Law at Chapel Hill from 1964–1974. About their student years together, Judge Phillips wrote: "There was about him that indefinable extra gift of personal charm and attractiveness, of sturdy but unpretentious charm, that all too rarely accompanies great ability. Even then you could sense that whatever power might come his way, he was—at odds with the maxim—congenitally incorruptible. . . In a word, some straight arrows are insufferable; this one was a lovable one."

Upon receiving his degree, he was immediately invited to join the law school faculty, which he adorned for just under forty years. In 1966 he was named to a Kenan Professorship.

As a teacher, he was known as fair and available. Many students and former students admit with fondness to calling or appearing at Bill's and Grace's home to discuss the issues of a puzzling case. And he always found time to help.

Another dean of the law school and friend of Bill's, Henry Brandis Jr., said of him, "Anyone attempting to appraise the career of William Brantley Aycock faces a problem which is no less serious for being stated ungrammatically: There are so many of him."

In 1957, less than a decade after joining the faculty, he was chosen to be Chancellor of this University, a post he held with great distinction for seven years. Under his leadership the University grew by an average of five hundred students a year, the Division of Health Affairs was brought to adulthood, and he oversaw with dignity, calm and reason the period of turmoil during the state's Speaker Ban Law, which he fought to have repealed.

Tar Heel sports fans are grateful to Bill Aycock for a hiring decision he made in 1961. He selected Dean Smith as coach of the men's basketball team with instructions to always play fair and by the NCAA rules. This style of sportsmanship is part of the natural character of Coach Smith, who recently said, "Chancellor Aycock is a man whom I continue to respect and admire as one of the finest leaders I have ever known. He was very patient with me and very supportive and has continued to be that way"

In a resolution dated April 26, 1964, the Board of Trustees issued a resolution on the resignation of Bill Aycock as Chancellor. In part it said, "We have been fortunate to have. . . seven years of the whole life and time and mind of William B. Aycock. . . He has earned the right to follow his bent. Much as we shall miss him from his office in Old South, we cannot help but observe that the University makes no higher call than to teach, and has none better to respond than William Brantley Aycock."

For nearly two decades thereafter, he served as an unsurpassed teacher in the law school.

Speaking about education in 1959, he said, "In the troubled world today, education is essential to our survival; ultimately, it is our hope for winning peace for mankind; and finally, it is the means by which we aspire to develop our civilization to its highest reaches."