

Richard Allen Vinroot '63

In one column, list all the ways that a person can be of service to Carolina. In another, list all the ways that Richard Vinroot has been of service to Carolina. They are practically the same list. General Alumni Association Board of Directors. Alumni chapter president. GAA vice president. Board of Visitors. Chancellor's Club. Tar Heel Network. Carolina Fund Friend. Arts and Sciences Friend.

And throw in president of the junior class. President of the senior class. Order of the Golden Fleece. Order of the Grail. Order of the Old Well.

In 1968, Richard was in Vietnam, where he was to earn the Bronze Star. He wrote to Spike Saunders that he would like to bid adieu to "this little land of rain, dust, (and) rice" but that "Uncle Sam has planned for me to spend five more months in the enchanting orient." The special pity in that, to Richard, was that he would not be back to help out with the fifth-year reunion of the Class of '63. "If there is anything I need do—or can do—in spite of my absence and location roughly half way round the world, do let me know."

It's not just Carolina that gets the benefit of Richard Vinroot's devotion and energy. An equal beneficiary is the City of Charlotte. Richard had come to Carolina as a Morehead Scholar from East Mecklenburg High School back in 1959. He returned after college and law school at UNC, and the army duty, to practice law, rising to partnership in the firm of Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson. His service in the community has included stints as director of the Mint Museum and of the YMCA.

But it's through politics and governmental service that Richard has most advanced the Queen City. At age 33, he was appointed campaign manager for a nonpartisan effort to get Charlotteans to approve a \$54 million bond package for uptown development and a host of other projects.

Service of this sort led to his candidacy for the Charlotte City Council, where he championed a regional view of Charlotte's problems and potential. Bringing the best government and most effective services to the people of Charlotte, he stressed, necessarily requires working closely with Charlotte's neighbors, like Gastonia and Monroe in North Carolina and Rock Hill across the line in South Carolina. And he stressed the importance of further developing Charlotte's uptown as the symbolic and economic center of the region. "As a region, we are only secure and strong as long as we keep this part of our city healthy," he said in 1989. The people of Charlotte in overwhelming numbers agreed, making him the largest vote-getter among city council candidates. That was the year *The Charlotte Observer*, in a surprisingly offhanded way, said of Richard that "he claims he can see on the horizon an NFL stadium."

Richard's vision was better than some people's apparently, as the uptown site for the NFL Panthers today moves toward reality, a leap forward in civic pride that had developed under Richard's watch in the city's top job: mayor.

Not so long ago, the Orange County Republican Party invited Mayor Vinroot to be their convention keynote speaker. It was an invitation he couldn't turn down:

"I said, 'you're kidding me. I went to Chapel Hill. Is there a Republican Party in Chapel Hill? I've got to see them.'" And the 6-foot-7 lawyer, who played on Dean Smith's first team at Carolina, added, "Even Coach Smith, who is a dear friend of mine, came to Chapel Hill as a Republican, but I don't think he is one now."

In Charlotte, Mayor Vinroot is a Republican dedicated to serving all the people of Charlotte and improving life in the region. In Chapel Hill, alumnus Vinroot is a dedicated, nonpartisan servant, one who, as his Bell Tower Society membership indicates, "will do anything for the University."