

# McNair honored as American hero

by Mardell Griffin

A standing room only crowd of over 3,500 gathered Jan. 31, in Moore Gymnasium at A&T to pay somber tribute to astronaut and former Aggie Ronald McNair who died along with six others in the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger on Jan. 28.

Dignitaries from across the state and nation paid homage to McNair. The ceremony was highlighted by a telegram from President Reagan and some rousing words by the Reverend Jesse Jackson.

"He was, in the final analysis, an authentic American hero," said A&T Chancellor Edward B. Fort. "... Ron McNair was a believer in the destiny of mankind ... He was a man that commanded the awesome respect of many," Fort said of the 1971 magna cum laude graduate of A&T. "He was all of the 'right stuff.' We shall miss him but never forget him."

Jackson called McNair a "rejected stone" by "larger more expensive universities" because of "color and money." But, he said, "Ron McNair took us to the mountaintop of scientific exploration that we might see beyond the mountaintop that Dr. King stood on." He added, "He was a rejected stone transformed into a cornerstone."

The President's message said: "Nancy and I join in thought and spirit with all those gathered today to pay tribute to the memory of Dr. Ronald McNair. By sharing together our grief and sadness, perhaps we may find the strength to bear our sorrow and courage to renew our hope. Words will never suffice to measure the honor and sacrifice of those we have lost."

A record-setting 68 members of the press, including representatives of two national networks, covered the service, according to Dr. Richard Moore, director of information services at A&T. Two local television stations and one radio station provided live broadcasts.

"This is the most press I've seen on campus in the 18 years I've been here," Moore said.

Camera crews roamed the aisles and shot film footage of the overflow crowd, A&T band, choirs and ROTC members as well as the speakers during the hour-and-a-half memorial. The stage was lined with palms in the rear and on the left of the podium was a red and white flower arrangement at the base of a picture of McNair. The photo showed the astronaut smiling and dressed in his blue flight suit complete with NASA insignia. On the right was a picture of the entire Challenger crew in similar dress with a matching

flower arrangement at the base.

"These seven starcrossed explorers and those who worked with them were fulfilling our destiny," said Governor James E. Martin. Of McNair, he said, "He challenged others to excel as he did" ... He was our consummate challenger."

Congressman Howard Coble said, "Ron McNair was a gallant patriot."

Greensboro Mayor John Forbis read a resolution by the city council. Forbis said McNair "decided to reach into the unknown and challenge the future."

NASA University Affairs Officer and A&T graduate, Dr. Samuel Massenberg called McNair a "true renaissance man who exulted in the exploration of the difficult and the unexplored." He also said, "... there is no progress without risk ... From the ashes of this tragedy will rise triumph."

The strongest audience response was to Dr. Stuart Ahrens, A&T physics professor and director of the student space shuttle program. He recalled speaking to McNair two weeks before the ill-fated Challenger flight. McNair asked Ahrens to send him an A&T pennant and a copy of a student-drawn cartoon depicting the A&T mascot (a bulldog) riding on the outside of the shuttle. The mementoes were aboard Challenger

when it exploded.

Ahrens said McNair had made his dream of space flight part of A&T's dream by organizing the student space shuttle program at the university. "Ron would want us to continue our dream," he said. An A&T developed payload is scheduled to go up on the next shuttle flight. He added, "His name will be engraved on it and his picture enclosed in it. Thus, Ron will have another space shuttle flight." McNair received an undergraduate degree in physics from A&T and received a Ph.D. in physics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He joined NASA as an astronaut candidate in 1978.

The local parade for McNair after his first space flight in 1984 was remembered by Dr. Donald Edwards, retired chairman of A&T's physics department. He noted that McNair had stopped the parade to talk to a group of children and shake their hands. He also quoted McNair from an address he made to a group of his school students. "You can always do a little better than you think you can," he remembered McNair saying.

"Keep alive his memory by accepting his challenge," Edwards said.

Fort presented Edwards and Ahrens with a plaque from the Guilford County commissioners to

be "enshrined on the sight of the space shuttle project." He also announced the formation of a Ron McNair scholarship fund.

Jackson concluded the program with a speech that included references to nuclear war, military use of space, "misplaced trust in machines," the sit-in movement in Greensboro and apartheid. His often-repeated theme was "there is treasure in tragedy."

"When our hearts are broken, our dreams reduced to nightmares, and our days turned to midnights, we don't say, 'Oh, my scientist,' or 'Oh, my computer,' but 'Oh, my God,'" he said. We should learn a lesson from this tragedy about our "misplaced trust in the machines we take for granted," he added.

"Nuclear wars are likely to occur the same way the space shuttle blew up, by human error, computer malfunction or by the wrong signal," he said. Space exploration for "peaceful purposes" should continue but "military use" of space should be stopped. "Lessons learned must not be short-learned but long-lived," he said.

"There are some more Ronald McNairs out there. There are more McNairs all over this building today," he said. "Long live the spirit and legacy of Dr. Ronald McNair."

## Shortage of computers

### Lab has need

by Cassandra Henderson

"There is a big lack of computers in our writing lab," stated Mrs. Elaine Harrigan, the audio-lingual lab director.

Troubled by the growing problem, Harrigan emphasized that there are only 10 computers available to 140 students who are required to take courses involving this facility, "not to mention the other students who use the computers that aren't even registered in one of the courses," she added.

Pointing out that Bennett is one of the few colleges with its own writing lab in communication skills, Harrigan encouraged the students to realize that this is a privilege that shouldn't be taken for granted.

"Bennett College has a good facility that is incorporated in its communication skills curriculum, which offers students the ability to expand their creative skills, the opportunity to train for summer jobs and to be exposed to computers without being a computer science major," she said.

Trying to reach the goal of 10 more computers has been a very difficult process, she added. "Because this is a Title III funded program, we have federal guidelines. When this program was set up, they only had space for 10 computers. Now the students need them, like them and use them. They didn't look long-range when

they set up the program," she said.

Harrigan argues that the 10 extra computers will not only better serve the students, but they will minimize the wear and tear on the present computers and the teachers. "The teachers will be able to come to the lab with their class. They will no longer have to be split up," she said.

Harrigan sees many other advantages to the writing lab. "Students that don't have any experience with computers or typewriters seem to become more motivated. We also see great improvements in creative writing. The computer gives you so much flexibility. It allows you to edit and revise, so you have more time to be creative," she said.

There are disadvantages, she stressed.

"The students seem to procrastinate too much. The lab is only open 18 hours outside of classtime and there are only 10 computers. But if they don't get to a computer, it's a learning experience for them. It teaches them not to wait until the last minute," she said.

Harrigan hopes to have the 10 new computers by fall of this year.

A lab fee may be required to help pay for the computers and to provide diskettes for students. Once the lab fee is paid, students won't have to pay again. No fee has been established.

## Belles uphold the dream

by Venessa McLaughlin

An announcement rang out, "Attention, ladies! Attention, ladies! Bennett College is gathering in the quadrangle to commemorate Dr. King's birthday."

"We will be holding hands and singing to let everyone know that we have not forgotten what Dr. King fought for. We are gathering now. Please come out and participate."

The campus came alive. Students ran outside in nightgowns, housecoats, rollers and house-shoes. About 100 students held hands and sang "We Shall Overcome." They did not care that they were not saying the right words, that half of them were not in tune and that the other half were laughing because of the way they sounded. The only message they were trying to get across was "We did not forget."

The crowd moved to the sidewalk in front of President Isaac H. Miller Jr.'s house. SGA Presi-

dent Evelyn Fulmore told the president, "We just wanted you to know that we remembered." "You've done a good job," stated President Miller as he walked down the sidewalk to join the students.

The crowd sang "Let Freedom Ring," "Happy Birthday To You" and "We Are The World."

"It was outstanding the way the students assembled on their own," said Miller. "This is the spirit of the old Bennett, being on the firing lines and being arrested. This is the true spirit."

His statement was interrupted by a passing wind dressed in dark clothes, a toboggan and a dark trenchcoat. Being in the "spirit" also, he stopped, raised his clenched fist and in a loud voice said, "We will never be free. Ya'll don't know that, but we will never be free. You know why? Because, until we can all come together and be as one, we will never be free." Staggering to the corner, he re-

peated, "We ain't gon' never be free."

"Although nothing was done on Bennett's campus to commemorate Dr. King's birthday, Bennett College was well represented at Trinity A.M.E. Zion Church," stated Miller. "I can assure you, though, the (Black History) committee has already started planning events for next year."

"When the time comes for maturity, Bennett Belles have always come through," said Miller. "It is important that we hang on to the dream. We have to examine ourselves. We have to ask ourselves what is it we must do to make this dream a reality because in Mississippi the dream hasn't even begun. We must go to college to prepare ourselves so that we can take over where people like Dr. King have left off."

Five students were responsible for the gathering at the quadrangle—Mary Dickerson, Audrea Murphy, Janice Smith, Donna Williams and Robin Williams.

## Malone—from page 1

every Wednesday night at 8:15 at the Charter Center. Andrea's season high was 25 points. She led her team in scoring, but her club lost.

If you get a chance, go check out Bennett's best basketball talent.

## House—from page 1

possibility not to allow students to go through life horsing around ... This is your task as a future educator and as a black American," she said.

## Banner reporter lands jobs

Mardell Griffin, a senior who has worked for this paper for three semesters, has been hired as a full-time reporter for The Orange/Alamance Enterprise, located in Mebane, and as a feature writer for Greensboro's The Spectator



Art Show: Walt Davis appears at the Z gallery: Freshman students view artwork with the artist. Students are (l-r) Robin Starks, Talia McCray and Helen Laurence. (photo by Otis Hairston)