

PAID
Permit No. 2
Mars Hill, NC
28754

THE HILLTOP

Volume 62, Issue 5

Mars Hill, North Carolina

Monday, November 21, 1988

Former President Blackwell Dies

by John Campbell
Hilltop Advisor

Dr. Hoyt Blackwell, president of Mars Hill College from 1938 until 1966, died Tuesday at a nursing home in Mars Hill. He was 98. During his 38-year career as a teacher and administrator at the Baptist college, Dr. Blackwell became known to thousands of students, alumni and Baptists throughout the state; his broad, ready smile and a friendly wave became his trademarks. He travelled widely throughout the state, speaking in Baptist churches large and small, representing the college with enthusiasm. He established a reputation as a Greek and Bible scholar, as a college administrator, and as an outstanding fundraiser. When he retired from his presidency in 1966, relinquishing his duties to Dr. Fred Bentley, the current president, Dr. Blackwell prided himself on leaving the institution debt-free. It was noted at the time that if the buildings on campus had been erected during his administration. A high school dropout who only completed his secondary schooling after returning home from combat duty in World War I, Dr. Blackwell also identified himself as a tree farmer. He owned large tracts of land in South Carolina and keenly followed the raising of timber throughout his life. Born Sept. 20, 1890, in Jefferson, near Kershaw, he was one of 11 children in a well-to-do family. After 10th grade, he dropped out of school to become a rural mail carrier. When World War I came along, he joined the Army and was sent to Europe, serving with an artillery regiment in France. He returned to the United States in June, 1919, and completed Mars Hill that fall. There he completed his high school studies and transferred to Wake Forest College to continue his undergraduate studies. He returned to Mars Hill at Easter, 1923, was rebaptized and ordained to the ministry by the Mars Hill Baptist Church. He was graduated from Wake Forest in 1925 with a Bachelor of Arts degree, and continued his studies at C-Chapel Hill and at Southern Seminary in Louisville, KY, receiving a Master of Theology degree from the seminary in 1928. That fall he joined the Mars Hill faculty as a teacher of Greek and Bible. While a member of the Mars Hill faculty, he continued his studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York, the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, and the University of

He was asked in 1935 to return from a leave of absence to assume responsibilities as director of a college enlargement program. His first major undertaking was the raising of funds for a new residence hall.

The trustees unanimously elected Dr. Blackwell the school's 18th president in 1938. He was inaugurated on Founders Day that fall. During 28 years as president he succeeded in expanding the college's physical plant as well as its staff.

Five dormitories; a science building; a cafeteria with bookstore, snack bar, and post office; an auditorium and fine arts building; and the beginnings of a physical education building, swimming pool and stadium were constructed during his administration. Older buildings were renovated and



modernized, the campus beautifully landscaped, the faculty and staff more than doubled, endowment significantly increased, the annual budget expanded from less than \$300,000 to approximately \$1.5 million and the college kept free of indebtedness.

During World War II, Dr. Blackwell served as Madison County chairman of the Third War Bond Sales drive. The goal was \$300,000, \$100,000 from banks and businesses with the remainder coming from sales to individual citizens. Learning that famed aviator Eddie Rickenbacker was to speak in Asheville, he persuaded the flying ace to help him with the bond drive in Madison County. Their teamwork provided the boost for a successful sales campaign. Dr. Blackwell

was later cited by the U.S. Treasury for his leadership in the successful bond drive.

Throughout his career, the scholarly educator enjoyed opportunities to preach. During his college and seminary days, he had pastored small churches in eastern North Carolina, Kentucky and Virginia. Later, after joining the faculty at Mars Hill, he pastored the Piney Mountain Church in northern Buncombe County as well as the Forks of Ivy and Marshall First Baptist.

Early in his tenure as president of the college, he was elected a vice-president of the Baptist State Convention. He probably would have been elevated to the presidency, but convention rules prohibited officials of Baptist institutions from serving as president of the convention.

Under Dr. Blackwell's leadership, the college was integrated in the early 1960s with the admission of Oralene Graves of Asheville. Until then, no blacks had ever been admitted to the college. Seeing Miss Graves' application as an opportunity to make a significant move, Dr. Blackwell called a special meeting of the trustees. Dr. Perry Crouch, then pastor of the First Baptist Church of Asheville, offered a motion that the college adopt a policy of admitting qualified students without regard to race. The adoption of that motion not only opened the door for Miss Graves, now Mrs. Oralene Simmons of Asheville, but to numerous others who have come after her.

Another significant development at the college, the conversion from junior college status to that of a senior college, was instigated under Dr. Blackwell's leadership. That transition occurred during 1962-64. The junior year was added in 1962-63, the senior year in 1963-64, and the first baccalaureate degrees were awarded in May, 1964.

One of Dr. Blackwell's travels away from the campus representing the college led to his marriage. While speaking at the First Baptist Church of Erwin, TN, on Easter 1933, he met Olive Brown. They were married several months later and enjoyed 54 years of marriage together.

In addition to his wife, Dr. Blackwell is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Hannah Appel of Winston-Salem, and two sons, Dr. Albert Blackwell, professor of religion at Furman University, and Dr. Eric Blackwell, professor of medicine at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. Also among the survivors are eight grandchildren.

Keeping in Touch:

National Phonathon and Alumni Office

by Lisa Ramsey
Staff Writer

Mars Hill College's National Phonathon, held October 23 through November 7, was the most successful ever with a total of 3026 pledges and \$93,000...\$18,000 more than has been raised in the past. Ed Hoffmeyer, Director of Alumni Activities, said, "the two benefits the phonathon provides are: 1). it involves the students in fund-raising for the college; and 2). it allows alumni the opportunity to communicate with current students, putting a face to their contribution." One hundred and seventy students--17% of the college's enrollment--participated in the event. Mr. Hoffmeyer said that working in the phonathon gives students a chance to pay the college back for the things it has given them, and it allows them to help with the future of MHC. The location of this year's event was different from those of the past. The phonathon was held in Peterson Conference Center in Blackwell Hall, rather than McConnell Gym, because it has better class facilities. Channel 4 news covered a portion of the event on television. Sixteen phones were placed two to a table and manned by volunteers from the following MHC organizations: Sigma Chi Nu, Gamma Chi Epsilon, Iota Chi Alpha, Delta Kappa Theta, Golden Pride, SGA/Senate, Omega Kappa Alpha, Delta Phi Zeta, and Sigma Alpha Chi. Top calling organizations were: first place, Iota Chi Alpha, raising \$13,000 and beating the all-time record by \$3,000; second place, Delta Kappa Theta, raising \$11,700; and third place, Gamma Chi Epsilon, raising \$11,400. Top individual callers were: first place, Chip Thompson; second place, Rod Hemphill; and third place, Nancy DeBord.

Continued on page 6

INSIDE	
Editorial	2
On Campus	3
Sports	4, 5
Odds & Ends	6
Diversions	7