

# Memorial Scholarship Established in English

Chowan College in co-operation with the Roanoke-Chowan Group of artists and writers announces the establishment of the Bernice Kelly Harris Memorial Scholarship in Creative Writing and English. The memorial scholarship honors one of North Carolina's great literary figures of all time — the late Dr. Bernice Kelly Harris of Seaboard. The first recipient of the scholarship will be selected by the Scholarship Committee beginning with the 1979-80 academic year.

The scholarship originated within the Roanoke-Chowan Group which represents artists and writers who either live or come from the Roanoke-Chowan region of North Carolina. Dr. Harris was a member of this organization which was founded in the early 1950's by the late Dr. Gilbert T. Stephenson of Pendleton. In July 1976, the Roanoke-Chowan Group voted to establish the Harris Memorial Scholarship in Creative Writing and English at Chowan College. The group appointed a special scholarship committee to direct a fund raising drive of \$5,000 to

fund the memorial scholarship which will be administered by Chowan College.

Prior to the Group's decision to establish the Harris Scholarship at Chowan, the Group had endowed a scholarship in performing arts at the North Carolina School of Performing Arts in Winston-Salem. In addition, the Group sponsors the Roanoke-Chowan Poetry Cup Award which is presented annually during Culture Week in Raleigh.

Chowan President Dr. Bruce E. Whitaker, in announcing the establishment of the scholarship said that it was very difficult to describe adequately the contributions of the late Dr. Harris who was affectionately known and addressed by all who knew her as "Miss Kelly" or "Dr. Kelly." Many of her literary critics placed her in the company of Thomas Wolfe, Whitaker noted.

Winner of the Mayflower Cup for Fiction and the North Carolina Award for Literature, Dr. Harris wrote always of the simple people of her eastern North Carolina, Whitaker said. Her short stories were

published in national magazines and her novels were published in this country and abroad.

Her first novel, *Purslane*, was the first novel ever published by the University of North Carolina Press. Her second novel, *Portulaca*, was published by Doubleday after the publisher sent a representative to the small eastern North Carolina town of Seaboard, near Roanoke Rapids, to find her. Her other novels include *Sweet Beulah Land*, *Sage Quarter*, *Janey Jeems*, and *Heartstones*. Many readers and critics considered her moving autobiography, *Southern Savoury*, to be her best work. She also wrote two children's novels: *The Santa On The Mantel* and *The Very Real Trust About Christmas*.

Whitaker said plays were a favorite of "Miss Kelly." She wrote a group of one-act plays, *Folk Plays of Eastern Carolina*. Dr. Harris also organized the Northampton Players, a drama group that became well known and won numerous awards.

During the last ten years of her life, she was associated with Chowan College where she taught creative writing. Under her guidance and tutelage, the Chowan College Creative Writing Class launched a number of writing careers for eastern North Carolina residents. Her Creative Writing Class pupils came from many walks of life including teachers, housewives, college students, civic leaders, insurance agents and physicians.

For her contributions to the literary world and to her native state of North Carolina, Dr. Harris received many honors including:

1. First Mayflower Cup Award in 1939 for her first book, *Purslane*.

2. First woman to serve as President of the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association.

3. Convenor of the Roanoke-Chowan Group of artists and writers.

4. Honorary Doctorate by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and by Wake Forest University. She was called by many as North Carolina's "first lady of letters."

5. Master Playwright Award, North Carolina Drama Association

6. North Carolina Award for Literature

Dr. Harris was born in the Mount Moriah community in Wake County and received a degree from Meredith College. She went to Seaboard in the northeastern part of the state near the Virginia line as a school teacher, and there she met her husband, the late Herbert Kavanaugh Harris. She died on September 13, 1973, and is survived by a number of nieces and nephews.

Dr. Whitaker stated, "The cultural and literary life of North Carolina for generations to come has been greatly enriched by the writings of this very dear person. The Bernice Kelly Harris Memorial Scholarship in Creative Writing and English at Chowan College is a most appropriate way to remember a truly great North Carolinian who gave so much to all of us."

## Mrs. Walter Elsee Appointed To Chowan Board of Advisors

A Smithfield woman, Mrs. Walter Brand Elsee, has been appointed to the Board of Advisors at Chowan College, according to Chowan President Bruce E. Whitaker.

A Winston-Salem native, Mrs. Elsee holds the A.B. degree from Hollins College and M.S.W. degree from the University of Denver.

She has served as a caseworker at the Denver Bureau of Public Welfare in Denver, Col.; child welfare worker at the Wake County Welfare Dept. in Raleigh; family care worker at the Family Service Society in Raleigh; and caseworker for the Baptist Children's Home in Thomasville.

Mrs. Elsee is a member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church where she has served as president of the Episcopal Churchwomen, chairman of the Community and World Ministries Committee, Sunday school teacher, and member of the Vestry. She also held a diocesan position for three years as secretary of Christian Social Relations.

The new Chowan advisor is active in



MRS. WALTER ELSEE

## Six Students Serving In Summer Missions

Six Chowan College students are serving in some phase of summer missions this summer.

The students, their assignment and sponsoring agency, are: Joseph G. Austin, New Hope Baptist Church, Whiteville (Baptist Youth Corps); Michael Gosnell, chaplain's assistant, Samarcand Manor, Samarcand (BSU Missions); Sidney Gray Little, Bambi Lake, Mich. (BSU Work Team); Kathy McEachern, counselor, Camp Mundo Vista; Connie Towns, counselor, Camp Mundo Vista; Eric Del Santo, American Heritage Camp Grounds, Littleton (Resort Area Ministry).

community affairs as a member of the Boards of the United Fund, Salvation Army, and Contact Teleministry. She is a senior worker at Contact Teleministry. One of her main interests is mental health. She has served as treasurer and president and is presently vice president in charge of membership for the Mental Health Assoc. of Johnson County. She is also a member of the Public Affairs Committee of the Mental Health Assoc. of North Carolina. Mrs. Elsee is a member of the Symphony Council for the North Carolina Symphony.

Mrs. Elsee and her husband are parents of three children: Margaret, 29, a cattle farmer in Chatham County; Allison, 20, a senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and Jeff, 19, a third-class cadet at the Air Force Academy.



## Refinishing Historic Columns

The eight columns on the porches of McDowell Columns Building were stripped during the past weeks, and a fresh coat of paint was applied to keep the building in a good state of repair. Torches were used to burn the many, many layers of paint from the columns, after which all breaks in the wood were repaired and sealed. Workers indicated that paint on several of the columns measured over one-eighth of an inch thick.