

Dr., Mrs. Whitaker honored at retirement dinner after 32 years of service to Chowan College

By Jennifer Moore

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Amid laughter and tears, their friends bid Godspeed to Bruce and Esther Whitaker April 29, after 32 years' service to Chowan College.

Dignitaries from throughout the Baptist community told stories on the pair but assured them of their place in the hearts of the school and religious community during a farewell banquet in Thomas Cafeteria. The principal speaker was Dr. William C. Friday, a long-time friend of Dr. Whitaker's, who spoke from friendship, refusing any fee for his appearance.

Friday said the Whitakers "must have a great deal of satisfaction sitting here tonight. You have touched every student...and made a difference in their lives." He added that the "greatest test of all is 'did you do what you were put here to do.' Clearly, you have."

The speaker, president emeritus of the University of North Carolina System, noted the changes in the world since the Whitakers came to Chowan. "Television, air travel — I got on a plane one morning, flew to Canada and was home for supper — we have fought wars, struggled with human rights, the numbers of people in school, the emergence of women, the enormous emphasis on learning — all since you came to Chowan."

Friday said he had ridden around the campus that afternoon and "This is an incredible thing that has happened here. I can hardly believe the changes that have taken place."

"In the context of history, this institution has grown and matured and is ready for the future," the speaker stated.

"But there are certain things we must do something about yet. Six out of 10 in this country go to college" but "we haven't reached five out of ten."

He declared there is still work to do even "with the legacy he has left us" and noted one million people in North Carolina live below the poverty line "and 400,000 of those are children.

"There are over 100,000 who can't communicate well enough" to have access to good jobs and decent housing. "There are 400,000 who will drop out of school. Twenty thousand people have left the land in North Carolina in the last five years. All of these circumstances make it difficult to survive," he contended.

"The future will depend on people who can deal with all the sophistication science has brought us," he said.

"Bruce Whitaker's life is an expression of the leadership" needed for the future. Friday spoke of the president of a Swedish university who, when asked what people really think of the United States, made the comment, "They love the United States but you've lost the moral leadership."

Friday compared the salaries paid professional athletes with that of teachers. "They are paid more in one year than a teacher makes in five years. Where are our priorities?"

The speaker concluded with his thanks

Dr. William Friday, UNC system president emeritus, offers congratulations to Dr. and Mrs. Whitaker at their retirement banquet.



for the work Dr. Whitaker had done. "You have helped keep this country free. We owe him, and we owe her."

Dr. Roy Smith, executive director/treasurer of the N.C. Baptist State Convention, said, "Dr. Whitaker has been a model in keeping a balance between faith and reason," while Robert B. Spivey, general chairman of the college's Mission Excellence Campaign and a member of the board of advisors, said Whitaker "has led the college to be one of the strongest, if not the strongest, junior colleges in the nation."

Dr. John E. Weems, president of Meredith College, noted that Dr. Whitaker is the dean of the heads of Baptist institutions. Mrs. Texie Camp Marks of Boykins, Va., brought a message from the Baptist General Association of Virginia, saying "Dr. Whitaker has been a friend and supporter of Virginia Baptists" all through his tenure.

Joseph C. McPhail, Class of '68,

reported that Mrs. Whitaker "has taught just under 11,000 students — 11,000 students!" He said he didn't come back to the campus after graduation until 1978 "and I didn't recognize the place" because of the changes in the 10 year span, attributing the difference to Dr. Whitaker's hard work.

Murfreesboro Mayor Billy Hill, Class of '43, warned Dr. Whitaker he would have to learn all about gardening and washing windows in his retirement and offered to share his "special TV channels" when things got too boring.

Emma Gay Stephenson, Class of '31 and chairperson of the Board of Advisors, and Thomas M. McCrary, chairman of the trustees, presented envelopes with gifts to each of the Whitakers.

Pam Mullins, president of the Chowan Student Government Association, brought greeting from that group. Dr. B. Franklin Lowe Jr., Dean of Chowan, presented framed resolutions of appreciation to each

of the honorees, adopted Feb. 10 by the faculty and staff of the college.

Garry Whitaker, the Whitaker's younger son, told the audience of over 500 of the Christian atmosphere in their home as he and his brother, Barry, were growing up and the influence it had on their lives. "We don't say often enough how much we love you," he commented as he turned to his parents, "but we do and want you to know how much we appreciate all you have done for us." In addition to the sons, Dr. Whitaker's mother, their granddaughter and brothers and sisters were also present for the occasion.

Mrs. Whitaker thanked "Bruce and the Board of Trustees for the privilege of teaching" religion over the years. She mentioned that she had taught "many of you and now I'm teaching some of your children." She expressed appreciation for the home built by the college, trustees and advisors and expressed special ap-

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