

Summer 1990

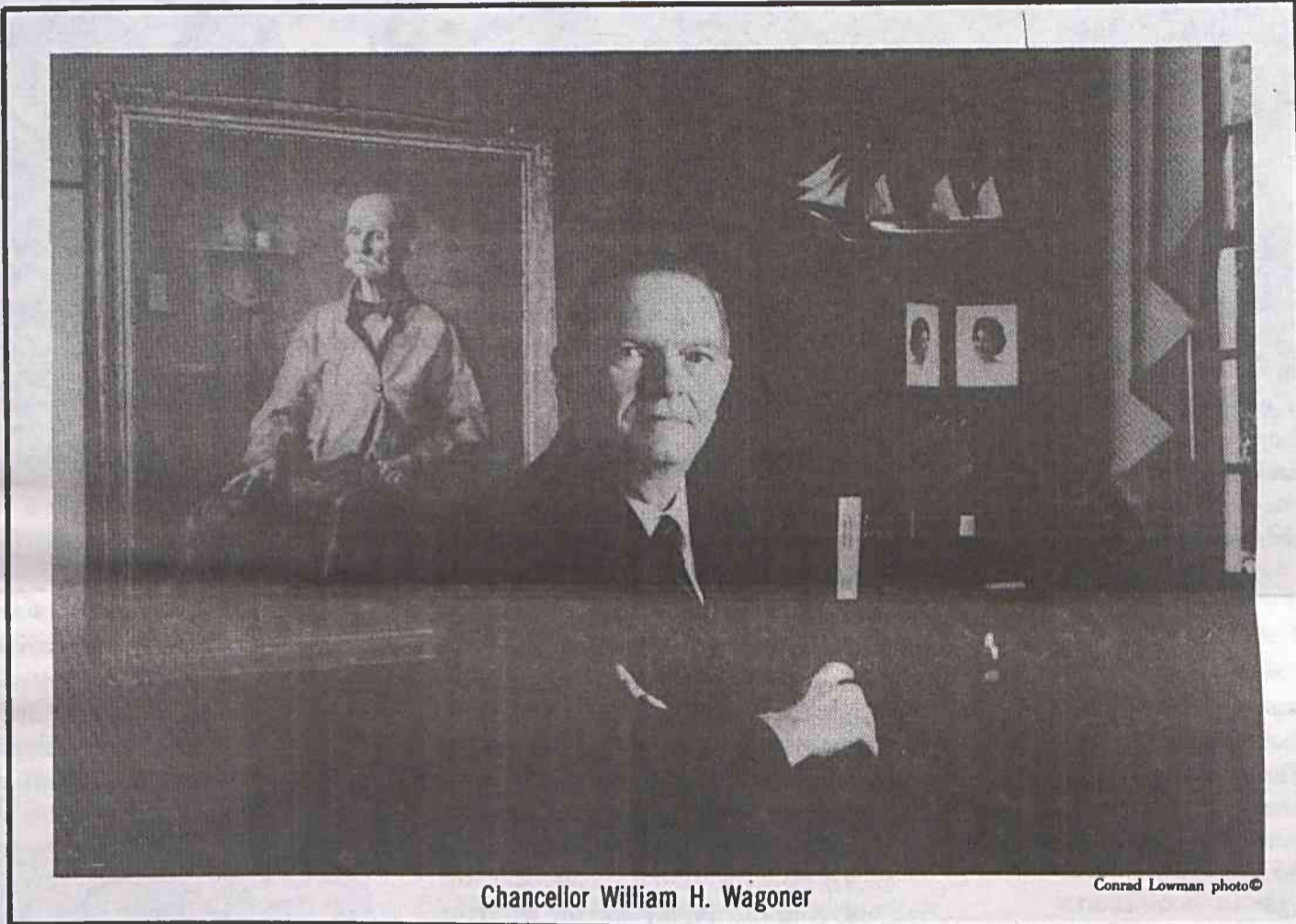
# Today

UNCW

A publication for alumni, parents  
and friends of the university.

## The Wagoner Era

1968-1990



Chancellor William H. Wagoner

Conrad Lowman photo©

Special to UNCW Today  
by Mimi Cunningham

On July 15, 1990, the curtain falls on the Wagoner era at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, an era marked by 22 years of dramatic change and phenomenal growth, an era whose accomplishments will reflect the quiet leadership style of an educator who sought compromise rather than confrontation, an era of behind-the-scenes diplomacy and persuasion rather than headline-grabbing activism.

Eleven thousand nine hundred and eighty-nine of the 13,342 graduates of this institution attended UNCW during Chancellor William H. Wagoner's tenure. He has directly or indirectly impacted 90 percent of UNCW's alumni.

It's unlikely that those students who spent their college careers at UNCW paid a great deal of attention to the milestones

that were regularly chalked up by their alma mater. But the milestones were many and profound changes occurred at Wilmington College and UNCW during the Wagoner era.

Now, as Bill Wagoner steps out for his final curtain call, it is time to applaud his leadership. He shaped a small community college into a graduate-degree granting institution and made the school a vital link in the UNC system of higher education. It is time to ask him what he considers to be the highlights of his tenure here, his greatest accomplishments, and his most cherished memories.

Wagoner's involvement with Wilmington College began early during his service as superintendent of New Hanover County Schools. Once the college became a four-year institution, President Randall asked him to become a part-time member of the faculty and he taught during several sum-

mer sessions.

Wagoner moved from part-time professor to president as a result of a process that began with a conversation on a late night flight between Charlotte and Wilmington, probably somewhere over Fayetteville.

"I got to be president through a strange set of circumstances," Wagoner recalled. There were only three or four people on the plane. One of them was the late Harry Payne, current Representative Harry Payne's father and a former Wilmington College trustee.

"Harry Payne said to me, 'Bill, it's not going to be much longer until Bill Randall retires. How would you react to being president of Wilmington College?'"

"It took me completely by surprise, and I told him I was perfectly happy where I was."

continued on page 2