

Once Randall announced in 1967 that he planned to retire the following year, trustees and others in the college community approached Wagoner on a more serious basis, including Randall himself.

"I was still very happy as superintendent. I did not apply for the presidency, but the trustees asked me eventually to come in for an interview and I did. Subsequently, the board met and elected me president."

By then, the board was heavily involved in negotiations to move Wilmington College into the Consolidated University of North Carolina. President Bill Friday added his encouragement.

"He said to me, 'I'd like to see you accept the presidency because I would like to have you as one of my chancellors.'"

"That offer interested me. I liked the idea of being a part of the university and having some resources that Wilmington College didn't have. With Bill Friday's encouragement, I accepted."

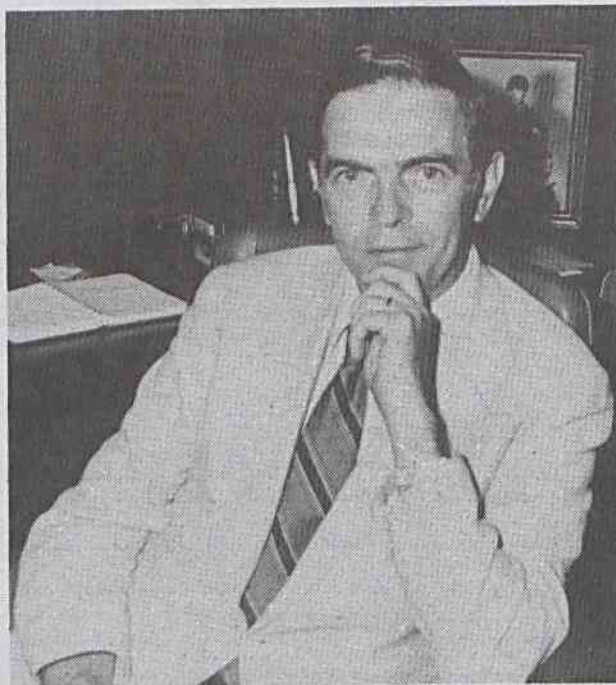
During the first year, Wagoner was immersed in getting the college approved for inclusion in the Consolidated University, a cumbersome and complicated process. But the hard work paid off, and on July 1, 1969, Wilmington College became the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. The Board of Trustees of the Consolidated University elected Wagoner chancellor.

"I didn't see any difference in being president and being chancellor except I had these other resources and more seasoned colleagues to lean on. When it came to budget allocations, there was strength in numbers. Those were good years. We received some good appropriations, and they did increase."

"The first noticeable change was that the application rate began to zoom." Part of Wagoner's retirement plans include looking back at his years at UNCW and documenting them in detail. He wants to record the history he helped make. For this article, he recalled a few highlights of his tenure here.

"Only history can determine the true highlights of my time at UNCW. But from my perspective, I think the day that we became part of the university was a highlight. Another was the first day I came to campus and got a parking ticket. The beginning of the Albert Schweitzer International Prizes, with one of the first recipients being Mother Teresa, without any question was a highlight. The advent of the first graduate program. Moving the institution from a Comprehensive II to a Comprehensive I level was a highlight."

"The occupying of William Madison Randall Library -- the first part -- was a highlight. Moving into the second part was a highlight, because I love libraries that much. Another was the opening of Trask



Dr. Wagoner in the early days of his chancellorship at UNCW.

Coliseum with the christening game played against my alma mater Wake Forest -- and we almost beat them ('us')! Knowing certain people, and it would be unwise for me to say which ones, has been a continuing highlight, especially people like B. Frank Hall. It was wonderful for me to be able to rub shoulders every day with this kind of scholar and to be inspired by such love for learning."

Living in Kenan House has added an unusual dimension to the Wagoner family's life, one that Wagoner said has been a lot of fun. But it was a time that meant sacrifices as well as pleasures.

"It's been for an entire family a process of completely and absolutely giving up all privacy -- seven days a week, 24 hours a day -- for the chancellor, for his wife, and his children. That's part of it. But it has also meant having had as social guests in your home people like Mother Teresa, Andres Segovia, Helen Hayes, and Alan Alda. And Bill Friday and the governors of the state and members of the legislature, and everyday people like me."

"The house itself is absolutely magnificent. It is without question the best planned house for entertaining in a gracious Southern style, all made possible by a gift of the Kenan family." Wagoner mentioned that his doorbell rings often, many times to tourists who want to come in. It also rings for people looking for a funeral. Kenan House is across 17th Street from a mortuary.



Dr. Wagoner poses with Dr. B. Frank Hall, professor emeritus of philosophy and religion, during Hall's birthday celebration at Kenan House April 7, 1988.

Since moving to Kenan House in 1969, the Wagoners have experienced many interesting incidents. One of the funniest involved Susie Sharp, chief justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court who spoke at commencement and received an honorary degree from UNCW.

"One of our basset hounds, Dr. Watson, buried his favorite rawhide bone in the most formal couch in Kenan House. After we gave Susie the honorary degree, she came to Kenan House for a reception. She



Chancellor Wagoner, left, Raiford Trask, Sr., and William L. Hill II, right, chairman of the UNCW Board of Trustees, pose with a portrait of Mr. Trask at the dedication of Trask Coliseum in 1977. The construction of Trask Coliseum was significant because it provided a cultural, athletic, and civic center for southeastern N.C.



Mother Teresa  
1975 Schweitzer International Prizes  
recipient in the Humanities