



PRESIDENT ALFONSO ELDER

NCC and Its President

By HORACE G. DAWSON, JR.

In educational circles, North Carolina College at Durham is known as a "quality" school. This reputation testifies to the caliber of the College's chief executive, President Alfonso Elder, who has dedicated his entire administration to "the pursuit of excellence."

Under the Elder regime, the College has experienced phenomenal growth in terms of physical expansion and enrollment. Of the 36 buildings valued at \$10,000,000 adorning the campus, only twenty-one of them were standing when Dr. Elder became president in 1948. Enrollment has increased by several hundred students and the faculty in proper proportion.

But as formidable as these accomplishments may seem, the most profound impact of the Elder administration has been felt in the expanded scope and improved quality of the institution's academic offerings and in the caliber of its faculty and instruction.

The College today offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in the arts and sciences and professional degrees in law, library science, and public health nursing. In 1955, it conferred the first doctor of philosophy degree in education ever awarded by a predominantly Negro institution.

Approximately half of the 106 faculty members at NCC hold doctorate degrees from leading universities in the United States and abroad. Frequently recipients of such scholarly and research grants as the Ford, Fulbright, Danforth and Southern Education fellowships, NCC faculty members are also in demand as visiting professors at other institutions. From their ranks in recent years have come college presidents, deans, a United States ambassador, and information specialists for the U. S. government.

When in 1957 the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools dropped its racial standards, North Carolina College was one of only 18 predominantly Negro institutions (among 63 in the U. S.) admitted to full membership. The College was already approved by the Association of American Universities, the American Bar Association, the American Council on Education and held "A" ratings with the North Carolina State Department of Education and the American Medical Association.

President Elder laid the foundation for his program in his inaugural address (delivered January 3, 1949), when he set "faith in good will, faith in intelligence, and faith in the democratic process" as conditions for the College's achieving "true greatness."

Admirably suited to translate these ideals into action, Elder brought to his task a rich background of classroom experience and administrative leadership. By training and experience a teacher of mathematics, he was dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at North Carolina College from 1924 to 1943. From 1943 until 1947, he was dean of the Graduate School of Education at Atlanta University, from which post he resigned to return to the NCC faculty shortly before being named president.

Dr. Elder is a native of Sandersville, Georgia, where his father, the late Thomas J. Elder, served as principal of the Thomas J. Elder High and Industrial School from 1889 to 1942. President Elder recently spoke at dedication exercises for a new high school in Sandersville named in his father's honor.

His early education was received at the school his father founded. Later, he received the A. B. degree (magna cum laude) from Atlanta University in 1921., and the M. A. under a special General Education Board Fellowship, at Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1924. He did post-graduate work at the University of Chicago in the summers of 1930 and 1931. The NCC president earned his Ed.D. degree in 1938 at Teachers College, Columbia University.

His career in North Carolina began in 1921 at Bennett College. In 1924, he came to NCC as a teacher of mathematics, and, except for the brief period (1943 to 1947) during which he was dean at Atlanta University, Dr. Elder has been associated with North Carolina College ever since.

The North Carolina College president has served the

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-Dr. James E. Shepard-

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than Booker T. Washington."

Although the higher education of Negroes was the task to which he devoted his major effort, this field alone was insufficient to claim the numerous talents and interests which characterized him. A master of human relations, he was widely known as a goodwill ambassador; a college founder and president, he was known as an educational statesman; an organizer and promoter of worthwhile causes, he was given the name of "builder of dreams." Thus, James Edward Shepard, a registered pharmacist, ordained minister, politician, fraternal leader and educator, was a legend in his own time.

He was born November 3, 1875, in Raleigh, the son of the Reverend S. Augustus and Mrs. Harriet E. (Whitted) Shepard. He received his undergraduate and professional training at Shaw University, from which he won the Ph.G. degree in 1894. The following year (November 7, 1895), he married Miss Annie Day Robinson, and two daughters were born to this union: Miss Marjorie Shepard of Durham, and Mrs. Annie Day Shepard Smith of New Bern.

During 1898 and 1900, Dr. Shepard was comparer of deeds in the Recorder's Office in Washington, D. C., and was deputy collector of internal revenue at Raleigh from 1899 to 1905. He also served as field superintendent of the International Sunday School Association (for work among Negroes) from 1905 to 1909.

It was in 1910 that Dr. Shepard founded North Carolina College on a site that was once a trash pile. Originally conceived as a center for religious training, the National Religious Training School and Chataqua, later the National Training School, was supported by the philanthropy of Dr. Shepard's numerous white and Negro friends in both the North and South. The State gave its support in 1925, and it became the Durham State Normal School. In 1929 a four year college course was begun and the name became the North Carolina College for Negroes. The North Carolina General Assembly of 1947 ruled that the name should be the North Carolina College at Durham.

The first state-supported liberal arts college for Negroes in the United States (there now is one other — Central State in Ohio), the school survived two disastrous fires in 1925, an auction sale, and numerous other difficulties which attended the depression years.

At the time of his death, Dr. Shepard had guided the institution from its humble beginnings to a place in the forefront of institutions of higher learning in the South.

The physical plant was valued at \$2,000,000, and appropriations in excess of \$2,000,000 had been approved by the State legislature for expansion.

Some seventy-two faculty members were training students in undergraduate and graduate work and in professional schools of law, library science, and public health. The graduate program was authorized by the General Assembly in 1939, the School of Law in 1940, and the School of Library Science in 1941.

Among numerous honors bestowed upon him during his life time were the degrees of doctor of divinity by Muskingum College in Ohio (1910); master of arts by Selma University in Alabama (1912), and the Litt.D. by Howard University in 1925.

Dr. Shepard's emphasis was always upon "all of the people of North Carolina," whom he addressed annually in a state-wide broadcast. In this emphasis he was well served by personal friendships with first the fathers and later the sons and grandsons of the leading political powers in North Carolina from the turn of the century until his death in 1947.

To his campus office came some of the foremost educational and political leaders of the State and Nation. Few citizens of North Carolina kept closer to the pulse of the people than did Dr. Shepard. He was able to do this in large measure as a result of his many contacts with people in many walks of life and with the various representatives of organizations that he served and guided.

He was for many years Grand Master of the Negro Masons in North Carolina. Other positions that he held at various times included Grand Patron of the Eastern Star, Secretary of Finances for the Knights of Pythias, Director of the Mechanics and Farmers Bank, and President of the State Negro Teachers' Association. In 1910, Dr. Shepard, was the only Negro speaker at the World Sunday School Convention in Rome, Italy.

His life-long devotion to the art of human relations can be seen in the many individuals who helped him in the development of his beloved N. C. College. Mrs. Russell Sage of New York provided funds necessary for continued operation in 1915 when the school was sold and reorganized. In 1927 the late B. N. Duke of Durham and many other local citizens, white and Negro, made generous financial gifts to supplement funds provided by the State legislature. Other donors in later years also contributed liberal financial gifts to the school. The Howard J. Chidleys and the First Congregational Church of Winchester, Massachusetts, have been supporters of the college for nearly fifty years.

Evidence of the esteem in which he was held is seen in an editorial carried in the CAMPUS ECHO, student paper, following Dr. Shepard's death: "The magnanimity of the man cannot be measured by mere words or facts . . . we doubt if we will live to see the complete effects that Dr. Shepard has wrought on this city, this state and country. The fruits of his labor will outlive us."

Many Graduates Earn Doctorates

Evidence of the emphasis on academic excellence at North Carolina College is the increasing number of its graduates who earn higher degrees.

The ranks of doctors, lawyers, researchers, social workers, and teachers of advanced training are continually swelled by graduates of the institution.

In addition to the numerous master's and professional degrees won each year, several NCC graduates have earned the doctorate degree since 1950. Well distributed among the physical and biological sciences, social sciences, education and humanities, the degrees, conferred by some of America's most outstanding educational institutions, reflect at once the breadth and quality of undergraduate training at NCC.

Melvin Sikes, '38, was awarded a doctorate degree in personnel administration in 1950 by the University of Chicago.

The following year, in 1951, John L. Summersette, '40, and Gerald Edwards, '41, earned doctorates in education and physical chemistry respectively at Stanford University and the University of Buffalo.

In 1952, Harvard University conferred the Ph.D. in zoology on Thomas Malone, who later became professor of zoology at NCC. The young scholar is currently engaged in advanced research at Argonne National Laboratory in Chicago.

Vivian W. Henderson, '47, and Earlie Thorpe, '48, both won doctorate degrees in 1953, Henderson in economics at the State University of Iowa and Thorpe in history at Ohio State University. Since beginning his teaching career as professor of history at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Thorpe has published two books in his field. His brother, Eural Edward, '47, received the D.D.S. in 1956 from Howard University.

After earning the master's degree in English at NCC in 1949, Richard Jefferson, now professor of English at Grambling College, Grambling, Louisiana, earned a Ph.D. in English at the University of Wisconsin.

Two doctorates were awarded NCC graduates in 1955 and one in 1956. Walter M. Brown, 1948, director of student teaching here, received the first Ph.D. (in education) awarded by North Carolina College in 1955. Brown specialized in education, while Edward P. Mitchell, '48, who got his degree at the State University of Iowa, specialized in physical education.

Robert Freeman, '50, won the Ph.D. in chemistry at Wayne University in 1956.

In 1958, William Randolph Johnson was awarded the doctorate degree in chemistry by the University of Pennsylvania, and Elizabeth Bell, now teaching at Fayetteville State, received a doctorate in speech at Ohio State University. Other recent recipients of doctorates are Arthur Teele, '34, in education, and Joseph Knuckles, who did his work in biology at the University of Connecticut.

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