

## Five Distinguished Presidents Have Shaped Meredith's Character

# Meredith Has Only Five Presidents in 68 Years

By MRS. FAYE HUMPHRIES  
Director, Meredith News Bureau

Meredith College presidents have numbered only five in the school's seventy-six-year history and sixty-eight years of operation.

Each has been described, by advocates and adversaries, as men distinguished in educational and religious circles, a factor the college trustees have considered the key to maintenance of Meredith integrity.

The first president stayed only for the first year; the second remained for fifteen. The third and fourth presidents have served the college for well over two-thirds of its history, and the fifth is to be inaugurated this weekend.

All but the first Meredith president have been fully and joyfully received into the bosoms of Tar Heel Baptists who establish the college policies. And James Carter Blasingame left the school, according to his letter of resignation, "All for the glory of God. . . ."

Dr. Blasingame was only 32 when he came to North Carolina, already having headed colleges in Georgia and Tennessee. Because of conflicts in custom and opinion on small things, it is reported that Dr. Blasingame acquired a reputation as something of a "dude" among the good, homespun element of North Carolina Baptists of his period.

### Blasingame's Shortened Term

It is said that the white kid gloves he wore to the Baptist State Convention of 1899 were remembered long after his effective speech was forgotten. To be fair to the man and his critics, however, Meredith historian, Dr. Mary Lynch Johnson, says the main reason the first president left so soon after arriving was a fundamental difference between himself and the trustees in their ideas of the kind of school the Baptist Female University was to be; Dr. Blasingame simply had no experience in a denominational school.

The second president, Richard Tilman Vann, has been described as the most popular Baptist of his day. A native of Hertford County, Vann was not quite 12 years old when he lost both arms in a cane mill. His mother had died when he was five, and his father soon after the son's accident. Vann's serious handicap failed to daunt him, and he graduated from Wake Forest College in 1873 at the head of his class.

Upon his election to the presidency of the Baptist Female University, *The Biblical Recorder* cheered him: "Dr. Vann holds the hearts of North Carolina . . . upheld by the affectations of a great people — the debt shall be paid, new buildings reared, and an endowment raised. . . ."

So it was. Dr. Vann is regarded as the man most responsible for keeping Meredith College from foundering in a sea of debts. During the fifteen years of his presidency, the school grew from a female university with rather vague requirements for entrance and graduation to a college which commanded respect in academic circles.

Charles Edward Brewer became president in 1915, coming from a background where the academic world was "the world." He was born at Wake Forest and grew up in the shadow of the college where his grandfather, Samuel Wait, was the first president. He inherited the blessings of Dr. Vann and immediately began a drive to improve further Meredith standards. He was selective in choosing faculty and never let the student body forget that no ratings but the best were good enough.

Dr. Johnson reports the whole

college was so involved with Dr. Brewer's drive for quality that when Meredith was accredited in 1921 by the Southern Association of Colleges, one freshman wrote home special delivery that the school had "at last, been taken into the Southern Baptist Convention."

When Meredith's growth was limited by space available for expansion at its downtown location, Dr. Brewer helped lead the drive to relocate the college at its present site. Baptists began to debate the advisability of building another senior college campus, some feeling Wake Forest and Meredith should be consolidated. But the new campus was ready for use by January, 1926.

The ambitious expansion pro-



James Carter Blasingame



Richard Tilman Vann



Charles Edward Brewer



Carlyle Campbell

## Dr. Sarah Lemmon Has Been Efficient Guiding Force As Thoughtful, Busy Chairman of Inauguration Activities

By ELIZABETH MAYNARD

On March 15, a gentleman entered Johnson Hall and inquired about the inauguration ceremony to be held that day for Dr. E. Bruce Heilman. His anticipation came a month too early for the inauguration-centered events. Dr. Sarah Lemmon, chairman of the history department and more recently chairman of the inauguration committee, welcomed that extra month for preparation.

Dr. Lemmon's chairmanship began in late November, 1966, when Dr. Heilman called her to ask that she be chairman. That night the appointment was announced at a faculty meeting. Dr. Heilman further appointed a steering committee, which promptly began making plans. The day following the initial meeting of this committee was spent by Dr. Lemmon on the dictaphone. She dictated assignments, letters, and an impressive-looking manual on "who?, what?, and how?" the inauguration would be organized. Her work had begun.

A date, of course, had to be set. The administration, looking for a Saturday before May Day, or when the amphitheater could be used, selected April 15, 1967.

For ideas on "how" to present this "first in twenty-seven years" event Dr. Lemmon asked trustees for suggestions, received programs from other colleges and a complete inauguration file from East Carolina College, and sprinkled these suggestions with her own imagination and thoughtfulness.

Only two major problems have appeared. The first has been that of printing and mailing all of the necessary letters and invitations. Only one incident has occurred over this communication problem. A

gentleman wrote Dr. Lemmon requesting a reply card which was not included with his invitation. Calmly, Dr. Lemmon checked her file. The excited gentleman had returned his reply card already — and was anxiously awaiting his trip to the campus on April 15! Dr. Lemmon smiled with relief. Everything was going fine.

The second major problem lurked ahead, and no amount of planning could assure its outcome. . . . Will rain clouds gather on April 15? With fingers crossed — and provisions made for the auditorium in case of rain — Dr. Lemmon awaits the weatherman's forecast.

As overall chairman of the inaugural festivities, Dr. Lemmon cannot seem to praise enough the co-operation she has received from

students and faculty alike. In fact, only two people turned down her request for help — and Dr. Lemmon inserted, "They had very good reasons." From this experience of working so closely with so many on campus, Dr. Lemmon has gained not only invaluable knowledge of the campus, of how it runs, and of the esteem which outsiders hold for Meredith, but also the realization that she still has her sanity after five busy months — the latter being a noteworthy accomplishment!

Being asked about her plans after the inauguration, Dr. Lemmon replied with an enthusiastic monosyllable — "SLEEP!" Then she added in a thoughtful tone, "And write thank you notes to the many people who have been so grand."

As the time for inauguration

draws nearer and the academic procession forms, there will be one member of that line with a special interest and place in the festivities. For with her have all the ideas gathered and all the plans been executed. She has been the guiding force, the thoughtful conductor, the perfectionist. She has been typically . . . Dr. Lemmon.

### GROUND BREAKING

(Continued from page 1)

ond and third floors of the administration building, Johnson Hall. Designed to house up to 125,000 volumes, the three-story building will be carpeted and air-conditioned throughout. In addition to usual library features, it will provide for modern non-book systems for the storage and transmission of knowledge, microfilm readers, and duplicating equipment.

Also in the plan are an art lending room, a college archives section, audio-visual rooms, curriculum laboratory, conference rooms, individual research rooms, and typing rooms for researchers.

The construction of the building is being made possible by gifts from many friends of the college and of Dr. Campbell, including alumnae and others. Additional funds will continue to come in during the current total college development program.

### ART EXHIBITION

(Continued from page 3)

work.

In retrospect, Brenda feels that presenting her show has been frightening, exciting, and challenging. "It is a good evaluation because it lets the teacher evaluate you and himself. But most of all, you evaluate yourself."



Dr. Sarah Lemmon has been busy since November planning and coordinating activities for the inauguration of Dr. Heilman.