MRS. VIVIAN SANSOM HONORED - From left to right are Dr. George C. Debnam, trustee, Shaw University; Dr. Clarence G. Newsome, president, Shaw; Dr. Vivian Merrick Sansom; and Dr. Willie E. Gary, chairman of the trustee board of Shaw University.

HHS HONOREES - Hillside high School recently honored its outstanding student-athletes during its annual Spring Banquet. Pictured from left to right are: James K. Reaves, alumnus; Anya Sippens, 4.8 grade point average (gpa), full scholarship to Hampton University; John Lyon, 4.99 gpa, valedictorian, full scholarship to Harvard University; Taylor Brown, 4.77 gpa, full scholarship to UNC-Chapel Hill; and Bob Hill, athletic

Mrs. Vivian Sansom Honored for 70 Years of Community Work

Shaw University presented a Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa to Mrs. Vivian Merrick Sansom for contributions as a "role model for women in Raleigh and Durham areas."

According to Clarence G. Newsome, president of Shaw University, "Mrs. Vivian Merrick Sansom has spent nearly 70 years serving as a role model for women in the Raleigh and Durham areas. She extols and exemplifies the importance of physical fitness for women. To her great credit, she spent 55 years as a teacher in that field personally inspiring young women at both Shaw University and North Carolina Central University."

She came to Shaw University in 1959 and spent 36 years as an instructor in tennis, swimming, golf, archery, jazz, tap, and modern dance. She also organized the drill team, dance troupe, and cheerleaders. At a time when women were beginning to recognize their physicality and their place in both the sports world and society as a whole, Mrs. Sansom served as a pioneer, mentor and teacher - a living and breathing example for the young women she taught and with whom she came into contact.

Prior to coming to Shaw, she taught physical education at NCCU, where she worked with legendary coach John McClendon. She was present when the first CIAA Tournament was held in 1946 ... and she's been present ever since - a presence at the tournament every single year it has been held.

From a young age, Mrs. Sansom was involved in physical fitness for women. After receiving a bachelor's degree in physical education from Talladega College, she obtained a masters degree in education from Boston University, and did post graduate studies at North Carolina Central University.

For five years, she was the director of physical education at the Young Women's Christian Association in Winston Salem. In Durham, she co-founded the Play School at W.D. Hill Recreation Center in Durham.

Outside the world of education, Mrs. Sansom and her family are the co-founders and co-owners with the York family the Southgate Plaza Shopping Center - the first minority-owned shopping center between Washington, D.C., and New Orleans; La. to be built without government expenditure.

Mrs. Sansom is the mother of four, grandmother of six, and great-grandmother of one.

The degree was presented May 10 at the Shaw University Commencement that was held at J.S. Dorton Arena in Raleigh.

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(Mrs.) Vivian Austin Edmonds
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