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Martin H. Brinkley

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DEDICATION

Our "Citadel of Truth," William Brantley Aycock

MARTIN H. BRINKLEY AND JUDITH WELCH WEGNER

This issue of the *North Carolina Law Review* is dedicated to Professor and Chancellor Emeritus William Brantley Aycock, a man who has graced the UNC School of Law in one way or another for fifty years.

Albert Coates observed that there is a special spirit here at the UNC School of Law, a "lifting power," that characterizes the place and the institution. Bill Aycock embodies that "lifting power."

In an essay for entering law students, Coates spoke of the school's proud traditions:

I talk to you of these traditions because I profoundly believe that if they get into your bloodstream, you will find in them a lifting power while you are in this Law School and on this campus, and that you will carry them with you as tangible assets when you go out to live and make a living in the practice of law.¹

Coates also reflected on his own experience at the School of Law, then told a tale drawn from a letter. He said:

For three years, the Law School had worked to make me independent of her and not dependent on her, and in the process drawn me closer to my meaning with a letter from a recent graduate, written a few years ago to members of the Law School faculty who had taught him, on the occasion of the death of one of them:

I am not sure why I got in the car and drove eighty miles to attend Mr. Wettach's funeral; but I believe that if I can put it right it is this: all of you did something really important for me. You jointly and singly equipped me to perform my life's work. You have made it possible for me not only to make a good living, but to make that living serving the law with love, and that's right important to me.

1. ALBERT COATES, GREETINGS TO FIRST YEAR LAW STUDENTS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR 10 (1983).

I hope to live my life in such a way, and with no other ambition than to do what I am doing well; give my family a good home; give my children as good an opportunity as my father who drove a truck and educated me by the sweat of his brow and strength of his shoulder. And perhaps when it is all behind me, and if I have done it well, and if there is then such a need, I will follow in the footsteps of men from the Law School, the University, and Chapel Hill who have gone before me in public service undertakings.²

Bill Aycock is a man in whose footsteps we all should aspire to follow. He is our community's memory of the best that our law school has been and the greatness toward which we strive. Bill's association with the law school began when he entered as a student in 1945, after returning from World War II. He graduated in January 1948 and immediately joined the faculty. He served as Chancellor from 1956 to 1964, then returned to the law school he so loved. He taught full-time until his retirement in 1986, and continues to be an active member of the law school community today.

Bill has ever been the historian, a high school history teacher in his day, an aide to Dr. Frank Porter Graham during his historical work in India and Pakistan, the Chancellor who led the University through its notable encounters with the Speaker Ban, and a teacher of property law who illuminated legal conventions through references to feudal estates and interests in land. It is thus not surprising that he served as inspiration for this UNC Law School Sesquicentennial History project. He was our principal archivist and defining architect.

We are not the first to praise Bill Aycock. Lifelong friends such as Judge J. Dickson Phillips, Jr., and the late Dean Henry P. Brandis, Jr., have elsewhere spoken of Bill as a student, classmate, faculty colleague, and companion over the years.³ For the law school family,

2. *Id.*

3. See generally J. Dickson Phillips, Jr., *Bill Aycock in Law School*, 64 N.C. L. Rev. 207 (1986); Henry P. Brandis, Jr., *William Brantley Aycock; There Are So Many of Him*, 64 N.C. L. Rev. 211 (1986). Judge James Dickson Phillips, in a retirement tribute, retold a story about Bill Aycock, stemming from their times together in law school. He said:

One winter day we woke to find that we'd had one of our rare hip-deep snowfalls overnight. I looked out the window of my house on the Pittsboro Road on the south edge of town and went back to bed. In a little while my wife looked out and came back to tell me that she'd just seen Aycock walking up the middle of the road from his house three miles out, up to his

Bill Aycock is nothing less than our citadel of truth—a living symbol of that same university citadel that he nurtured as faculty member and chancellor, and to which he has given his whole life. He embodies everything that has made the School of Law great: a passion for truth blended with uncompromising devotion to his fellow human beings.

hips in snow, heading for school.

Here was a man who the winter before, under the compulsion of war's circumstances, had been trying to stay alive and avoid frozen feet in the Ardennes, and who now under no compulsion but that of felt duty, was plowing through Ardennes-depth snow to go up and talk about "last clear chance," or the Rule in Wild's Case or something equally inconsequential over the long haul. . . . As usual, his influence was felt. Under the compulsion of shame, I struggled out and up the hill, following the path he'd plowed.

