

IN MEMORIAM: WILLIAM BRANTLEY AYCOCK*

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William Brantley “Bill” Aycock passed away on June 20, 2015, at ninety-nine years old. A graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (M.A. 1937, J.D. 1948), Bill Aycock served his alma mater for twenty-nine years as a law professor and seven years as chancellor. This Article, a collection of memories shared by his colleagues and friends at a memorial service held at the University of North Carolina School of Law on October 26, 2015, honors Chancellor Aycock’s marvelous and dynamic life.

I. FEELINGS OF UNREMEMBERED PLEASURE: THE BILL AYCOCK I KNEW†

The *North Carolina Law Review* may have had a more intimate and long-lived connection with an author, editor, and subject than the one it enjoyed for more than half a century with William Brantley Aycock. But I doubt it.

In 1986, the *Review* celebrated Bill’s retirement from what was perhaps the most storied classroom in the history of the law school.¹ A decade later, it dedicated the sesquicentennial history of the school

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† Part I was composed by Dean Martin H. Brinkley.

1. Henry Brandis, Jr., *William Brantley Aycock: There Are So Many of Him*, 64 N.C. L. REV. 211, 211 (1986); Kenneth S. Broun, *Tribute to William Brantley Aycock: Foreword*, 64 N.C. L. REV. 205, 205–06 (1986); James L. Godfrey, *William Brantley Aycock: University Administrator 1957–1964*, 64 N.C. L. REV. 215, 215 (1986); J. Dickinson Phillips, Jr., *Bill Aycock in Law School*, 64 N.C. L. REV. 207, 207 (1986).

to him.² Bill's own scholarship appeared often in its pages, beginning with notes written in his student days as a member of the fabled Class of 1948,³ and running to doctrinal articles on real property⁴ and trade regulation,⁵ memoirs on retiring and departed friends and colleagues,⁶ and essays on the history of the school.⁷

It is most fitting that the journal he served as editor in chief should have one last dance with Bill, just after the end of his long and splendid life. I congratulate the Volume 95 Board of Editors for having the good judgment to play the tune. Others—John Orth, Esphur Foster, and Judith Wegner, whose essays grace these pages—knew him as a senior colleague and supporter of their teaching and leadership. I knew him as the keeper of the flame, a sort of Ali-Baba whose quiet whisper could open a cave of treasures in the form of wisdom about what was, what is, and what may be.

Shuffling off this mortal coil just four months shy of his one-hundredth birthday, by anyone's lights Bill lived a long life. A twice-decorated veteran of the European Theater in World War II, he is rightly thought of as one of America's "Greatest Generation."⁸ But there was a critical, often overlooked, difference between him and many of his UNC School of Law companions. Bill was born in 1915, two years before the United States entered World War I. The other members of the famous Class of 1948 study group—James Dickson

2. Martin H. Brinkley & Judith Welch Wegner, *Our "Citadel of Truth," William Brantley Aycock*, 73 N.C. L. REV. 565, 565 (1995) (dedicating the University of North Carolina School of Law sesquicentennial history issue of the *North Carolina Law Review* to William Aycock).

3. See, e.g., William B. Aycock, Note, *Courts—Jury—Exclusion of Women from the Jury List*, 25 N.C. L. REV. 334 (1947) (suggesting that when women are intentionally and systematically excluded from a jury in a North Carolina court that a "defendant's motion to quash the indictment or challenge the array should be sustained").

4. See, e.g., William B. Aycock, *Homestead Exemption in North Carolina*, 29 N.C. L. REV. 143 (1951) (setting forth the basic doctrine of homestead exemption as provided by the North Carolina Constitution).

5. See, e.g., William B. Aycock, *North Carolina Law on Antitrust and Consumer Protection*, 60 N.C. L. REV. 207 (1982) (setting forth the then-current state of antitrust and consumer protection law in North Carolina and advocating for revisions to the statutory scheme).

6. See, e.g., William B. Aycock, *Albert Coates—Educator (1896–1989): My Most Unforgettable Character*, 67 N.C. L. REV. 743 (1989) (remembering Professor Albert Coates, who William Aycock knew both as a student and as a colleague).

7. See, e.g., William B. Aycock, *A Wonderful Journey: 1945–95*, 73 N.C. L. REV. 571, 572 (1995) (commemorating the sesquicentennial anniversary of the University of North Carolina School of Law by recounting his half-century as "a member of the law school family").

8. See generally TOM BROKAW, *THE GREATEST GENERATION* (1998) (popularizing the term that is used to describe those who endured the Great Depression and went on to fight in World War II).

Phillips, Jr., who is still with us, and the late William Clyde Friday, William A. Dees, and John R. Jordan—were all born in the early 1920s. They were teenagers when Bill, twenty-three, having completed his M.A. in history at the University of North Carolina, began teaching at Greensboro High School to support his family after his lawyer father became ill. Future Governor Terry Sanford, UNC School of Law Class of 1946, born in 1917, came closest to Bill in age and experience. Both lived through the last part of the Great Depression as what my grandmother would have called “grown men.”

In some ways, my friendship with Bill Aycock was a case of being, like Wordsworth, “[s]urprised by joy.”⁹ Bill’s retirement in 1985, the result of a university policy to which he yielded with great reluctance, meant that he had left the classroom four years before I entered law school. So I missed the privilege of taking his property, antitrust, and federal jurisdiction classes, remembered for decades by our alumni as the pinnacle of their law school experiences. There was no reason we should even have met. I carry around in my mind’s eye the image of him parking his big car (I think it was a Mercury Grand Marquis; vintage, sometime in the first Nixon administration) in the faculty parking lot sometime during my first year. Some explanation of why we did become friends is therefore in order.

When I was a child, I was considered odd by my peers and more than a few of my parents’ friends. I was known as the boy who visited the old folks. I rode my bicycle around the small town where we lived, knocking on the doors of older people, wheedling my way into their living rooms. And once I got there, I would start asking questions. Why is our town this way? Who made it the way it is? I was thirsty to understand the reasons why things were the way they were, and the old people seemed to know. *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*. They had all the best stories.

My connection with Bill began from the same impulse.

A sixth sense told me that he (from Lucama in Wilson County) and I (from Wake Forest in northern Wake, just thirty-six miles away) had something in common. I had come back to Carolina from years in New England schools because I wanted, in some way as yet undetermined, to help my native state. I knew that of the 100 good things that had ever happened to North Carolina, ninety-five had run through Chapel Hill sometime, somehow. Coming home was an intentional thing with me. I needed to sort out for myself what it

9. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, *Surprised by Joy—Impatient as the Wind*, in WILLIAM WORDSWORTH: THE POEMS 863 (John O. Hayden ed., 1977).

meant to be a Tar Heel. And so it seemed to me that people like Bill Aycock—people who were the essence of our university—knew the things that I had come back to learn. So one day, aged about twenty-three and sans bicycle, I knocked on his door in the faculty wing of Van Hecke-Wettach Hall.

A merry voice called out, “Come in!” There behind the desk was a small mole of a man in a short-sleeved shirt and mismatched tie, peering out from large owlish bifocals, perched on a hard chair behind an ancient Royal typewriter. I introduced myself. Bill acted as if my temerity in interrupting him was the most natural thing in the world. We fell to talking. The stories started to flow. This, I thought, was what Chapel Hill was supposed to be all about.

Bill’s old students often speak of the times they called him, sitting at their desks in practice, for advice about a client’s real estate problem or antitrust issue. I’ve mused about why they did. Former Carolina law students often call their old professors, perhaps to shore up their understanding of the theory at work behind a given doctrine, to sharpen their understanding of counterarguments, or as a shortcut to enriched research. But from what I’ve heard, Bill’s old students called because they felt he somehow could understand the client’s whole problem, in all its messiness. How could this be true? After all, Bill never practiced law a day in his life. I never had occasion to consult him about a practice problem, but I’d wager that growing up as the son of a country lawyer in a tiny Wilson County community had something to do with it. Bill understood down to the marrow of his bones “the structure of society and how its groups interlock and interact, because he live[d] in a community so small that he [could] keep it all in view.”¹⁰ The stories he told me about former professors, chancellors, and university presidents were just first cousins of what he’d learned in Lucama.

Our friendship blossomed into a sort of adoption of Bill by the Volume 70 Board of Editors of the *North Carolina Law Review*, on which I was privileged to serve. We asked him to be the speaker at the *Review* banquet in the spring of my third year. Mounted on the wall of my office at the law school today is a precious photograph of him with the members of our board, seated on an armchair between Editor in Chief Paul Schwartz and me. There is another copy on the wall of the *Review* offices in the basement of the law school.

Bill’s path to the law faculty will never again be replicated, no matter how long the law school exists. He was hired as an assistant

10. Robert H. Jackson, *The County Seat Lawyer*, 36 A.B.A. J. 497, 497 (1950).

professor in January 1948, having finished his law degree the previous month as the top student of his year and, as I've said, as editor in chief of the *Law Review*. To some degree, his appointment was a product of the time in which it occurred. Soldiers had returned from war; colleges were flooded with students; America's massive postwar economic expansion had begun. It was a good time to join a university faculty. That Professors Van Hecke, Wettach, Brandis, Coates, and the rest thought highly enough of their own student to make him their peer, with no comparison shopping at Harvard or Yale, was both a tribute to Bill's academic prowess and a master stroke of recognition. To be able to acknowledge human greatness when it is right there staring you in the face is not a gift partaken of by many of us.

Bill, I have owed to you

[i]n hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
 Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
 And passing even into my purer mind,
 With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
 Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
 As have no slight or trivial influence
 On that best portion of a good man's life,
 His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
 Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
 To them I may have owed another gift,
 Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
 In which the burden of the mystery,
 In which the heavy and the weary weight
 Of all this unintelligible world,
 Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on,—
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul:
 While with an eye made quiet by the power
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
 We see into the life of things.¹¹

Thank you.

11. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour. July 13, 1798*, in WORDSWORTH *supra* note 9, at 357–59.

II. TALKING WITH BILL^{††}

I joined the faculty at the beginning of the 1978–79 academic year. Bill Aycock was still teaching at that time; Henry Brandis and Albert Coates were retired. But I was privileged to get to know them all.

The law school made a record five new hires that year. I was the last to arrive on site, so I got the last vacant office—an interior, windowless office. I won't say I wasn't disappointed. I had come from the metropolitan New York area and was looking forward to an office window that didn't look out on urban blight. But, as it turned out, I had the best office of all—across the hall from Bill Aycock and Henry Brandis, who had a little emeritus office.

As a property teacher, I had one great fear: that I would cover the material too slow to finish the course, or too fast for the students to keep up. I had been careful to pick the same casebook as Professor Aycock, and I casually dropped in on him about once a week to check on his progress and pace myself accordingly. During those visits, I had a chance to chat with Bill about property—and later about many things.

Ah, memory . . . As I think about those chats, many stories come to mind. And as I sat down to write these remarks, I found myself talking with Bill. I realized that I didn't want to write about Bill, or even write to Bill. Bill was someone you talked *with*, not someone you wrote *to*. So, Bill, I'm going to talk with you again, one last time. These others can listen in.

Bill, you told me many stories about your time as chancellor—some of them more candid and revealing than I expected. I realize now that you were inducting me into teaching—and into the Carolina tradition, as we were both inducting our students into the legal tradition.

There's only time for one or two of your chancellor stories.

One time, in your last year as chancellor, you decided to begin water fluoridation in Chapel Hill. (At that time, the university owned the town's water system as it owned the town's telephone system.) A local resident was convinced that fluoridation was a Communist plot to weaken Americans and was determined to stop it. Fluoridation was

^{††} Part II consists of remarks that were delivered on Monday, October 26, 2015, by Professor John V. Orth at the memorial ceremony for William Aycock held at the University of North Carolina School of Law. As a reprint, it does not follow the *North Carolina Law Review's* standard citation and style practices.

scheduled to begin on the first of some month. (I forget which.) As the date approached, the critic became more and more insistent and had a lot of people in town all stirred up. Well, you went down to the water works a couple of months earlier and told them to begin fluoridating the water right away. And at your last meeting with the critic, you asked him if he had been drinking the water recently. He said he drank it and was storing as much as he could. Then you told him, “Well, you’ve been drinking fluoridated water for weeks now without ill effect.” That set him back. You laughed. Maybe it’s the effect of memory, but somehow the battles seemed jollier then.

Another story comes to mind, this one a little more sobering. You were in your office in South Building when your secretary rang and said that someone wanted to see you right away. “Send him in,” you said. The door opened, and an elderly professor—you didn’t name him—came in. He walked very slowly, putting one foot painfully in front of the other. It took him a long time to cross the room and sink down in the chair next to your desk. He was breathing heavily and had to catch his breath. “What can I do for you, Professor?” you finally asked. Between gasps, the old gentleman managed to say, “They’re trying to make me retire Say I’m too old to teach.” This time you didn’t laugh, and your smile was rueful. I think that story was on your mind as you faced the end of your own teaching career. It certainly is on my mind now that my soul is in your soul’s stead.¹²

As an old hand at property teaching, you gave me a lot of good advice. “Don’t be distracted while teaching. Be sure to stop at the men’s room on the way to class.” As I recall, Bill, you used a more colloquial expression, but it came to the same thing. Before each of the literally thousands of classes I have taught since then, I have always taken your advice.

Another time, you pointed out to me that, like Zacchaeus in the Bible, you were “little of stature.”¹³ And you said that when you were in high school and hung around the filling station after school with the other boys, you were the shortest one, so you always walked up to them with a smile. Years later, you went into class smiling. Even then, I could see that you were telling me to lighten up, so as not to put the students off.

For all my class preparation, there was a lot I didn’t understand about property law and the cases in the book. And that became

12. Cf. *Job* 16:4 (King James).

13. *Luke* 19:3 (King James).

apparent as we talked. You were able to put me straight without embarrassing me or making me feel bad. That's why you were a serial winner of the McCall Teaching Award.

When you retired in December 1984, Property was still a two-semester course: three hours in the fall, three hours in the spring. (It still should be.) I was assigned to take over your class. I remember you sat me down with the seating chart and went over the students: whose daddy had been your student, who had an uncle in the general assembly or on the state supreme court, who talked a lot, who didn't. You knew their names—something I have always had trouble with (as my students know). The composition of the class has changed a lot since then, but I've reached the point that I now have students whose brothers or sisters—or mothers or fathers—were students of mine.

Well, our styles were different, but I'm pleased to say that at graduation in May 1985 there were joint winners of the McCall award for the first and only time—you and me. It was a great honor, greater because it was shared with you.

Bill, it's been great talking with you again, but it's time to hear from some others.

III. REMEMBERING “WILD BILL” AYCOCK^{†††}

Good afternoon to the Aycock family and everyone else. My name is Esphur Eudean Foster, and for twenty-eight years and four months, I worked here, with twenty-five of those years as the happy and joyous voice of UNC Law. The first three years involved an arduous and boring task—keeping track of all the furniture in the law school. It was a nightmare! Except when the professors were in their offices and I had the rare opportunity to talk to them and get to know them person-to-person. No one was trying to impress anyone. We were simply doing our jobs as best we could, and treating each other as human beings. One of those human beings was Professor William Brantley Aycock, professor and chancellor emeritus, a grand southern gentleman of fervor, grace, love, and passion.

Of course, I already knew about Professor Aycock. Our mother often said that had anyone other than Professor Aycock been chancellor when desegregation was mandated here it really would have been a mess on this campus. I was more than delighted to get to

^{†††} Part III consists of remarks that were delivered on Monday, October 26, 2015, by Esphur E. Foster at the memorial ceremony for William Aycock held at the University of North Carolina School of Law. As a reprint, it does not follow the *North Carolina Law Review's* standard citation and style practices.

know him and found him to be so humane and such a passionate person, more than I could have ever imagined. How marvelous it was to know a person who had such fervency that the students changed “William Brantley” to “Wild Bill.”

I was horrified when I first heard what I thought were disparaging remarks about his teaching.

You have to remember that we were just midway through the post-Civil Rights era here in Chapel Hill that my brother and his buddies had begun. I was unaccustomed to youngsters speaking negatively about their elders and superiors, as they were called back in the day. I thought that they were being sacrilegious and said so. The students asked me if I had ever heard him teach and I said, “No,” and they said, “You just wait.” Sure enough, one day, I happened to be upstairs near classroom three, and I heard his fervor, and I said, “They were correct.” I listened for a moment or two, and I thoroughly enjoyed his passion for property.

Professor Aycock was a great storyteller, too. Of course, the one story that he would not tell you was about his love and devotion for and to Ms. Grace, the love of his life and the mother of his children. She suffered with multiple sclerosis for many, many years. Along with all the other responsibilities that he had, his passion and love for her were beyond measure. He did not have to tell that story. He lived it for all the world to witness—a true love story.

One of his favorite stories to tell, which also demonstrated his humanity, was a story that involved his pride and joy, a story about those two precious children—his daughter, Ms. Nancy Aycock, and his son, Mr. William P. Aycock II—and their childhood friends.

Although he had many duties that included being a husband, a professor, a chancellor, having a home to maintain, a classroom to run, two professional offices to run, he would shotgun over sometimes and play in the yard at home. I guess some days he felt he had to be Wild Bill. As you can imagine, his yard was always filled with children and an assorted array of toys—coloring books, dolls of all kinds and their attire, toys that were handmade from cardboard boxes, rocks of all colors and sizes, and toys professionally manufactured. And of course, (oh this, I’m fixing to say a word that I manufactured, I made up) we all know how rough and “tumber-ly” children can be.

One day a group of his neighbors came to the Aycock home to register a complaint about the children playing in the yard all the time and his grass not being pristine and up to snuff. The grass and the yard did not reflect the standards of the Greenwood Road section. Greenwood was the name of the neighborhood where Professor

Aycock's home was located, and it was the Governor's Club of the day. The yard's grass was just not as well kept as all the other grass yards in the neighborhood. The neighbors complained that the grass had bald spots and brown patches and that it just looked like an eyesore in the neighborhood. Professor Aycock simply replied, "Well, we are busy raising children over here—not grass." Needless to say, no more complaints were ever registered again about the Aycocks' yard.

We continued to exchange Christmas cards and notes over the years. My life has been greatly enriched because I knew William Brantley "Wild Bill" Aycock, a grand southern gentleman who was filled with fervor, grace, love, and passion for life—and for property law.

Thank you.

IV. REMEMBERING BILL AYCOCK: THE RETIREMENT YEARS^{††††}

Bill Aycock has meant so much to so many for so long.¹⁴ Although he was memorialized by the *North Carolina Law Review* at the end of his long teaching career in 1986,¹⁵ it is fitting that the *Review* offer additional reflections following Bill's death at age ninety-nine in June 2015 and the law school's program honoring his life in October of that year. I appreciate the *Review's* inviting me to be among the contributors. Although I have previously written and spoken comprehensively about Bill's life and what he meant to me, I've decided to focus these remarks on Bill's path through the retirement years, a thirty-year period in which I got to know him well.

At the time of Bill's retirement, then-Dean Ken Broun wrote:

William Brantley Aycock has been the ideal faculty member. He has achieved superiority in teaching, in scholarship, and in public service. He has supplied his colleagues and his dean with good and wise counsel. He has consistently supported his school, his colleagues, and his dean effectively and with good grace and humor.¹⁶

This Essay will suggest that these wonderful characteristics continued to shine during Bill's retirement years, even as he passed from

^{††††} Part IV was composed by Professor Judith Welch Wegner.

¹⁴ Kathrine R. Everett Law Library has created a digital collection featuring many tributes to Chancellor Aycock. *Tributes, William B. Aycock*, KATHRINE R. EVERETT L. LIB., <http://aycock.unc.edu/tributes/> [<https://perma.cc/9B25-U4X6>].

¹⁵ See *supra* note 1 and accompanying text.

¹⁶ Broun, *supra* note 1, at 206.

a public life into a more private one. I hope that others of us can continue to learn from Bill's extraordinary life as we, too, approach our final years.

A. Bill as Teacher

I served as law dean from 1989–1999, a time that overlapped the first fifteen years or so of Bill's retirement. He was still an active presence at the law school, and a legendary teacher who all members of the faculty knew had won the Frederick B. McCall Award for Teaching (selected by the graduating class) five times out of the nineteen years it had existed during his tenure. I believe that there was some sort of rotation rule, even then, that required winners to sit out one or two years before they could be eligible for future selection. As a new generation of teachers began to receive recognition for their excellence following the retirement of the "greats" (including Bill Aycock, Bill Murphy, Ferebee Taylor, and Dan Pollitt), I began to wonder what I could do to maintain and memorialize the commitment to excellent teaching that was a hallmark of the school when I arrived in 1981 and had continued since. The result was a piece in the 1997 Dean's Report that featured reflections from Bill and from younger McCall Award winners (many of whom are now at or are nearing retirement age): Elizabeth Gibson, Jack Boger, John Orth, Patricia Bryan, Lissa Broome, and Don Hornstein.¹⁷

Bill drew on both how he liked to be taught and on collegial discussions to define what is required for great teaching. Here's what he said—speaking wisdom that had not faded with retirement:

- Never put anything ahead of your teaching. Prepare yourself as well as you possibly can Never miss a class unless it's absolutely unavoidable, and never keep a class overtime.
- Try to teach everybody in the class, not just those with the most gifted minds. Students should be able to succeed, even if they cannot excel.
- Be organized. Continually update plans . . . so that students know what's expected of them and so that the last class is no more hurried than the first.
- Treat students with respect. Never try to cross-examine students, especially when it's clear that [they] can't handle it because they're confused or unprepared.

17. *True Teachers Across the Generations: Following the Tracks of "Freddie B" McCall*, 1997 DEAN'S REP., at 7–9 (Univ. of N.C. Sch. of Law ed., 1997) (on file with the North Carolina Law Review).

- Learn about teaching from all available sources, including experience in public school teaching and strategies employed by fellow law teachers.¹⁸

Many of the insights shared by the “young” McCall winners of that time captured similar themes or the deep undercurrents of Bill’s expressed views.

- “Effective teachers identify closely with their students.”
- “Good teachers really care that their students succeed.”
- “Good teachers convey a real sense of excitement about the subject matter of their courses.”
- “Outstanding teachers are learned in their fields of expertise and must have a sense of mastery of their material.”
- “Outstanding teachers recognize the importance of humility.”
- “Good teachers are good communicators.”¹⁹

It seemed clear then, as it still does now, that Bill and others of his generation served as role models of excellent teaching well beyond the day of his last lecture on federal jurisdiction. Indeed, Bill’s stature as a legendary exemplar of good teaching will undoubtedly continue well past the time of his death. In talking with many law alumni over the years, it is evident that Bill taught them to be outstanding lawyers, but in doing so, also taught them that being an excellent lawyer involves the kind of respect, preparation, and dedication that he daily portrayed so indelibly in the classroom.

B. Bill as Scholar

The law school celebrated its sesquicentennial in 1995. Bill had been retired for ten years by then, but as I reflected on how to capture the school’s evolution over the prior fifty years and its special spirit as an integral part of a great public university, I knew I needed Bill’s advice and Bill’s involvement. Bill was ever the scholar²⁰ and historian.²¹ Bill

18. *Id.* at 7.

19. *Id.* at 8 (collecting thoughts from various faculty members about the meaning of “good teaching”).

20. See generally William B. Aycock, *North Carolina Law on Antitrust and Consumer Protection*, 60 N.C. L. REV. 205 (1982); William B. Aycock, *Article 26—Foreign Personal Representatives and Ancillary Administration*, 11 WAKE FOREST L. REV. 75 (1975); William B. Aycock, *Article 17—Sales, Leases or Mortgages of Real Property*, 11 WAKE FOREST L. REV. 35 (1975); William B. Aycock, *Antitrust and Unfair Trade Practice Law in North Carolina—Federal Law Compared*, 50 N.C. L. REV. 199 (1972); William B. Aycock,

was particularly appreciative and fond of the *North Carolina Law Review*, having served as associate editor and then as editor in chief during his years as a student and as *Review* adviser during his early tenure on the faculty. Rather than trying to commission an updated “history” or a fancy “picture book” from a ghostwriter, Bill and I concluded that it would be best to ask the *Review* to consider publishing a collection of essays, written by members of the community who were directly knowledgeable about associated events. As the two of us began to develop our ideas, we knew we were missing something important. It was then that we turned to recent graduate (now Dean) Martin Brinkley to help steer the project to successful completion.²²

Bill was much more than an adviser to this project. He penned three essays of his own, offering his own reflections on fifty years of a life spent closely linked to the law school, as well as tributes to prior deans, his classmate Dickson Phillips and his friend and colleague Robert Byrd.²³ Going beyond these contributions, he also worked with law school registrar, Karen Haywood, to compile a comprehensive set of biographies for all faculty members who had taught at the law school in the prior fifty-year period.²⁴ It was a prodigious task, since there were over 100 present or former faculty members within that universe at that time. Bill realized that the faculty, like the students, play a crucial role in the law school every day, and wanted to reflect that history which would otherwise undoubtedly have been lost. Bill later commented that of these many colleagues he “had maximum high regard for ninety-seven

Introduction to Certain Members of the Federal Question Family, 49 N.C. L. REV. 1 (1970); William B. Aycock, *Introduction to Water Use Law in North Carolina*, 46 N.C. L. REV. 1 (1967); William B. Aycock, *The Court of Military Appeals The Second Year*, 2 J. PUB. L. 254 (1953); William B. Aycock, *The Court of Military Appeals—The First Year*, 31 N.C. L. REV. 1 (1952); William B. Aycock, *Homestead Exemption in North Carolina*, 29 N.C. L. REV. 143 (1950).

21. Bill’s first intellectual love was history. After graduating from North Carolina State University with a background in teaching, he pursued a master’s degree in history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. For his 1937 master’s thesis on regulation of tobacco in colonial Virginia see *Articles*, William B. Aycock, KATHRINE R. EVERETT L. LIB., <http://aycock.unc.edu/articles/> [<https://perma.cc/6Z5R-U3KM>]. Many of the courses he taught (property, unfair trade, federal jurisdiction) had deep historical resonance.

22. See generally *The University of North Carolina School of Law: A Sesquicentennial History*, 73 N.C. L. REV. 563 (1995) (publishing a collection of essays and articles about the law school’s history).

23. See generally Aycock, *supra* note 7; William B. Aycock, *The Vietnam Era: The Deanship of James Dickson Phillips, Jr. (1964–74)*, 73 N.C. L. REV. 601 (1995); William B. Aycock, *An Evolving Institution: The Deanship of Robert Gray Byrd (1974–79)*, 73 N.C. L. REV. 622 (1995). These articles are available in the Kathrine R. Everett Law Library’s online collection. *Tributes*, William B. Aycock, *supra* note 14.

24. See *The University of North Carolina School of Law: A Sesquicentennial History*, 73 N.C. L. REV. 563, app. B (1995) (on file with the North Carolina Law Review).

and minimum high regard for three.”²⁵ He had high standards, but he also had high hopes for other human beings.

C. Bill as Public Servant, Counselor, and Friend: Grace Under Pressure

Bill arrived well prepared to serve as chancellor of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill from 1957–1964.²⁶ He was a callow young man of thirty-seven when taking on that mantle. He had come to that position after distinguished military service in World War II, an unmatched trajectory through law school that led to his being offered a position on the faculty before he even graduated, and service to the United Nations assisting Frank Porter Graham in Graham’s efforts to bring peace to India and Pakistan during the Kashmiri conflict of the 1950s.²⁷

As chancellor, he set a new course for the post-war years when research became a recognized core function and health affairs programming grew. He navigated pressures for enrollment growth and increased access to higher education. He understood the threats to academic freedom in the air during the red-baiting era of Senator Joe McCarthy. His insights about these and other responsibilities are well framed in his many significant speeches.²⁸ But he is likely better remembered for his leadership in two other respects.

Bill was committed to justice, including racial justice. In taking on the challenge of racial injustice during the fraught period during which he served, Bill brought not only wisdom, but craft, to his work.²⁹ There are numerous tales of Bill’s commitment to bring racial justice to the campus. One that I particularly enjoy concerns his very pragmatic approach to introducing medical students of color to

25. William B. Aycock, Acceptance of the Award, Address at the North Caroliniana Society Award Proceedings (Mar. 22, 2007), in NORTH CAROLINIANA SOC’Y IMPRINTS, no. 43, 2007, at 21, 23, <http://aycock.unc.edu/north-caroliniana-society-award-proceedings/> [<https://perma.cc/5X9B-WAEQ> (staff-uploaded archive)].

26. See Judith Welch Wegner, William B. Aycock, Our Champion, Address at the North Caroliniana Society Award Proceedings (Mar. 22, 2007), in NORTH CAROLINIANA SOC’Y IMPRINTS, *supra* note 25, at 5, <http://aycock.unc.edu/north-caroliniana-society-award-proceedings/> [<https://perma.cc/5X9B-WAEQ>].

27. *Id.*

28. For speeches collected in the Kathrine R. Everett Law Library’s Digital library, particularly Aycock’s installation address, see *Speeches, William B. Aycock*, KATHRINE R. EVERETT L. LIB., <http://aycock.unc.edu/manuscripts/> [<https://perma.cc/2QGK-92X8>]. For a more extensive collection of speeches, see generally WILLIAM BRANTLEY AYCOCK, SPEECHES AND STATEMENTS OF WILLIAM BRANTLEY AYCOCK (1989) [hereinafter SPEECHES AND STATEMENTS].

29. See Wegner, *supra* note 26, at 11 for a more detailed discussion.

positions at UNC Memorial Hospital. Fully understanding the culture of the times, Bill said that white patients could be asked whether they would agree to be assisted by African American medical students. No one objected and things moved forward from there. He sought out allies, for example, hiring Dean Smith as basketball coach, knowing full well the potential for Smith to bring equal opportunity and racial diversity to the basketball program. He made sure that the law helped him move ahead toward racial justice, insisting that a contract with a bowling alley for students in physical education provided that all students, black or white, would be accommodated.³⁰

And he used his good sense. Another favorite story concerned his response to a safety officer who came to South Building (the administrative office building) to report that there was a march involving adults and children, many of whom were black, near Cameron Avenue.³¹ Bill told the officer that he should tell the protestors that he hoped they would walk on the sidewalk (rather than the street) for the safety of the children.³² He also asked that they not disturb classes, but invited them to come and march around South Building, stressing that they were welcome on campus.³³ He maintained his low-key effectiveness, taking steps day by day to reach the goal of greater justice. When he became chancellor in 1957, there were fifteen black students on campus.³⁴ When he finished in 1964, there were eighty-two.³⁵

Bill also had an enormous gift for framing policy arguments, drawing insight from the law and tapping his great gifts as an effective advocate. As a brilliant teacher, he also knew that he had to educate those facing difficult social challenges, linking light and liberty. He used these gifts to good effect, both in dealing with racial issues and with the emerging issue of the Speaker Ban,³⁶ giving others succinct and effective arguments to carry forth into the public realm. Two more of his exemplary speeches illustrate this approach—one made to an alumni luncheon on campus in 1960 during a highly racially charged gubernatorial campaign; and the other in which he addressed

30. *Id.*

31. *Id.*

32. *Id.*

33. *Id.*

34. *Id.*

35. *Id.* at 12.

36. Act of June 26, 1963, ch. 1207, §§ 1–2, 1963 N.C. Sess. Laws 1688, 1688–89 (repealed 1995).

the Greensboro Bar Association on “Law and the University” following the passage of the Speaker Ban law.³⁷

Bill’s stellar leadership and service did not end when he retired as chancellor to return to teaching, nor when he retired from the law faculty. He criss-crossed the state, advocating on behalf of the Equal Rights Amendment from the 1970s into the 1980s. He also continued to speak to civic groups, explaining at a meeting of the Johnston County Forum in 1988 the connection between education and citizenship, setting forth basic concepts of constitutionalism, civics, and civil rights for all.³⁸

As he grew older, Bill began to suffer more from the frailties of the flesh. His vision dimmed so that he could no longer drive, and in time, hearing became difficult. Nonetheless, he was always ready to provide counsel on troubling issues when called upon to do so. I remember talking with him on numerous occasions about both law school and university issues, including those that arose when I served as faculty chair at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and as faculty assembly chair for the university system. Bill was not one to force his views on anyone. He was always circumspect and would often recur to first principles in helping puzzle through a challenging situation. His core beliefs remained unchanged from those he had shared in a prayer he uttered on the occasion of his investiture as chancellor:

Give us the desire to search for the truth,
 Reverence to know the truth,
 Courage to protect the truth,
 And wisdom to practice the truth
 So that we may, together, advance on this earth
 Nearer to the goals of mercy,
 Love and understanding of all mankind.
 Amen.³⁹

37. For copies of these speeches, see *Speeches, William B. Aycock*, *supra* note 28. For further discussion of Bill’s role in the Speaker Ban controversy, see generally Gene R. Nichol, *Bill Aycock and the North Carolina Speaker Ban Law*, 79 N.C. L. REV. 1725 (2001) (discussing Chancellor Aycock’s efforts to repeal the statute and illustrating how his actions teach “important lessons about leadership, courage, and the foundations of academic freedom”).

38. For copies of these speeches, see generally *SPEECHES AND STATEMENTS*, *supra* note 28.

39. William Brantley Aycock, Address for William Brantley Aycock’s Formal Installation as Chancellor at Kenan Stadium (Oct. 12, 1957), in *SPEECHES AND STATEMENTS*, *supra* note 28, at 6–17.

Bill faced different sorts of challenges in his last two decades, but he withstood these challenges with remarkable good humor, courage, strength, and grace. I remember talking with him about a voting rights issue I had been grappling with when he was ninety-seven or ninety-eight. He gave me back brilliant insights, cloaked, as ever, in wit. He was able to find joy in the day-to-day, despite health concerns and losses. His beloved wife, Grace Mewborn Aycock, died in 1996 after suffering from multiple sclerosis for many years. His son William Preston Aycock II died in 2013, leaving Bill's son-in-law, Dan Leigh, and his daughter, Nancy (who is his sole remaining child), along with other extended family members. Notwithstanding these difficult losses, Bill always rose to the occasion as he received visitors, quipped to doctors and nurses, and enjoyed the fellowship of family and friends. He left us with memories from throughout his long life, ones we will never lose.

CONCLUSION^{††††}

Over the years, Bill received many tributes from many observers. He was always humble in receiving such testimonials, yet he also understood his role within the larger academic, legal, and broader communities he touched during his long life. His stature as a wise and valiant leader during the Speaker Ban and his inspiring work as a teacher and scholar have been heralded by many. I hope that these comments from colleagues and friends about his marvelous and dynamic life may offer a fresh portrayal that will resonate with the personal memories of *Law Review* readers. Bill set a high standard during both his public, and later, more private years. I am sure that many of us will keep Bill's memory and wisdom close to our hearts as we too move through the remainder of our professional and personal lives.

^{††††} The conclusion was composed by Professor Judith Welch Wegner.

