

EULOGY

GEORGE CALVIN ROGERS, JR. DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR EMERITUS

Mr. Chairman and colleagues,

It is my sad duty to report the death of our colleague, George Calvin Rogers, Jr. on October 7, 1997. Professor Rogers will be remembered as one of the Department of History's most distinguished members. His particular distinction arose not merely from his personal and professional involvement with, and service to, Charleston and the state of South Carolina, but the quality of these associations.

Charleston-born and educated with a B.A. degree from the College of Charleston in 1943, after completing his graduate study -- M.A. and Ph.D. -- at the University of Chicago in 1953 and brief appointments at the the University of Pennsylvania, Hunter College and Emory University, he joined the History faculty of the University of South Carolina in 1958 in which he spent the remainder of his career. When he retired from the University in 1986 after finishing a term as Chairman of the department during the previous three years, the title awarded him, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, truly expressed his illustrious record.

His historical vision focused on early American aspects of his native state, methodologically emphasizing the importance of local studies. Such fruits were his biography of William Laughton Smith, The Evolution of a Federalist, his History of Georgetown County, South Carolina, Generation of Lawyers, A History of the south Carolina Bar, and the monograph of which he was the most proud, Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys. His sense of the evidential importance of personal records led to his editorial involvement with the inauguration of the still running series of volumes, The Papers of Henry Laurens. All told, Professor Rogers co-authored or edited some 16 books as well as significant articles and reviews. He furthered the cause of historical study within the state by editing The South Carolina Historical Magazine between 1964 and 1970, serving as Chairman of the South Carolina Commission on Archives and History from 1984 to 1990 and as President of the South Carolina Historical Association during 1978-1980.

Recognition of Rogers' achievements came virtually at every stage of his career: while still a graduate student, a Rotary Fellowship at the University of Edinburgh in 1949-50, then as a faculty member at USC, Senior Research Fellow in 1974; Visiting Research Fellow, Merton College, Oxford University in 1975; President of Alpha Chapter of South Carolina, Phi Beta Kappa in 1982; Honorary Doctor of Letters from

the College of Charleston in 1984; Honorary Doctor of Letters from the College of Charleston in 1984; Honorary Doctor of Humanities from USC in 1991; and an inductee in the South Carolina Literary Hall of Fame in 1997. Reviewers of his books praised "this distinguished scholar" for his "prodigious research," and "superbly edited volumes."

But George Rogers will also be remembered for the same quality of his teaching. He never forgot that the function of scholar-teachers is to teach. Typical of his attitude is the advice he gave to a graduate student teaching assistant. When they young man observed to Dr. Rogers that a typical class's knowledge was rather abysmal, George quipped "Of course they don't know anything. You are supposed to teach them. That's why they are here." He prided himself on knowing each student, as reflected in his reputation for being able to identify each student by name after calling the roll only once in large classes.

The chairmanship of the History Department, an office he never sought, it can truly be said, was imposed upon him by virtually unanimous acclaim, based upon the rare unanimity of respect, trust and affection he enjoyed among his faculty colleagues. Part of this derived from his ability to separate friendship from academic politics, part from his wonderful sense of humor, part from his cosmopolitan civility.

George loved people and they loved him. His wit and laughter were infectious. He entertained and gardened with the same skill, enthusiasm, and meticulous planning he devoted to the other aspects of his life.

In his sophisticated way, he was the life of every party and the terpsichorean wonder of any ball, when other males who considered themselves dancers were doomed to watch in envy as the ladies favored him as a partner. The fond memory of one expresses his sought-after grace; said she, "He made me feel like Ginger Rogers."

A reviewer in 1995 referred to our beloved colleague as "the elegist of the rice planters of the Waccamaw, the Pee Dee, and the North Santee." George Roger's breadth and depth presents an almost impossible challenge to one who must attempt the same for him.

Respectfully submitted: Robert B. Patterson, Department of History. November 5, 1997