

College bids farewell to dean

On the evening of April 24, Albert T. Scroggins combed his famous silver hair, then stepped out into the twilight with his lady Lilla on his arm to attend a party with 310 of his closest friends.

Somewhere along the way, a rosebud sprigged with baby's breath was tucked into his lapel. He was further festooned with a big blue ribbon, the kind they award at livestock fairs, reading "First Class Retiree."

These embellishments, lovely and whimsical as they were, were hardly necessary because everyone already knew who the guest of honor was.

And because they knew, they came from all over the nation to be there when USC threw a retirement party for Al Scroggins.

It was, as they say in the society columns, a gala affair. Even the tables in the Capstone Campus Room were dressed up in linen and flowers; the napkins at each place setting had been cleverly molded into thin, impossibly vertical red spirals.

"Where are the napkins?" one reveler asked his companion.

"Right there," she nodded at the spiral.

"I'll be darned," he said. "How do you suppose they did that?"

Lots of people went to lots of trouble to make Al Scroggins' retirement party something special. And it was.

Dr. Perry Ashley was chief organizer of the party, but as he said later, "People kept coming in with more ideas. I had a lot of help."

Before the night was through, a number of remarkable things would happen to Al Scroggins.



PHOTO/Clark Brookstone

State's highest honor

Dean and Mrs. Albert T. Scroggins shared the spotlight at his April 24 retirement party. USC President James Holderman inducted Scroggins into the Order of the Palmetto on behalf of Gov. Dick Riley.

President James B. Holderman would present him with an official USC rocking chair.

He would be named Dean Emeritus by the University.

Tom McClean, executive editor of the *Columbia State and Record* newspapers, would give him a foot-and-a-half long check for \$27,684 for the Al and Lilla Scroggins Scholarship Fund, on behalf of all the contributors.

He would accept two "get up and go" travel passes that allow him and Lilla to fly anywhere in the U.S., Puerto Rico or Canada — for free.

He would see his official portrait — the one that will hang forever in the College of Journalism — unveiled.

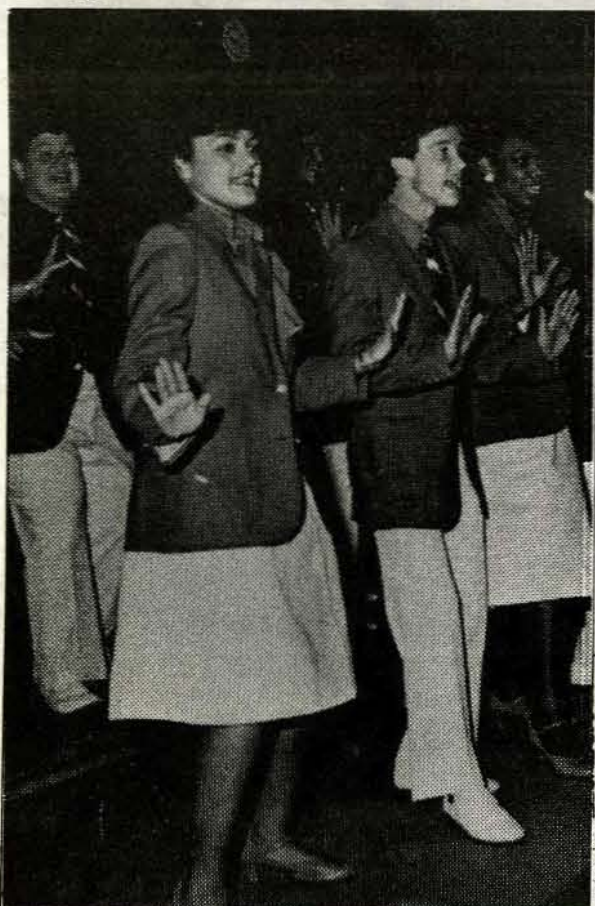
And Holderman would induct him, on behalf of Gov. Dick Riley, into the Order of the Palmetto, the highest honor conferred by the State of South Carolina.

But Scroggins was by no means the only one having fun at the party.

Some of his oldest friends, like master of ceremonies Frank Harden (who had been on the search committee that selected Scroggins as the dean 20 years ago) had a good time subjecting him to a royal roasting.

Harden told the crowd that although the dean would not actually retire until June, they had decided to hold the party in April because it would take Scroggins "until June just to clean off his desk."

Dr. Henry Price, associate dean, narrated a slide presentation titled "The Scroggins Years — An Overview," during which he let the audience in on a little-known side of their dignified dean.



PHOTO/Clark Brookstone

Puttin' on the Ritz

Carolina Alive, directed by Richard Conant, sang "Puttin' on the Ritz" and other hits at the dean's retirement party.

Price described Scroggins as "A man of varied expressions and tastes, a man who can sit and enjoy a Broadway play at eight o'clock, watch a fine jazz band at 11 o'clock, and top the evening off by watching four flamenco dancers cavort until 2 a.m. in a place the rest of us would cross the street to avoid."

Price enumerated some of the dean's professional accomplishments, then observed, "Few deans of journalism — or any other discipline — have been as visible, or as involved, or as outspoken, or as respected...or could stay out as late as Al Scroggins."

Dean Harry Varney pretended he would be glad to see the last of Scroggins, claiming he is tired of being constantly reminded by Scroggins that it is Scroggins, not Varney, who is "senior dean" on campus.

There is no question that the send-up flavor of Scroggins' send-off was designed to keep more serious sentiments under wraps.

But the emotion was simmering under the surface, and threatened to break loose during a viewing of a videotape made by faculty, showing each member of the staff and faculty waving goodbye to the tune of "If Ever I Would Leave You."

Inside, a lot of people were probably feeling like Judy Garland's Dorothy must have felt when the Wizard drifted away in his balloon, leaving her behind.

But, being grown-up, sophisticated people, no one shouted "Come back! Come back!"

Instead, when the party ended, they straightened their shoulders, gathered their accouterments, and with gracious goodbyes to their friends and companions, walked out into the night.

inside

In Memoriam Mark Ethridge Jr. 1924-1985

p. 8

Russell and Rucker retire

p. 6

Investigative Reporters & Editors Conference

p. 14

The Year 2000

p. 4

Tie me kangaroo down, sport

Find out how this grad wound up Down Under.

p. 5

