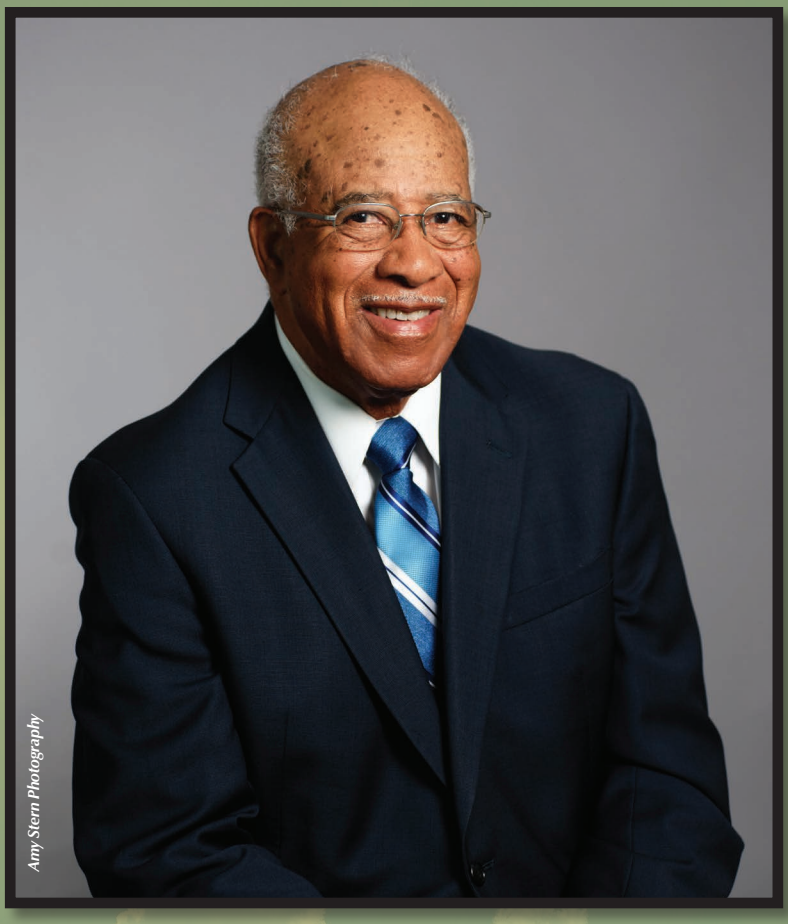

Howard N. Lee

MY LIFE OF BREAKING BARRIERS, BUILDING BRIDGES, AND MAKING HISTORY

NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY

Raleigh, North Carolina • 2021

Howard N. Lee

MY LIFE OF BREAKING BARRIERS, BUILDING BRIDGES, AND MAKING HISTORY

2021 SOCIETY AWARD

Together with tributes to Howard N. Lee and the 2020 Society Book Award

NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY

Raleigh, North Carolina • 2021

ABOVE: The original cup is in the North Carolina Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill's Wilson Library.

NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY IMPRINTS
Number 62
Lynn Roundtree, Editor

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Introduction

NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY

P. O. Box 20632 • Raleigh, North Carolina 27619 • Telephone: 919-230-1524
www.ncsociety.org

Chartered on 11 September 1975 as a private nonprofit corporation under provisions of Chapter 55A of the General Statutes of North Carolina, the North Caroliniana Society is dedicated to the promotion of increased knowledge and appreciation of North Carolina's heritage through the encouragement of scholarly research and writing in and teaching of state and local history and literature; publication of documentary materials, including the numbered, limited-edition *North Caroliniana Society Imprints* (see a list included in this publication) and *North Caroliniana Society Keepsakes*; sponsorship of professional and lay conferences, seminars, lectures, and exhibitions; commemoration of historic events, including sponsorship of markers and plaques; and through assistance to the North Carolina Collection of UNC-Chapel Hill and other cultural organizations with kindred objectives. The Society's motto is "Substance, Not Show."

Founded by H.G. Jones and incorporated by Jones, William S. Powell, and Louis M. Connor Jr., who soon were joined by a distinguished group of North Carolinians, the Society was limited to a hundred members for the first decade. It elects from time to time additional individuals meeting its strict criterion of "adjudged performance" in service to their state's culture — i.e., those who have demonstrated a continuing interest in and support of the historical, literary, and cultural heritage of North Carolina. Presently, the Society has 250 members.

The Society, a tax-exempt organization under provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, expects continued service from its members, and for its programs it depends upon the contributions, bequests, and devises of its members and friends. Its IRS Tax ID number is 56-1119848.

In addition to its continued support of the North Carolina Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill, the Society administers a fund, given in 1987 by the Research Triangle Foundation in honor of its retiring board chairman and the Society's longtime president, from which more than 400 Archie K. Davis Fellowships have been awarded for research in North Carolina's historical and cultural resources. N.C. History Day and the North Carolina Historical Review, both administered through the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, receive continued support from the Society.

In 2016, committed to supporting our state's K-12 teachers, the Society and the Carolina K-12 Fund of Carolina Public Humanities developed the William

continued

Friday Teacher Education Initiative, with the goal of equally educating and appreciating our state's hard working educators through free, quality professional development events.

The Society also sponsors the North Caroliniana Book Award, recognizing a book that best captures the essence of North Carolina; the William Stevens Powell Award to a student who, during the student's career at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has done the most to develop an interest in, and understanding of, the history and traditions of the nation's oldest state university; and the H.G. Jones North Carolina History Prizes for winners in the National History Day competition.

A highlight of the Society's year is the presentation of the North Caroliniana Society Award to an individual or organization for long and distinguished service in the encouragement, production, enhancement, promotion, and preservation of North Carolina's heritage. *(See a list of Award recipients on the next page.)*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, January 1, 2022

Officers:

- James W. Clark Jr., *President*
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- Patrick S. Wooten, *Secretary*
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- *Vice Presidents emeritus:* H. David Bruton
- *Secretary-Treasurers emeriti:* H.G. Jones (1924-2018) and Martin H. Brinkley
- *Directors emeriti:* Timothy B. Burnett, Dana Borden Lacy, Nancy Cobb Lilly and Dannye Romine Powell

NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY AWARD RECIPIENTS

1978 — Paul Green
1979 — Albert Coates
1980 — Sam J. Ervin Jr.
1981 — Sam Ragan
1982 — Gertrude Sprague Carraway
1983 — John Fries Blair
1984 — William C. & Ida H. Friday
1985 — William S. Powell
1986 — Mary D.B.T. & James H. Semans
1987 — David Stick
1988 — William McWhorter Cochrane
1989 — Emma Neal Morrison
1990 — Burke Davis
1991 — Lawrence F. London
1992 — Frank Hawkins Kenan
1993 — Charles Kuralt
1994 — H.G. Jones
1994 — Archie K. Davis
1994 — North Carolina Collection
1995 — J. Carlyle Sitterson
1995 — LeRoy T. Walker
1996 — Hugh MacRae Morton
1997 — John L. Sanders
1998 — Doris Waugh Betts
1999 — Reynolds Price
2000 — Richard H. Jenrette
2001 — Wilma Dykeman
2002 — Frank Borden Hanes Sr.
2003 — Maxine Swalin
2004 — Elizabeth Vann Moore
2004 — W. Trent Ragland Jr.
2005 — W. Dallas Herring
2005 — John Hope Franklin
2006 — Betty Ray McCain
2006 — Joseph F. Steelman
2007 — William B. Aycock
2007 — Fred Chappell
2008 — Henry E. & Shirley T. Frye
2008 — Robert & Jessie Rae Scott
2009 — James E. Holshouser Jr.
2010 — Bland Simpson
2011 — Lindsay C. Warren Jr.
2012 — Lee Smith
2013 — Thomas W. Lambeth
2014 — Myrick Howard
2015 — Herb Jackson
2016 — Willis P. Whichard
2017 — H. David Bruton
2018 — Catherine Ward Bishir
2019 — Alice & Jerry Cotten
2020 — D.G. Martin
2021 — Howard N. Lee

continued

Opening Remarks

In 2021, as in 2020, the North Caroliniana Society has been operating under the restrictions and constraints of the pandemic known as COVID-19. Once again, we have held no annual membership meeting.

On October 27, 2021, President Jim Clark met with the 2021 Society Award recipient, Howard Lee, and the recipient of the 2020 Book Award, David Menconi, in Chapel Hill to prepare a video for the Society's membership. You can find the videos on the Society's website: *www.ncsociety.org*.

Thank you for your continued support of the Society.

James W. Clark Jr., *President*

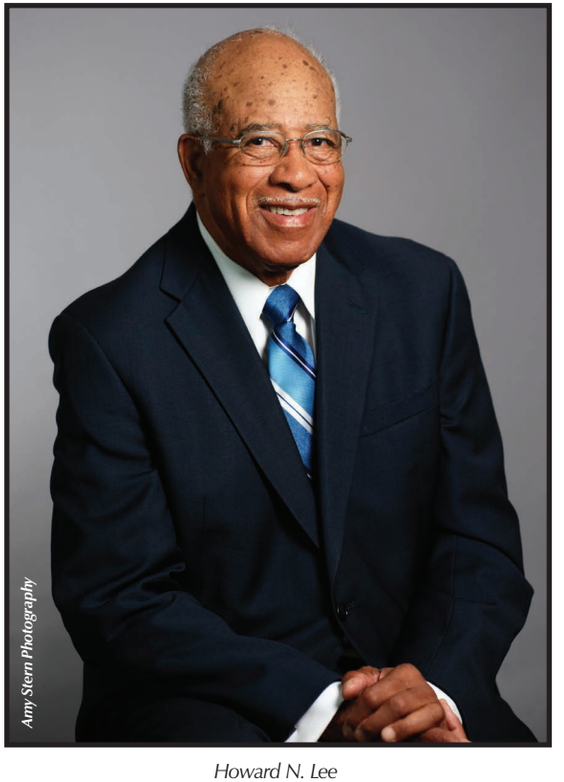
Copie Cain, *Executive Director*

Howard N. Lee and James Clark

James Clark and David Menconi

Howard Nathaniel Lee

NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY AWARD 2021



Howard N. Lee

Howard Nathaniel Lee, who was born on July 28, 1934, grew up on a sharecropper's farm in Lithonia, Georgia. He was graduated from Bruce High School in 1953 and enrolled in Clark College in Atlanta before later transferring to Fort Valley State College in Georgia, where he received a BA degree in Sociology in 1959. He was drafted and served two years in the United States Army, spending more than one year in Korea. After being honorably discharged in 1961, he worked

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as a Juvenile Probation Officer in Savannah, Georgia. In 1964, he enrolled in the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and received his master's degree in 1966. Until 1975, Lee was an administrator at Duke University and held a visiting faculty appointment at North Carolina Central University.

In 1969, Lee was elected and served three terms (until 1975) as Mayor of Chapel Hill. Among his major initiatives was the implementation of the first police social work initiative, which is now the Police Crisis Unit within the Chapel Hill Police Department.

In 1976, he was a candidate for Lieutenant Governor but lost in a second primary run-off election. From 1977 to 1981, he served as Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Community Development, a cabinet-level position in the administration of Governor James B. Hunt. Among his numerous achievements, he initiated a "Mountains to the Sea Hiking Trail," which stretches from the North Carolina Mountains to the coast, and guided the completion of the African Phase of the North Carolina Zoo.

From 1982 to 1991, he was a member of the School of Social Work faculty at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has lectured at numerous universities throughout the South and around the nation. Lee has contributed chapters to several books and has published articles in many professional, academic, and business publications.

In 2008, his memoir, "The Courage to Lead: One Man's Journey in Public Service," was published. In the book, Lee shares his life story and insights about how he survived the oppressive cruelty of the Jim Crow-infested South, overcame obstacles, and broke racial barriers as he rose to positions of political prominence and power.

Lee served for 13 years in the North Carolina Senate; building his reputation as a fighter for education reform. He sponsored or co-sponsored several significant pieces of educational legislation, including Smart Start, More at Four (a pre-kindergarten program), the Excellent Schools Act for school reform, and the Safe Schools Act.

From 2003 to 2009, Lee served as Chairman of the North Carolina State Board of Education, and a member of the North Carolina Utilities Commission. He has been a successful entrepreneur, having founded and operated several successful business enterprises. From March 2009 to September 2011, Lee served as the first Executive Director of the North Carolina Education Cabinet, having been appointed by Governor Beverly Eaves Perdue.

In 2011, he founded the Howard N. Lee Institute, which focuses on increasing the number of minority and disadvantaged students graduating from high school and prepared to succeed in a post-secondary institution.

Lee's favorite hobbies include golf, tennis, singing, and creative writing. Howard and his wife, Lillian, a retired public-school teacher, live in Chapel Hill and are the proud parents of three grown children (Angela, Ricky, and Karin), two adult granddaughters (Jaimie and Jillian), and one great-granddaughter (Noah Belle).

My Life of Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges, and Making History

HOWARD N. LEE

Acknowledgements —
Dr. Jim Clark and Ms. Copie Cain

It is such an honor to be recognized by the North Caroliniana Society as its 2021 honoree. When I review the list of past recipients, I feel very special, and am delighted to be a member of this prestigious group.

I feel fortunate to have reached my 87th birthday and to be able to stand and deliver a speech, when so many of my peers have either passed away or are enduring physical restrictions. I am blessed to still be able to carry my golf bag and walk eighteen holes on a course. Occasionally, I still join friends for a five-plus mile hike on the Mountains-to-Sea Trail. I believe that I have been allowed to live this long in order to make a difference in the world. For this and other reasons, I have dedicated my life to public service, spending much of my time working to inspire and motivate people, especially young people. *My life has been laser-focused on breaking barriers that divide us, on building bridges that — I hope — will unite us, and on ultimately making history, so that future generations might be inspired to follow a similar path.*

Growing up in the Deep South and living on a sharecropper's farm in the small community of Lithonia, Georgia, my early life was one of struggle amid extreme racial prejudice and segregation. The black people in my town — even the teachers and the preachers — had to be subservient to white people at all times. I grew up being cautious of white people, but generally did not avoid being around them. I knew that it was not considered to be normal or accepted practice for blacks and whites to be openly friendly towards one another. Yet one of my first best friends was a white boy named "Lukee." From my twelfth year to my fifteenth year, we spent countless hours together in Lithonia, reading our comic books, exchanging them with one another, and just "hanging out" together.

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Note: The text of these remarks have been edited for publication.

But, as always, the chickens eventually come home to roost. My friendship with Lukee ended abruptly one brisk fall day when his father forbade him from associating with me. I was fifteen years old. Since that time, Lukee and I have had no further contact. This experience early in life was a major disappointment to me, one that made me feel both resentful and revengeful for some time.

But while growing up, I was fortunate to have loving and caring parents, and marvelous grandparents who set wonderful examples for me on how to survive the dangers of being a young black man iiving in the South. Since, at the time, it was not uncommon for a black man in north Georgia to be found having been beaten, savaged, or even killed by whites, as a young man I was often tempted to lash out and challenge the system. Yet even at a young age I understood that I had to be cautious in doing so.

I didn't realize it at the time, but I felt a need to defy the system in order to release my pent-up frustrations. One day when I was a teenager, I went to use one of the public bathrooms at the Lithonia bus station marked "COLORED." (Actually, it was misspelled "COLRED".) While these restrooms were invariably dirty and cluttered with junk, on this day this washroom felt particularly disgusting to me. I resolved to use the nearby bathroom designated for "WHITE MEN." When my act of defiance was discovered by the white men in town, it resulted in a confronation between me and several members of the local Ku Klux Klan chapter. I was pushed and struck several time by these Klansmen, but somehow managed to break free from them. Fortunately, I was able to escape through a thicket of woods and was no longer pursued by them after awhile, and eventually found my way home.

While this early confrontation was painful for me, it did not destroy my commitment to work for racial justice and fair play. Rather, it became a defining moment for me, one that deepened my resolve to remain in the South and work to break down barriers of segregation and fight Jim Crowism. Yet I also realized that I had to work on controlling my emotions — to never again let my anger be the sole driver of my actions. I made a commitment then and there to work hard at building bridges between all kinds of people. I was graduated from a segregated high school in Lithonia in 1953, where we only had desks, chairs, and textbooks handed down (and mostly used up) by students at the white high school in town. The one advantage we had at our school was a great group of truly dedicated teachers. In the tenth grade, I had considered dropping out of school. When I shared this thought with one of my teachers, Mrs. Williams, she was not amused. "I can't promise that you will have access to a good job, be respected, or be free," she told me. "But, I can guarantee that if you are educated and if opportunities come, you will be ready to take advantage." My life has been filled with many opportunities since then, and I have been ready to seize and make the most of each one. The words of that wise teacher truly changed my life.

My mother, Lou Temple Lee, was raised by her maternal grandmother after her parents had separated and moved away when she was just five years old. Mother was the smartest person in our family and its strong driving force. Despite having grown up in an environment where attending school was a low priority, she believed from an early age that the true hope for personal success and societal change was for a person to become educated.

My mother had an incessant thirst for education, and learned how to read at an early age. She earned her high school diploma by taking correspondence courses, then convinced a local church to open a school and hire her as the lone teacher for the children. My mother was my first teacher, and had taught me how to read before my fourth birthday. When I was five years old, she enrolled me in the first grade, but at the end of the school year she refused to promote me into the second grade. Even though I had made the highest grades in the class, she had decided that I had not done my very best. Thus, I had to repeat the first grade. This was a lesson that my mom drilled into me all throughout my growing up years. "Whether you finish first or last, always do your best," she would always say. When I was forced to transfer out of the first college that I attended because of the poor grades that I had earned, her first question to me had been, "Did you do your best, Howard?" When I answered that I had, she urged me to find another college, and to try again. I was accepted at Fort Valley State College in Georgia, and in 1959 I was graduated with my undergraduate degree from Fort Valley with honors. (Incidentally, my mother was graduated from the same college just two months later.)

After college I was drafted into the U. S. Army and spent two years serving in the military. I resented being called to defend our nation at a time when blacks were denied civil and voting rights enjoyed by other citizens. Nevertheless, I stepped up and served my country.

I had a rocky start in the military. Despite being a college graduate, in its wisdom the Army determined that I would become a mechanic at Fort Hood in Texas. I protested this assignment by writing directly to the Commander-in-Chief, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, asking him to intervene in this decision and have my job changed to one more commensurate with my education. While the mere fact of sending the letter had given me some degree of satisfaction, I was truly shocked when I learned that orders had come down from Washington, directing my commanding officer to reassign me as a social worker at the base's mental health clinic. For the first time in my life, I felt respected in my work and believed that I had been given fair treatment. I remembered the words of my wise teacher, Mrs. Williams: "I can't promise if an opportunity will ever come, but if it does, you will be prepared to take full advantage."

I was content in my new position at the base's mental health clinic. But I was not satisfied with the way that black soldiers were treated while off duty in the nearby town of Killeen, Texas. Every time we walked out of the gates of the military compound, we felt disrespected, and our freedoms were restricted in ways that white soldiers were not. When I complained to my superiors about our treatment off of the base, their response was always: "Then stay on base and be happy."

continued

They missed the point. I *was* happy. But I wasn't satisfied about how we were being treated.

One Saturday morning in August 1960, I decided to test the community attitude in Killeen. I walked into one of the local drug stores, ordered a cup of coffee, and was promptly refused service. I immediately returned to the base and convinced a group of a dozen soldiers to join me in holding a sit-in at the drug store. To my surprise, the military police learned of our plan and unceremoniously marched all of us into the commanding general's office. First, the general chastised me for not only being a disruptive force, but also for having written the commander-in-chief and engineering a change of assignment. Second, he accused all of us of being troublemakers. In his mind, we were making life hard for "good black soldiers who knew how to behave." The general wanted me to promise him that we would not engage in any more civil rights activities. I indicated to him that, with all due respect, I could not make such a commitment. In response, the general confined all of us to the base for that Saturday. The following Monday, I received my orders for a new assignment. I was being shipped out to a hardship post: Camp Casey in South Korea. I was being sent to the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the strip of land near the 38th parallel separating North Korea from South Korea, where U. S. forces attempted to keep an uneasy armistice.

My reputation as a "disruptor" had preceded me, and I was therefore warned that if I had the temerity to send another letter to the commander-in-chief, I could be court-martialed. Fortunately for me, a black captain came to my rescue shortly after my arrival in South Korea, when he requested that I be assigned as a clerk in his office.

The captain took me under his wing, and had a very long talk with me about surviving the army. He wanted me to know how lucky I had been, since he said that he had never known a soldier to write a letter of complaint to the commander-in-chief who had not been punished by his superiors. He told me that it was important for a man to pick the right fight at the right time, and to never fight alone. After I left the captain's office, I began to develop a better sense of how to make friends and how to influence people. I soon decided to stop challenging the status quo. I would settle down, serve my time, and live to fight another day when I returned home at the end of my service.

As a company clerk at Camp Casey, I was charged with making sure that there were positive relations and interactions among the troops in the company. But I found it to be a tough assignment, trying to create a harmonious atmosphere among black, white, Latino, and Korean soldiers. This challenge tested my resolve, and served to prepare me for my return to civilian life, where I would be tested by divisiveness in various situations.

After my discharge from the military in 1962, I accepted a position as a juvenile probation officer in Savannah, Georgia. I arrived in that Southern port city during the early days of civil rights demonstrations there. At the time, Savannah

was still a very segregated place. I married my wife, Lillian, on November 24, 1962, and settled in to raise a family and start my career there. In my spare time, I began advocating for more resources to support students, especially black youth. Several black leaders in Savannah, and in particular two black professional women, became my mentors and introduced me to influential members of the community, both black and white. One of the connections that I made was with a wealthy white couple, Frank and Lillian Spencer.

One day early in 1963, I had a call from Frank, who invited my wife (also named Lillian) and me to an invitation-only event at the Savannah Public Library: a speech by his good friend, Frank Porter Graham, the former president of the University of North Carolina. The only problem with the invitation was that the public library was for whites patrons only. The Spencers, however, insisted that we attend.

Reluctantly, Lillian and I arrived at the front door of the library for the speech and were seated, according to Frank Spencer's instructions, on the front row. But not long after taking our seats an older white woman appeared, demanding that we be removed from the building. Frank Spencer rose to our defense, demanding that the woman either sit down and be quiet or leave the premises. While the white attendees were a bit baffled by our presence, they seemed even more embarrassed by the woman's outburst. In any case, things settled down and the program got underway.

After President Graham finished his fine address, Frank Spencer introduced us to him. In the course of our brief conversation, I advised him of my plans to enroll in the School of Social Work at the University of Georgia. Immediately Dr. Graham suggested that I should reconsider my decision and enroll at the nation's first public university, the University of North Carolina. He assured me that if I was accepted at UNC, he would personally recommend that I receive financial aid. It came to pass that I was accepted, and in fact I became the recipient of the largest fellowship ever awarded to a UNC social work student at the time.

When I arrived on the Chapel Hill campus in September 1964, it was my first experience of living and working in a racially desegregated environment. I was assigned to a three-person room in a campus dormitory with two Southern white males, with whom I had a very pleasant experience. During my first year in graduate school, I was elected by my classmates as vice-president of the Student Social Work Association, becoming the first black to hold a student leadership position at the school. In my second year, I was elected president of the association. I enjoyed my year leading the organization, and was graduated from the School of Social Work on June 6, 1966.

Even more surprising to me was my election, two years after graduation, as president of the Eastern North Carolina Chapter of the National Association of Social Worker (NASW) — the first black to hold that office. There was some resistance to my presidency at first, and indeed a few white NASW members

continued

resigned. But within a year most had rejoined the organization, with a few of these members actually becoming some of my strongest allies. These positions of leadership early in my professional career proved to me that I could become a rational and responsible leader.

My leadership experience in the military, my leadership role in the UNC School of Social Work (including my experience with two white roommates), and my leadership of two social work organizations convinced me that underneath the exterior of negative behaviors by a group, there is a decency that can be found and cultivated in some members of that group.

After completing my graduate studies, I accepted a position at Duke University in a Ford Foundation-funded project that focused on improving student performance in Durham's black public schools. Two years later, Duke invited me to take an administrative position as their Director of Employee Relations. It was their hope that I could help the University improve working conditions among its non-academic staff, especially Duke's black employees. At the time, the morale of black employees at the University was at an all-time low. Indeed, the treatment of these employees by their white supervisors was creating unrest and sparking protests.

At the outset of my tenure at Duke University, many of the white supervisors at Duke University resented having me as the one overseeing their actions. At the same time, many black employees at Duke were also mistrustful of me, thinking that I had been appointed to appease them. But, over time, I was able to build trust and gain the confidence of not only the employees — both white and black — but also of administrators at Duke.

The decade of the 1960s was a tumultuous time in North Carolina, especially on college and university campuses. As the decade wore on, student protests over civil rights and the Vietnam War rocked both town and gown. In Durham, student protestors briefly occupied the Allen Building, Duke's administrative headquarters. In nearby Chapel Hill, there were frequent civil rights and anti-war marches centered around Franklin Street downtown. While the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 had, by the middle of the decade, ended generations of legally-sanctioned racial discrimination, the crusade for social justice in the South and across America was far from over.

In 1966, upon my acceptance of the job offer at Duke University, my wife and I had decided to buy a house in the town of Chapel Hill, partly because it would be more convenient for my wife Lillian, who had helped found a school for the children undergoing long-term treatment at the North Carolina Memorial Hospital on the UNC campus. Chapel Hill's liberal image and reputation had made the decision an easy one for Lillian and myself. Unfortunately, we soon found out that most of the town's real estate agents were not willing to show us any houses outside of the traditional black sections of town, much less sell one of them to us. In the end, we were able to purchase a house in a relatively new subdivision in a traditionally white section of town, although we had to invoke the power of federal loan laws to force the sale to us. It had become clear to us that the Chapel Hill Board of Aldermen would not summon the courage to pass an open housing ordinance for the town.

Yet problems remained even after my family moved into our new home. For the next year, we received death threats for having had the temerity to move into a white neighborhood, and a group of white teenagers even burned a cross in our front yard one night. Despite this incident of Klan-like behavior in liberal Chapel Hill and the shock of the assassination of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. in April 1968, the aldermen still refused to enact a fair housing ordinance.

In spite of the disappointments of the political climate in Chapel Hill, in 1969 I decided to run for the office of Mayor of the Town of Chapel Hill. Originally I had entered the race less with the hope of actually being elected, but more to highlight the needs of the black community and the long history of neglect by the town's elected leaders. During my campaign, I pressed my opponent in the race to publicly commit to rectifying these problems. Just as the mayor and the aldermen had failed to adopt any open housing regulations, in the black sections of town they had also failed to pave streets, extend water and sewer lines, provide adequate recreational facilities, and seek federal grants to build public housing for low-income residents.

On May 6, 1969, my life changed forever when, at the age of just thirty-four, I was elected as Mayor of Chapel Hill, thus becoming the first black American to lead a predominantly white municipality in the South since the Reconstruction era. My election was featured in news outlets across the country and even around the world.

Just three months later, I experienced my first crisis as mayor when UNC's black foodservice workers went on strike. Some of the demands of the workers — including the right to join a labor union — made the leaders of both the town and the University concerned about the possibility of violence between protestors and law enforcement. Thus, UNC President William C. Friday and I initially persuaded North Carolina's governor, Robert W. Scott, to hold off in sending state highway patrolmen and NC National Guard troops to the campus. (In the end, Scott did order the State Highway Patrol onto the Chapel Hill campus to maintain order.) President Friday and his colleagues worked with town officials for almost a month, engaging with the leaders of the foodservice workers and urging UNC's foodservice contractor to reach a settlement to their differences. In the end, the workers agreed to end their strike when the University's contractor agreed to increase wages and improve working conditions. From that time forward, Bill Friday became a close friend and a mentor of mine.

So, from almost the outset, being Mayor of Chapel Hill had its rough edges. On the one hand, some white members of the business community and a few older town residents felt that I was being too aggressive with the Board of Alderment and the Town Manager in trying to push through my campaign promises. At that time, the Mayor of Chapel Hill was expected to perform

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ceremonial duties, manage the Board of Aldermen, and make proposals to the Town Manager, who would then make his recommendations to the aldermen. On the other hand, many in the black community and some white liberals in town thought that I was not being aggressive enough. For instance, an elderly black woman came to visit me in my office and complained that the street in front of her house had still not been paved. I had been in office for only a month! (Six months later, the town was able to pave her street, after funds became available.) But unfortunately I was eventually forced to initiate a vote of the aldermen to fire the town manager, after he refused to promptly implement directives from the mayor's office.

In December 1975, at the end of my three terms as mayor, I was proud to note that I had kept all of my campaign promises. These included: starting a public transit system; increasing the number of public housing units; establishing a social services unit (today called the crisis unit) within the police department; expanding recreational facilities for town residents; hiring the town's first black administrator; increasing pay for police, fire, and sanitation workers; accelerating the construction of a municipal administration building; and increasing the ethnic and gender diversity of the town's workforce.

Over the years, I was also able to gain the confidence of the vast majority of the town's citizens, increasing my margins of victory in each successive election. I had also broken a racial barrier, which inspired a generation of black candidates in North Carolina and across the South to run for office in their local communities.

In the five decades since, I have enjoyed a distinguished public service journey, breaking other barriers along the way. In 1972, I ran for a seat in Congress. Although I lost the election, my coattails drew in enough voters to elect the first black and the first woman to Orange County's Board of Commissioners. In 1976, I ran for Lieutenant Governor. While pundits predicted that I would finish last in a field of eight Democratic candidates, I finished first, thus forcing a second primary and a runoff election. While I lost the runoff to the former Speaker of the North Carolina General Assembly, my 48% share of the electorate was a record for a black candidate running for statewide office.

One year later, in 1977, Governor James B. Hunt made history when he appointed me as Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources. I thus became the first black person to be appointed to a cabinet position by a Southern governor. Many members of the General Assembly and a number of Governor Hunt's supporters and advisers strongly disagreed with his choice, and pressured him to change his mind. But Jim Hunt would not be deterred. He felt that it was the right time and that I was the right person to help take a bold step forward, setting an example by diversifying a Southern governor's leadership team. My nomination went forward and I was duly sworn in as the Secretary of Natural Resources.

From the outset there were many challenges in my new assignment, including winning the confidence of the powerful division heads within my department.

Another challenge was gaining the support of powerful constituent groups within the state who were regulated by Natural Resources. One very unhappy constituent group was the state's commercial fishermen. It was assumed that their existing distrust of the department would be exacerbated by their having a black person overseeing things. But rather than simply assuming a negative reaction, I decided to try to build a bridge between them and me. Thus, I directed my staff to set up a meeting with the commerical fishermen and their leadership, so that I could not only share my ideas but also listen to their concerns.

My own staff and many on the Governor's staff thought that this was a bad idea and urged me to cancel the meeting. I was not persuaded. Arriving at our agreed upon venue, I was surprised to find my good friend and advisor, Walter Royal Davis. He had flown in from Texas specifically to attend the meeting, out of concern that the meeting might end unpleasantly. Entering the room designated for the meeting, I found a room packed with commercial fishermen, many who had come straight off their boats. (I was definitely overdressed for the occasion.)

I spoke to these fishermen for fifteen minutes, outlining my plans on how I would make their work better and more profitable for them and promising to always be available to hear their concerns. I also assured them that I would work harder than any previous state administrator to expand their markets, both domestically and overseas. After my speech, I received a standing ovation from the crowd — a prelude to the positive working relationship that I enjoyed with the commerical fishing industry during my nearly five years that I would lead the department.

In subsequent years, I would use this experience to teach my staff that one should never merely *assume* who people are, or how they will behave in a given situation. Rather, one should give people the benefit of the doubt, and allow them to *show* you who they are. As the poet Maya Angelou said, "When people show you who they are, believe them."

As the highest-ranking black official in North Carolina state government, there was great pressure on me from the black community to correct many longstanding problems in the state. One issue that rose to the top quickly in 1978 was the case of the so-called "Wilmington Ten." Nine young black people, led by civil rights activist Benjamin Chavis, Jr., had engaged in destruction of property in the city of Wilmington, North Carolina, were convicted by a jury in state court, and were sentenced in 1971 to long-term sentences in prison (most of them to twenty-nine years) by the judge in the case. Black leaders in North Carolina and from across the nation were demanding that Governor Hunt gain their release from prison by commuting their harsh sentences.

There were difficult, even heated discussions among Governor Hunt's advisors about how the governor should address the issue. Some felt that he should take no action at all, while others thought that the governor — who enjoyed strong support from black voters — should commute the sentences of the ten defendants. After

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much discussion, we came to a consensus, recommending that Governor Hunt should commute the sentences of the nine young people to time served, while keeping Ben Chavis incarcerated for additional time. The governor agreed and issued these commutations.

But Jim Hunt's decision did not go over well with many black leaders and a number of white liberals. I was accused by these groups of having "sold out," called many derogatory names, and put under great pressure to resign from my cabinet position. But I stood with the governor and supported his decision.

When I left the Hunt administration in 1981, I was praised for my achievements as a member of the governor's cabinet. Many of those who had thought Governor Hunt had made a mistake by appointing me now praised him for his courage. Even many black leaders who had branded me as a "sell out" for my stance in the Wilmington Ten case now agreed that I had acted honorably. Indeed, even Ben Chavis expressed his gratitude to me when we talked shortly after his release from prison.

Jim Hunt and I continue to be close friends to this day. The fact is not lost on me that my first best friend was a white boy named Lukee, and that now, over seventy-five years later, I claim as a good friend a white man named Jim.

What did I achieve during my time as Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources? Among other things, I oversaw the completion of the first phase of construction at the North Carolina Zoo in Asheboro (The African Pavilion). And I proposed and led the initiative to build a statwide hiking trail: the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, which today consists of over one thousand miles of trail from Mount Mitchell in western North Carolina to its terminus at Manteo on Roanoke Island on the North Carolina coast.

I feel blessed to have served thirteen years — between 1991 and 2003 — in the North Carolina Senate, the only black senator in the chamber at the time. But I was shocked when I lost my Senate seat in the 2002 elections. Still, I came to see it as a blessing in disguise, for in 2003 Governor Mike Easley appointed me as the first black person to serve as Chair of the North Carolina State Board of Education. (A year later, Governor Easley also appointed me to serve on the North Carolina Utilities Commission.)

In 2016, I decided to resign from public office in order to establish the Howard N. Lee Institute for Equity and Opportunitty in Education, an organization dedicated to enhancing the educational experience for students attending low-performing schools. I am proud to say that the work of the Institute continues to this day.

The life journey that I have enjoyed to this point is not the life that I envisioned for myself growing up on that sharecropper's farm in north Georgia. I feel truly blessed and hope that I have left some good "nuggets" that will inspire other to follow behind me and do good for others. I am no longer blinded by skin color or ethnicity and have learned to look beyond the labels that are placed on people: conservative, right-wing, liberal, progressive. Political affiliations are merely descriptors; they should not become barriers to working together.

A reporter once asked me, "Howard Lee, how much more do you think you might have achieved if you had been white?" My response — which I truly believe — was: "Probably not as much as I have achieved by being black." For example, I became a public figure because I was elected as Mayor of Chapel Hill. If I had been white and elected as mayor, no one would have really noticed. But being elected as a black man to public office at that time in the South made history — as well as national and international news — and made me into an icon for a time. I have risen to greater heights than I ever expected as a young man, and have worked hard to overcome — to go beyond race and racism.

I have encountered many stumbling blocks on this journey of life, which I have been able to transform into stepping stones. I have been stymied by some barriers, but I have worked to push them down. I think that my greatest achievement, however, is that I have built bridges to make connections with people who are different than I am.

Finally, it seems today that the barriers we face are more numerous, stronger, and higher than at anytime in my lifetime. It seems that more people resist wanting to cross bridges and connect with the other side.

What advice does a barrier-breaker and a bridge-builder like myself have, you might ask? First, don't make assumptions about people who have opinions that are different from yours. Instead, seek to understand what's truly in their heart and in their soul. Try to understand what is motivating them, and be patient enough to search for common interests.

Second, don't tell people that they are wrong — even when you believe that they are — because having different positions brings strength to a relationship. Give the other person space, allowing them the freedom to to be right or wrong.

As for me, I will continue to be open and extend the hand of friendship, because I believe that everyone has at least some decency deep inside. I will be patient, and will keep digging in an attempt to find that decency. During the little time that I have left in this world, I will keep trying to break barriers, to build bridges, and turn stumbling blocks into steppingstones.

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In Tribute to Howard N. Lee

Angela Lee *The daughter of this year's honoree, Angela Lee of Chapel Hill, has been Executive Director of Durham's Hayti Heritage Center since January 2013. The nonprofit is dedicated to preserving and advancing the heritage and culture of historic Hayti and the African American experience in Durham through programs that benefit the broader local, national, and global community.*

Marshéle Carter *Marshéle Carter is a professional writer, an adjunct instructor at UNC-Chapel Hill's Hussman School of Media and Journalism, and an associate faculty member at Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. She first met Howard Lee through an exchange of letters in 1971, when she was a fourth grader at Estes Hills Elementary School in Chapel Hill and he was the town's Mayor.*

Valerie Foushee *A life-long resident of Chapel Hill and a retired member of the Chapel Hill Police Department, Valerie Foushee first served in the North Carolina House of Representatives for one year before her appointment to the North Carolina Senate in 2013, where she has represented the 23rd District since 2013. She currently chairs the North Carolina Senate Democratic Caucus and is state director for the National Foundation of Women Legislators. Ms. Foushee also chairs the North Carolina Black Alliance. A long-time resident of Orange County, she has known Howard Lee since shortly after his family moved to Chapel Hill in 1964.*

REMARKS BY ANGELA LEE

Greetings, Mrs. Cain and the North Caroliniana Society.

It gives me joy to be here today, sharing remarks about a remarkable human being who also happens to be my dad. I'm glad that he is the 2021 North Caroliniana Society Award recipient.

I could recite a litany of Howard Lee's political accomplishments as a mayor, as a state senator, as a member of former Governor Jim Hunt's cabinet, and so on. I could speak about his long-standing commitment to education in the public school classroom and on the university level. I could tell you about honors he has received of which you might not be aware, including having a street named in his honor on the campus of Fort Valley State University, his college alma mater.

Yes, I could go on and take my allotted time today speaking about all of those things. However, I want to share some thoughts and reflections about the man who has meant so much to me, and who has had such an influence on my life.

THE ARTIST

My dad was an amateur photographer, and as a little girl I loved sharing his makeshift darkroom in our small home in Savannah, Georgia and watching the images he developed come to life. He captured individual family members, pets, and streetscapes, all of which helped preserve stories and lasting memories. Although he no longer develops photos in a darkroom, he regularly prints out family photos almost daily — especially those of his now seven-months-old great-granddaughter!

My dad was also a musician, and he is a singer. Although I have only heard about his skills on the drums, I have been soothed and entertained throughout my life by his beautiful baritone voice which, generations later, he uses to serenade that same great-grand baby, especially with his rendition of "Rock-a-bye Baby."

THE ATHLETE

My dad grew up at a time when facilities and equipment at black schools were very lacking or sub-standard. Nonetheless, he participated in sports and was always very active. He passed that love of physical fitness to his children. My dad loved tennis, and we all played with him. Although my brother and I never embraced his love of golf, our sister did, much to my dad's satisfaction. He still plays golf, preferring to walk rather than ride a golf cart. My dad never ceases to amaze us, and we have to work hard to try to keep up with him. My brother runs, my sister teaches spinning and works out, I train and am a member of my daughter's Krav Maga self-defense studio. But my dad HIKES! It takes effort to keep up with this man, so I have hiked — once — and joined the Mountains-to-Sea Trail Board of Directors to support the trail. I do plan to hike some more... soon, to keep up!

THE WRITER & ORATOR

My dad has delivered hundreds if not thousands of speeches, having written them all himself. He has penned articles and written poetry. His autobiography captures experiences and memories documented over the years on notepads, on typewriters, and on computers. My dad the writer is also an excellent orator. I have watched in awe as he has captivated audiences and individuals from stages, pulpits, and in many other public and private settings.

THE CHEF

I come from a family of amazing cooks. I am NOT one of them. My mom is a great cook and she bakes the absolute best carrot cake on the planet. But my dad has a couple of signature creations that really should be commercially produced and marketed. His made-from-scratch waffle mix is so good! He gets requests for it from family members in Atlanta, and now knows to make enough batter to freeze a couple of containers for me to bring home and enjoy. Honestly, his waffles are so light it's almost like eating air! His salmon cakes are also noteworthy, and he has a

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few other dishes that I could tell you about that are making my mouth water just now as I speak to you.

Howard Lee is most deserving of this honor, given his professional accomplishments and his many years of service to the people of North Carolina. I remember Chapel Hill before there were public transit buses. I remember the expansion of the North Carolina Zoo in Asheboro when the Africa Pavilion was brand new, and when a mountain-to-sea hiking trail was just an idea in my dad's mind. I also remember my parents standing up for fairness and equality and fighting against discrimination. The evidence of my dad's influence on my life is irrefutable, as I have found personal and professional fulfillment in my work, as my dad found in his. How has his life impacted mine?

The artist, athlete, writer/orator, and chef nurtured my spirit. I became an artist, an athlete, a writer/orator and, well, maybe one day I'll become a chef! As a result of my dad's influence, I learned many valuable life lessons, and will name just a few here:

1. Dream. Dream big and dream often. Dreams can and do come true.
2. Never be afraid to ask if you don't know. But verify...
3. Love your family.
4. Give back and serve.
5. Education is essential. Knowledge is power, and cannot be taken from you.
6. Do all that you can as well as you can for as long as you can.

There are many more, but these lessons have sustained me and I believe have made me a better daughter, sister, mother, aunt, niece, cousin, and friend.

Howard Lee is indeed most deserving of this honor. His body of work and his service in and for North Carolina are surpassed only by his contributions as a son, husband, father, brother, uncle, cousin, and friend.

Yes, I could go on and on about Howard Lee, but I'll end with this: Thank you, Daddy, for who you are, and for who you've helped me become. Congratulations. I love you.

Thank you.

REMARKS BY MARSHÉLE CARTER

My name is Marshéle Carter. I was born and raised in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Some of my earliest memories are of weekday suppers in the late 1960s and early 1970s at The Carolina Inn, which at the time had a cafeteria that was open not only to hotel guests but also to members of the local community. At those suppers I remember listening to the grown-ups' conversations. The talk of the town often included the names of local newsmakers and celebrities like James Taylor, Dean Smith, and yes, Mayor Howard N. Lee.

Fast forward fifty years, and it's difficult for me to put into words how I felt when I was invited by Howard Lee to say a few words at this award ceremony in his honor.

I think it's fitting, that, as I started to construct what I wanted say about this man who masterminded the North Carolina Mountains-to-Sea Trail, I was drawn out of my office into the great outdoors where I could see farther, think more clearly, and organize my thoughts. I felt called to a trail in the Phoenix Mountains Preserve near my home in Arizona, where I teach in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University. I wanted to listen quietly and to look inwardly in order to find the right words and the best stories that would help me to honor Howard Lee, and to show you why I respect him so much.

Mr. Lee's path has crossed my own path at three very memorable intersections.

We met face-to-face in the summer of 2018. At mid-year in 2018, thanks to a busted water heater that flooded a closet in my home in Chapel Hill (where I was living and working at the time), I was forced to rescue several boxes of waterlogged childhood memorabilia, and in the course of combing through them I ran across a long-forgotten letter addressed to me.

I smiled as I ran my fingertips across the embossed seal on the yellowed official letterhead of the Town of Chapel Hill. The letter was from December 1971. It was signed by Howard N. Lee, the Mayor of Chapel Hill. Back then he had taken the time to respond to me, a 9-year-old fourth grader at Estes Hills Elementary School in Chapel Hill.

A few months after finding this keepsake, I received a telephone call from Jessica Stringer, the editor of Chapel Hill Magazine. She asked me if I would write a profile for the magazine about a former mayor and "Chapel Hill champion" named Howard Lee. Ms. Stringer asked if I knew him personally or had heard of him.

I couldn't believe the timing of this opportunity! Just weeks before, I had run across that 1971 typewritten letter signed by Mayor Lee. I eagerly accepted the writing assignment and reached out to him to arrange an interview.

He welcomed me to his home. I couldn't believe I was sitting in the living room of this Chapel Hill legend.

Before I started the interview, I pulled that 1971 letter from my briefcase and handed it to him. I asked him to notice to whom the letter was addressed.

He looked more closely at the letter. When he realized that the 48-year-old letter had been addressed to a nine-year-old me, we laughed and marveled at this amazing moment that we had arrived at together all these years later.

I pointed out to him that the last part of his letter to me in 1971 had read: "If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me." I apologized that it had taken me 48 years to respond, but that now I had a few additional questions for him!

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At a second intersection, we served side-by-side at a community event in November 2018. During that August 2018 interview in his living room, I had asked Mr. Lee if he would consider serving as the keynote speaker at an event led by UNC-Chapel Hill students held at the CommunityWorx Thrift Shop in Carrboro.

The event had been designed by students in my course called "Cause Communications" at UNC's Hussman School of Media and Journalism. He agreed to address the community members and students attending the event.

On a mid-November morning, Howard Lee spoke to a room full of community nonprofit leaders and college students about the importance of investing in our town's most precious resource: our local youth.

In their course evaluations submitted to me at the end of that semester, student after student mentioned the "inspiring" and "life-changing" impact of meeting and listening to Mr. Lee that November morning in Carrboro. They said that they would never forget listening to the humble wisdom imparted by a man who had lived a life dedicated to public service.

At a third intersection of our paths in March 2020, we both said goodbye to a mutual friend. In the early spring of 2020, just before the COVID-19 closures and lockdowns, I attended the funeral of a dear family friend and well-known Chapel Hill pediatrician, Dr. Harvey Hamrick.

The pews at University Presbyterian Church on East Franklin Street were packed for the service, the attendees sitting shoulder-to-shoulder. Towards the end of the service, the congregation assembled that day stood to sing that great American hymn, "Amazing Grace." As we began to sing, I noticed that a rich, confident baritone was blending beautifully with the voices of those around me.

After the singing of the first two verses, I simply had to turn around to see who had such a beautiful voice. It was none other than Howard Lee, wholeheartedly singing the third stanza of John Newton's classic: "Through many dangers, toils, and snares / I have already come / 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far / And grace will lead me home."

As we sang the other stanzas, I couldn't help but think to myself, "How fitting!"

These lyrics, in many ways, sum up Howard Lee's own journey.

I thought to myself, this is a man who has known the lowest, painful valleys and many exhilarating mountain tops.

This is a man who has dedicated and invested his life consistently into worthy causes, a person who has always been committed to uniting Chapel Hillians and North Carolinians during times and decades when equality and diversity were not popular pursuits.

I thought to myself, here is a man who has exemplified stewardship — not only stewardship, but forward-thinking stewardship of our town's and of our state's natural resources and potential **and** stewardship of our town's and state's human resources and human potential, through his compassionate mentorship of so many co-workers and young people.

I thought to myself, here is a man who did not allow naysayers to distract him or to detour him from staying true to the paths that would eventually lead him to the fulfillment of his campaign promises and the accomplishment of his own personal goals.

So, Howard Lee's journey has intersected with mine at three memorable times. And today marks a fourth.

Howard Lee's leadership and influence have shaped so much of my life here in Chapel Hill and in North Carolina in countless ways. I may never fully know or appreciate or understand the impact of his life of public service on my life the way that I should — his leadership at the community level, at the town level, at the state level, and even at the national level.

So, I want to say thank you, Mr. Lee. Thank you for not only reading the letter that I wrote to you when I was a fourth grader at Estes Hills Elementary School fifty years ago, but for taking the time to respond to one of Chapel Hill's youngest concerned citizens.

Thank you for being a person who has valued all voices equally throughout your lifetime, from those who were highly visible in positions of leadership to the less audible or even the silenced voices of countless others whom you refused to ignore.

Your 1971 letter to me serves as a priceless, tangible example of your greatest legacy — that is, the children who were blessed to grow up here in an atmosphere that you and your beautiful and talented wife, Lillian, helped to create.

And, as a result, we who grew up in Chapel Hill during the 70s became more aware of our freedom to choose, and of our potential to make a difference for good.

Thank you, Howard Lee.

REMARKS BY VALERIE FOUSHEE

What an honor it is for me to be included in this wonderful tribute to one of Chapel Hill's treasures. Many thanks to the North Caroliniana Society for bestowing this award upon Howard N. Lee and for sponsoring this celebration of his life and work.

I have had the good fortune to know Howard Lee and his family since shortly after they moved to Chapel Hill in 1964. Noel Lee ("Ricky" as we called him) and I were classmates at Chapel Hill High School. Howard Lee was Mayor of Chapel Hill throughout our high school years. I think it made all of us feel special that his history-making career as a public official began right here in Chapel Hill.

After serving three terms as mayor of Chapel Hill, Mr. Lee served from 1977 to 1981 as Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Community Development, a cabinet-level position in the administration of Governor James B. Hunt.

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In 1990, Mr. Lee was elected to the North Carolina Senate. He was re-elected in 1992, 1996, and 1998. During his tenure, he held several powerful committee chairmanships, presiding over the education, transportation, and appropriations committees. While serving in the North Carolina General Assembly, he built his reputation as a champion of educational reform. He fought for higher teacher salaries, increased funding for public and higher education, and advocated for raising teacher and student standards. Additionally, he sponsored or co-sponsored several major pieces of educational legislation, including the Smart Start initiative and More at Four (now known as NC Pre-K). Senator Lee also sponsored the Excellent Schools Act for school reform and the Safe Schools Act, which was designed to help keep violence out of North Carolina classrooms.

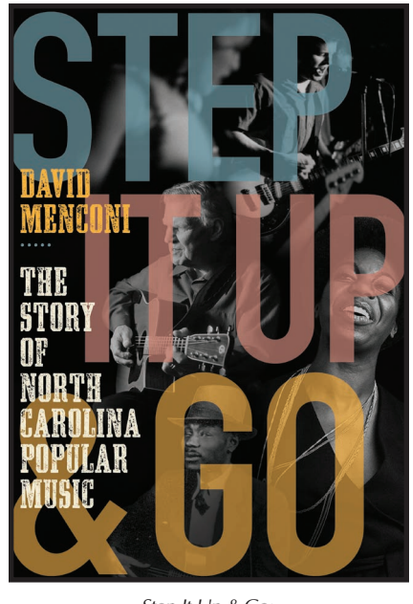
In 2003, the North Carolina State Board of Education elected Lee as its chairman. He later served as a member of the North Carolina Utilities Commission, having been appointed by Governor Mike Easley in 2005. In 2009, Governor Beverley Purdue appointed him as the executive director of the N.C. Education Cabinet, composed of leaders of public schools, community colleges, and public and private universities. He served in this position until 2011. Since 2011, Mr. Lee has spent most of his time as President of the Howard N. Lee Institute, which focuses on developing initiatives in middle and high schools to increase the number of disadvantaged students (especially black boys) who are graduating from high school and are prepared to succeed in a post-secondary institution of higher learning.I'll end my remarks by sharing this experience of Howard Lee from a few years ago, which demonstrates the range of his impact.

In 2015, I was fortunate to travel to Tokyo, Japan and Singapore with a delegation of North Carolina business people, policy makers, and educators for a summit on Economic Development and Education. I met an elementary school teacher who, upon learning that I was from Chapel Hill, asked me if I knew Howard Lee. "Well of course I do," I said proudly. She shared with me that she had met him a few years earlier. She was so inspired by her encounter with him that she purchased a copy of his autobiography, *The Courage to Lead: One Man's Journey in Public Service.* She said it changed not only her views on educating all children, but also helped to change her views about life in general. That's a legacy, Senator Lee, of which you can and should be proud.

2020 North Caroliniana Society Book Award

STEP IT UP & GO: THE STORY OF NORTH CAROLINA POPULAR MUSIC, FROM BLIND BOY FULLER AND DOC WATSON TO NINA SIMONE AND SUPERCHUNK

BY DAVID MENCONI



Step It Up & Go:
The Story of North Carolina Popular Music

David Menconi

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About the Award

DANNYE ROMINE POWELL

Each year since 2003, the North Caroliniana Society has presented an award for the book published during the previous year "that captures the essence of North Carolina by contributing powerfully to an understanding of the state." Competition for this award is always keen. This year was no exception.

Once again, as in the preceding year, the committee was obliged to meet not in person but by email and by phone to discuss the handful of nominated books.It became quickly apparent to the committee — Jeff Crow, Michael Hill and me — that David Menconi's *Step It Up & Go: The Story of North Carolina Popular Music from Blind Boy Fuller and Doc Watson to Nina Simone and Superchunk* was an overriding favorite.

Known as the dean of North Carolina music critics, Mr. Menconi covered music for the Raleigh *News & Observer* for close to three decades. He knows his stuff. Where else will you learn that as a child in Chapel Hill, singer James Taylor fashioned flutes from pieces of his family's garden hose? Or that in 2014, the Avett Brothers sang "Amazing Grace" at Arthur Smith's funeral.

In a low-key but authoritative style, Mr. Menconi begins with the music from the 1920s that grew out of the Piedmont's mill towns, and he brings us up to the present. Along the way, we meet Elizabeth "Libba" Cotton, born in 1893 in an area that's now Carrboro, who wrote "Freight Train" as a teenager, inspired by the passing trains near her house.

And blues guitarist Etta Baker of Morganton, whose acoustic guitar played old-time blues as true as Mr. Menconi says he'd ever heard, "each note hanging in the air like humidity."

And cotton-mill-worker turned recording artist Charlie Poole, about whom Mr. Menconi writes, "If Bill Monroe is the father of bluegrass, Charlie Poole is at the very least its drunk great-uncle."

In addition to the anecdotes, Mr. Menconi has assembled a stunning collection of black-and-white photographs.

So congratulations, David Menconi, and thank you. You have given our state an invaluable and enduring gift, one that will inform, delight and entertain for decades.

Remarks from the Author

I came to North Carolina about thirty years ago not knowing a soul, to take the music-writer job at the *The News & Observer* in Raleigh. A very vivid memory of my early days here was turning on the radio in the car one night and hearing one of Raleigh's rock stations playing that old 1970s warhorse, Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Free Bird." I lunged for the dial, as I always do when that one comes on, and switched over to Raleigh's other big commercial rock station — which, as it happened, was also playing (yes) "Free Bird."

The only thing to do was head for the left side of the dial, where the college radio and public radio stations reside, and that proved to be where I hung out most of the time. As I did, I came to discover that North Carolina is a state with an amazing musical past, present, and future. I was already familiar with some of the broad-brush highlights, like Doc Watson and Earl Scruggs. But North Carolina music was always surprising me.

"Oh, Nina Simone is from here? Wow. John Coltrane, too? And Link Wray? Libba Cotten? Let's Active? Andy Griffith? And half of James Brown's best band, too?"

There were lots of other people, places, and things to learn about, more obscure but no less vital to the Tar Heel music scene. People like Charlie Poole, a pre-bluegrass string-band legend from the roaring Twenties; groups like the "5" Royales, R&B pioneers from Winston-Salem; and UNC alumnus Orville Campbell's very quirky record label right here in Chapel Hill, Colonial Records.

I was fortunate to work for twenty-eight years at a newspaper that valued both storytelling and history. So I was permitted to roam the state to document a lot of what I was learning. And at a certain point, all this wonderful North Carolina music and history started to seem like one big interconnected story worthy of a book.

Turning those journalistic endeavors into this book, *Step It Up & Go*, was a challenge, a long haul spanning many years. It was a true labor of love, and I needed help from a long list of enablers, starting with the folks at UNC Press. I would also like to extend gratitude to Suzanne Brown, who hired me at *The News & Observer* way back when and was my editor and guide for many years; to my best friend and fellow soldier in the writing wars, Scott Huler; to "Kindness Ninja" Joe Newberry and other sounding board/spirit guides for expert and invaluable advice; and finally to my wife Martha Burns, who has always been patient and gracious when I've been on the book-writing grind.

Thanks to all of them, and also to the North Caroliniana Society for this award, which feels like a marvelous acknowledgement of all the work that went into *Step It Up & Go*. I am honored and thrilled. Thank you.

continued

About the Book

Step It Up & Go: The Story of North Carolina Popular Music, from Blind Boy Fuller and Doc Watson to Nina Simone and Superchunk is a love letter to the artists, scenes, and sounds defining North Carolina's extraordinary contributions to American popular music. David Menconi spent three decades immersed in the state's music, where traditions run deep but the energy expands in countless directions.

Menconi shows how working-class roots and rebellion tie North Carolina's Piedmont blues, jazz, and bluegrass to beach music, rock, hip-hop, and more. From mill towns and mountain coves to college-town clubs and the stage of "American Idol," Blind Boy Fuller and Doc Watson to Nina Simone and Superchunk, *Step It Up & Go* celebrates homegrown music just as essential to the state as barbecue and basketball.

Spanning a century of history from the dawn of recorded music to the present, and with sidebars and photos that help reveal the many-splendored glory of North Carolina's sonic landscape, this is a must-read for every music lover.

About the Author

David Menconi is a journalist, author, critic and sometime radio host in Raleigh, North Carolina.

He spent 34 years writing for daily newspapers, 28 of those years at *The News & Observer* in Raleigh. Before that, he spent five years at the Daily Camera in Boulder, Colorado. He earned a Master's degree in Journalism from the University of Texas/Austin and a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas.

He has written for publications including *Rolling Stone*, *Spin*, *Billboard* and *The New York Times*. He was also North Carolina's Piedmont Laureate for 2019 in the area of creative nonfiction and biography, as well as co-editor of the University of Texas' acclaimed American Music Series from 2011 to 2019.

His most recent book, *Step It Up & Go: The Story of North Carolina Popular Music, from Blind Boy Fuller and Doc Watson to Nina Simone and Superchunk*, was published in October 2020 by The University of North Carolina Press. It won First Runner-Up in the "Culture" category of the Eric Hoffer Awards in May of 2021.

Menconi's other books include 2012's *Ryan Adams: Losering, A Story of Whiskeytown* (also a Hoffer Award winner, Honorable Mention in 2013); 2015's *Comin' Right at Ya: How A Jewish Yankee Hippie Went Country, or, the Often Outrageous History of Asleep at the Wheel*; a novel, 2000's *Off The Record*; and the 1985 UT Master's thesis *Music, Media and the Metropolis: The Case of Austin's Armadillo World Headquarters*. His next book will be a history of the folk label Rounder Records, to be published in 2022 by UNC Press.

NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY IMPRINTS NUMBERS 1-62 (1978-2021)

No. 1. *An Evening at Monticello: An Essay in Reflection* (1978) by Edwin M. Gill
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