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JAMES DICKSON PHILLIPS, JR.

The interaction of teaching and practice is ultimately what the professional schools of a great university are about; and the achievement of Dickson Phillips shows this interaction at its most fruitful.

Born in Scotland County, he was captain of the baseball team and a Phi Beta Kappa student at Davidson College, and a parachute infantryman in World War II (awarded the Bronze Star as well as Purple Heart), before coming here to Law School and taking his legal degree in 1948. After a brief stint as Assistant Director of the Institute of Government, he practiced law in Laurinburg and Fayetteville for eleven years, returning in 1960 to teach at our Law School. For a decade, 1964 to 1974, he was its Dean: a Deanship which, as a colleague has put it, "gave a sense of movement that has carried us for many years." Among his greatest services to the state was his long membership on the North Carolina Courts Commission, the recommendations of which led to a thoroughgoing reorganization and restructuring of our judicial system. His stature in the state and in this University was recognized by the conferring of the John J. Parker award of the North Carolina Bar Association in 1975 and of our Thomas Jefferson Award in 1977.

Given this background, it is not surprising that Dickson Phillips's legal career should be capped by a call to the judicial bench. As a judge of the Fourth Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals since 1978 he has shown himself an influential as well as respected jurist, as witness a recent widely reported opinion declaring seven of our state legislative election districts invalid because of racial discrimination. Preeminent in intellectual acuity and personal probity alike, and in the respectful affection in which our legal community holds him, Dickson Phillips exemplifies what we would wish to understand by the term Doctor of Laws.