

Eli Nachamson Evans

Doctor of Laws

Eli Evans, Class of 1958, was born and raised in Durham, North Carolina, where his father, E. J. "Mutt" Evans, Class of 1928, was a six-term mayor. Evans graduated Phi Beta Kappa, served as president of the student body, and was inducted into the Order of the Golden Fleece. After serving in the United States Navy for two years, Evans entered Yale Law School, graduating in 1963, and then served on President Lyndon Johnson's staff for two years as a speech writer. His next assignment was staff director of a nationwide study of the future of the states, headed by Terry Sanford. From 1967 to 1977, he traveled extensively in the South as a senior program officer for the Carnegie Corporation. Evans spent the bulk of his career (1977–2003) as president of the Charles H. Revson Foundation. In that capacity he oversaw grants to Jewish philanthropy, urban affairs, education and biomedical research. A gifted writer, Evans is often called the "poet laureate of Southern Jews." He is the author of three important and influential books: "The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South" (1973), "Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate" (1988), and "The Lonely Days Were Sundays: Reflections of a Jewish Southerner" (1993). "The Provincials" has remained in print for three decades and is considered a classic. His writings have been praised by Pat Conroy, Hodding Carter, C. Vann Woodward and Abba Eban. Evans has been a guiding light for the development of Carolina's highly regarded Jewish Studies program and is a member of the advisory board for the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies. With 12 affiliated faculty members, undergraduate minors in Jewish studies and modern Hebrew, more than 1,000 students taking Jewish studies courses each year, and an active outreach program and popular lecture series, the center is a dynamic resource both on campus and beyond. Evans is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2001), holds honorary degrees from Hebrew Union College and Jewish Theological Seminary, and received a Distinguished Alumnus Award from Carolina in 1987.