

SAMUEL TALMADGE RAGAN

A unique combination of the journalist's flair, the savvy of the man of affairs, and the poet's percipience has made Sam Ragan one of this region's most valued citizens.

His roots are deeply local, his impact far broader. Born and educated in this state (A.B., Atlantic Christian College, 1936), he has been a newspaperman here for over half a century, save for a stint in the army in World War II. During the biggest part of that time he was Managing Editor of the Raleigh News and Observer. From that base he exercised nationwide influence, most notably as President of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association in 1964. In 1969 he turned his editorial talents in a different direction, to running his own small town newspaper as Editor and Publisher of the Southern Pines Pilot, a post he still holds and from which his presence has been felt throughout the state. The flood of his other activities continued unabated; among them may be mentioned the chairmanship of the North Carolina Arts Council for five years and the presidency of the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association. So it was natural rather than surprising that he should have been tapped to be first Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Arts, Culture, and History in 1972-3, a position which brought under newly unified leadership the Museums of Art and of History, the Department of Archives and History, and the North Carolina Symphony.

Just as Sam Ragan is a practicing journalist as well as an editor of journalism, so he is also a practicing poet as well as a former cultural czar. He has published three books of collected poems in as many decades, and is by designation of the State Legislature North Carolina's Poet Laureate. Such a grandiose title should not be allowed to mislead as to the quietly human tone of his verse, as when he speaks about poets who "rarely find the shining moment/ or the one small singing/ of every man." This shining moment for many, the University's Commencement, is made even brighter by the awarding to Sam Ragan of the degree of Doctor of Letters.