

**Remarks on the Occasion of the Induction of  
Norman Henry McCrummen, II  
into the  
Alabama Men's Hall of Fame  
September 23, 2014  
Dr. David E. Potts**

Acknowledgements:

We wish to express gratitude to:

- The Board of Directors of the Alabama Men's Hall of Fame
- To Samford University for keeping and supporting the Alabama Men's Hall of Fame
- The Judson College Alumnae Association for their initiative and persistence in making the case for the induction of Dr. McCrummen
- Mrs. Judy Martin, whose unflagging devotion to her college and to this induction is worthy of special note
- We salute this remarkable family – especially Mrs. N. H. McCrummen. While we understand the necessity of her absence, we know that in honoring her husband of 57 years, we must also readily acknowledge her own extraordinary contributions to these achievements of which we speak today and her own devotion to each church and institution where John and Kitty served.
- Women's Committee of 100 for Birmingham
- Alumnae and Trustees of Judson College

For much of the material that I recite today, I owe a great debt to Emily Johnson Baker and the Alabama Baptist Historian, a publication of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

Norman Henry McCrummen, II was an exemplary student, a patriot, a veteran of WW II, a devoted pastor, a gifted preacher, a leader in civic affairs at community and state-

wide levels, and president and then chancellor of one of the oldest institutions of higher education in America. He was indeed a great and good man among what Tom Brokaw calls "America's greatest generation."

He was best known by John, a name given to him in childhood. John was the product of the public schools of Montgomery and always announced proudly his graduation from Sydney Lanier High School. He was a summa cum laude graduate of Mercer University. He furthered his education at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, earning a Master's of Divinity, and was honored by Samford University with the Doctor of Divinity degree. He held steadfastly his passion for learning throughout all of his life.

John McCrummen was a patriot and a veteran. He served in the United States Air Force during WW II in the Pacific Theater, specifically in the Philippines and Okinawa. He entered military service as a First Lieutenant and upon completion of his call to duty four years later, was honorably discharged from the service with the rank of Major. His patriotism and love for his country did not end with his military service, he was an outspoken defender of freedom who was recognized on four different occasions by the Freedom Foundation at Valley Forge for his stirring addresses about love of country, bestowing on him the George Washington Medal of Honor in 1969, 1970, 1972 and 1973. Dr. McCrummen was among the most gifted preachers and loving pastors of his time. He started preaching on the decks of ships and in aircraft hangars during WW II. He began his formal ministry at the First Baptist Church of Atmore in 1952. His Sunday schedule of preaching is illustrative of his boundless energy. In Atmore, he led services at the State Prison at 7:00 a.m., followed by the 11:00 o'clock service at the First Baptist Church of Atmore, followed by his afternoon service for the Creek Indians, and concluded by preaching an evening service back at First Baptist Atmore. Throughout his lifelong ministry, he passionately shared the love of God and the grace of Christ. His call to the First Baptist Church of Selma came in 1955, where he began an outreach ministry to his fellow pilots and ground personnel at Craig Air Force Base, and dramatically grew the membership of that fine church.

He was called to serve the Woodlawn Baptist Church in 1960. It was during this fulfilling and successful pastorate that he made very significant contributions to the State of Alabama. Because of his devotion to civic engagement and to education, and the awareness by many across the state of his giftedness, he became Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Birmingham Baptist School of Nursing, an academic program that we know today as the Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing at Samford University. In this period of time, he served as the President of the Alabama Baptist Pastors' Conference, a revered position among the pastors of the state. Very

importantly, he served as Chairman of the Birmingham Parole Board from 1962 through 1970. As Chairman, he led the development of educational programs that were coupled with other rehabilitative services. Over the period of his leadership and service, recidivism among the incarcerated of Birmingham was reduced in three short years to 17%, a dramatic and unprecedented decline.

Mayor George G. Seibels, Jr. and the City Council acknowledged his service and leadership with a resolution dated the 27<sup>th</sup> of January, 1970:

*WHEREAS, Dr. N. H. McCrummen, Pastor of the Woodlawn Baptist Church, has resigned as Chairman of the Birmingham Parole Board of the occasion of his moving to another locality; and*

*WHEREAS; Dr. McCrummen has served as Chairman of the Birmingham Parole Board since 1962 and has faithfully dedicated himself to serving persons in unfortunate circumstances and in real need of assistance and in this capacity is widely recognized for his excellent contributions in the field of corrective rehabilitation; and*

*WHEREAS; Dr. McCrummen has won state-wide acclaim for his work as Chairman of the Alabama Youth Committee with the responsibility of advising the Governor on matters relating to youth and has held eminent positions in numerous other civic and community service organizations; and*

*WHEREAS; the City of Birmingham owes a great debt of gratitude to Dr. McCrummen . . . etc., etc.*

Three governors, George Wallace, Lurleen Wallace and Albert Brewer appointed him to serve as the Chair of the Alabama Youth Commission. The Commission was charged to review and improve the rehabilitation of delinquent youth. McCrummen recognized quickly that the scope of youth services was completely inadequate, leading the study that led to a legislative agenda that brought about the creation of the Alabama Youth Services Department which immediately began developing facilities that allowed the removal of youthful offenders from the adult population in jails across the state, building and equipping places that cared, educated and turned around the lives of inestimable numbers of boys and girls. If that weren't enough, while at Woodlawn Baptist Church, he began writing for the statewide Baptist newspaper a weekly column entitled "Gleams from the Greek" which aided many a Sunday School teacher and pastor with insights from scripture as McCrummen shared the wealth of his knowledge of the Greek language bringing new meaning and new life to the English testament that we read. To this flurry of remarkable leadership he added the distinction of serving as the chair of the Board of Trustees at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, the last seminary created by the Southern Baptist Convention.

Any member of any congregation who knew him and heard him will confirm that he was among the very best preachers in the Southern Baptist Convention. In 1988, I had the privilege of hearing him deliver a sermon on the power of prayer at the Legislative Prayer Luncheon during the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Judson College. The power of the words in his sermon on that day still rings in my ears. If I count correctly, he was the interim pastor at Siloam Baptist Church in Marion, Alabama no less than seven times. If you know Baptists, then you know that to be asked to return to a Baptist church is the highest praise for one's preaching and pastoring. He concluded his pastoral leadership at the historic Sampey Memorial Baptist Church, a church in close proximity to the land of his childhood.

In 1970, the congregation of the First Baptist Church of Dalton, Georgia had the grand opportunity to hear his preaching and experience his pastoring. In the same year and in one of the most difficult decisions of his life, he returned to Alabama in order to serve as President of Judson College, one of the 170 oldest institutions of higher education in our country. He and his wife loved the idea of educating women for they both deeply believed that, while educating a young man was a wonderful thing, when one educated a woman, one often educated a family.

Time does not permit a thorough telling of the many achievements of Norman Henry McCrummen, II at Judson College. Let me simply and forthrightly say that his character and his leadership ended a four decade long effort by some to close or merge the institution. As an officer in the United States Air Force, he understood what commitment to the mission meant and he brought that same level of commitment to the mission of Christian higher education especially for young women. In the face of enormous pressure to become co-educational he explained the benefits of remaining a school for women. As our American society began to replace systematically the sacred with the secular, he steadfastly held the informed view that education without the moral and spiritual guidance of scripture would bequeath more tyrants than citizens. He kept faith with the mission established by the founders and brought progress and quality to the institution. Under his guidance, impressive buildings were constructed, endowments were markedly improved, and enrollments were expanded.

As a great apologist, he ever sought to point his students to God and His purpose, encouraging young women to take the road less traveled, the more narrow but ever so more fulfilling way. He reminded them in Rose Sunday sermons that they were God's agents in this world and that no one need fear truth because our heavenly Father is the author.

So many of us who gather here today are the better because of his influence, his example, and his encouragement.

We express our deepest gratitude to the Board of Directors of the Alabama Men's Hall of Fame for this signal recognition of the enormity of his contributions.