

Chapter Nine

Honors and Accolades of the Officer D'Academe

By Opal A. Lovett

Membership in the International Platform Association is the signal honor received in his long career as educator, public servant, and popular public speaker according to Houston Cole.

“Obviously, I feel honored to be asked to become a member of IPA. It is devoted to the cause of good citizenship, which is so badly needed at this point in the history of our nation,” said Cole in an interview to *The Anniston Star*, Thursday, August 18, 1983.

Other papers publicizing Cole's recognition and honor upon being elected to membership in IPA were *The Jacksonville News*, *Gadsden Times*, *Midweek*, *Birmingham News*, *Talent Magazine*, and *Associated Press*.

Founded in Cleveland, Ohio by Daniel Webster and Josiah Holbrook over 150 years ago, IPA offers membership to only the nation's most talented orators. Cole joins such renowned people as Mark Twain, Winston Churchill, several U.S. presidents, Barbara Walters, Henry Kissinger, and Bob Hope (*The Anniston, Star*, August 18, 1983).

The recognition comes well earned. During the last sixty-nine years, Cole has made over 3,500 speeches, over 250 of them commencement addresses at universities, colleges, and high schools. He has filled speaking engagements in twelve states.

Related to his long career of speech-making, Cole was appointed a member of the Speaker's Bureau of the National Bicentennial of the Constitution by Justice Warren Burger in 1987 and will serve through 1991. During the bicentennial year Cole, 87, made thirty-two speeches, often wearing the Colonial costume, complete with powdered wig, a gift from the city of Piedmont.

Cole received letters of appreciation and certificates of award for his dedication to making the commemoration of the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution a success. One such award was from the James Gadsden Chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution signed by Anne H. Dill, Regent. Letters include those from Chief Justice Warren Burger, Retired, Supreme Court of the United States; Governor Guy Hunt; and Chief Justice C. C. Torbert, Jr., Supreme Court of Alabama.

"You are one of those rare and dedicated individuals — representing a cohesive force that has helped make the commemoration of the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution a history and civics lesson for all Americans," wrote Chief Justice Burger, retired from the Supreme Court of the United States.

Alabama Governor Guy Hunt commended Cole, "The many trips you made at your own expense have helped to enlighten thousands of Alabamians on the importance of the United States Constitution, the very essence of our democracy. Due to your dedicated fervor, patriotism has been promoted throughout North Alabama."

In his letter, C. C. Torbert, Jr., Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama, touched the very core of Cole's professional life: "I am particularly impressed with the fact that you have spoken to hundreds of teachers; and, as a consequence, your excellent presentations on the bicentennial will be passed on to future leaders of our country who will have a better grasp of the history of our great government and its Constitution."

Sandra Hobbs, student council advisor at Jacksonville High, was impressed with Dr. Cole's speech on the United States Constitution. She said, "Dr. Cole has the ability to take students into the past to make them feel the sacrifices made by our forefathers in their efforts to create a document that could withstand time and still be effective in preserving basic freedoms."

Barry Bennett, a Jacksonville High School student commented, "I was amazed at the way Dr. Cole could keep the attention of high school students on a topic which otherwise would be boring in a normal classroom setting. He not only kept history from being boring but made it come alive with his costume and excellent speaking."

Though the honor of membership in IPA came some years follow-



Dr. Houston Cole, a member of the Speaker's Bureau of the National Bicentennial of the Constitution, is surrounded by his "cabinet members," all of whom assisted him in preparing for his speeches on the constitution. Left to right: Cathy Nabors, Lynda Johnson, Peggy Peel, Carol Farrell, Vassie Johnson, Diane Marshall, Nancy Humphrey.

ing Dr. Cole's retirement and was earned as a result of his constant use of oratorical expertise reflected in the hundreds of speeches made during the years, his long list of academic and professional honors began early.

Dr. Cole remembers a day in 1929: "Dr. George Lang, professor of Philosophy at the University of Alabama called while I was home sick with the flu and said, 'I've got some news that will pick you up. You've just been elected to Phi Beta Kappa.'" He says that he will give his key to the great-grandson named for him.

Years later, when a senior at the University of Alabama, his daughter, now Beth Cole Rutledge, joined her father as a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

Houston Cole was named Chairman of the Black Warrior Council of the Boy Scouts of America for the year 1939. Cole, Tuscaloosa County Superintendent of Education, had been active in the Black Warrior Council for several years. He was in charge of organizing volunteer committees to be in charge of all the activities in the expanding program in both the city and rural areas.

Cole worked directly with the Boy Scouts of America for twenty years and continued to be supportive of the program throughout his educational career at Jacksonville State University, hosting annual meetings on campus and entertaining young scouts at athletic events.

Upon Houston Cole's resignation as Superintendent of the Tuscaloosa County School System to become associated with the University of Alabama, the county teachers honored him at their annual luncheon October 8, 1939.

The resolution offered Cole read in part:

During his term of office, there has been fairness shown to all persons with whom he has come in contact, and the affairs of the county which come under his supervision have been conducted on a professional and scientific basis.

As a result of this, there has always prevailed in our county a good spirit, and there has been continuous professional growth.

Cole's work, attested by numerous newspaper articles, indicates that he was actively involved in the development of the academic program of the students and the professional development and growth of the faculty members. From his earliest years as a teacher and as an administrator, records show his contributions to the teaching of good citizenship and patriotism in the schools with which he was associated. He originated and supervised speeches, study units, and essay and oratorical contests on citizenship for students in his classes and in the systems where he worked. This interest expanded to the Parent Teacher Association in which he was active and included his volunteer work in the Boy Scouts of America. The influence he had on the positive attitude toward good citizenship and patriotism is immeasurable because his philosophy spread into the civic organizations in which he was active and to the general public through his speeches which were a rare combination of factual background and idealism, the more stimulating because he always spoke extemporaneously, never reading a word except choice historical passages or poetry chosen to illustrate a point.

In 1941 Houston Cole was privileged to serve as vice president of the Alabama branch of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. The annual convention was held in Selma, and Cole addressed the general theme: "Normal Community Life for Responsible Citizenship" in the opening session.

Cole told the hundreds of parents in attendance:

The greatest contribution this group can make in the next few years is to revive and rekindle the flames of hope in the younger generation.

The depression and war have struck a blow at their aspirations

and faith . . . many young people feel that there is no tomorrow, that their future is circumvented by the ill fate of a "topsy-turvy" world. They can only ask, "What's the use?"

We meet here as a statewide organization dedicated to the service of boys and girls. We subscribe to the theory that civilization marches on the feet of little children. As never before, these should be days of dedication for all of us.

Cole was instrumental in leading Parent-Teacher Association groups throughout the state to sponsor Citizenship Day programs with emphasis on voter registration for young people just reaching the age of majority.

One such drive was sponsored April 7, 1941 on the University of Alabama campus where Cole worked in public relations. Governor Frank Dixon made the principal address at the rally, and voter registration booths were set up on campus for the benefit of students.

Despite the catastrophe that rages over Europe and its possible implications for this country, there is the feeling in high and responsible quarters that our greatest danger is internal rather than external. It is contended that the safety of the country is in direct proportion to the intelligent civic interest and the activity of its citizenry.

This was the opening remark made by Houston Cole in an address to the Jefferson County Council of Parents and Teachers in Birmingham in laying the groundwork for Citizenship Recognition Day, a day set aside by the United States government as a special time to honor the youth of America reaching voting age.

He pointed out that fewer than 50 percent of those qualified exercise the right to go to the polls and vote.

"Democracy is something that must be maintained at the price of eternal vigilance, and that vigilance must involve all the people, not the few," Cole stated.

He further argued that these programs will also make a definite contribution to national defense. "National unity is as necessary to defense as airplanes or guns or tanks or ships. There need to be little fear for the future of this country when the time comes that its people are a unit in spirit behind the flag and the things for which it stands," he said (*Birmingham Post Herald*, 1941).

Houston Cole was appointed President of Jacksonville State Teachers College September 1, 1942 by the State Board of Education to fill the position vacated by Dr. C. W. Daugette.

Cole had to resign as State Director of the Office of Price Administration, considered by some the most important post in the state, carrying as it did the administration of rationing price ceil-

ings, and the supervision of hundreds of employees. He also surrendered a salary of \$6,500 for a lesser one of \$5,900.

The University of Alabama *Alumni News* of October, 1942 reported:

There has been a wave of general satisfaction in the press over the election of Houston Cole as President of Jacksonville State Teachers College . . . Cole has always been connected with the field of education. He was Superintendent of Guntersville High School one year, principal of Northport High School in Tuscaloosa County for ten years, Superintendent of Education in Tuscaloosa County for three and one-half years before joining the faculty of the College of Education at the University of Alabama.

He was on leave from the University of Alabama at Governor Dixon's request to go to Montgomery to organize and become Director of the State Civilian Defense where he was so successful that he was also made Director of the OPA work in the state. "He has withal, a cheery, genial disposition and a faculty for getting along with people, old and young, that has proved a great asset to his success." These qualities indicate much success for him in the new position according to the press reaction across the state (University of Alabama *Alumni News*, October 1942).

Houston Cole was appointed President of Jacksonville State Teachers College in 1942 following the death of Dr. C. W. Dauge. He assumed his duties in September, 1942.

Soon after the arrival of Dr. and Mrs. Cole and their daughter Beth, the citizens of Jacksonville hosted a reception for them at the Community Recreation Center. Several hundred people called during the evening, including guests from both Piedmont and Anniston.

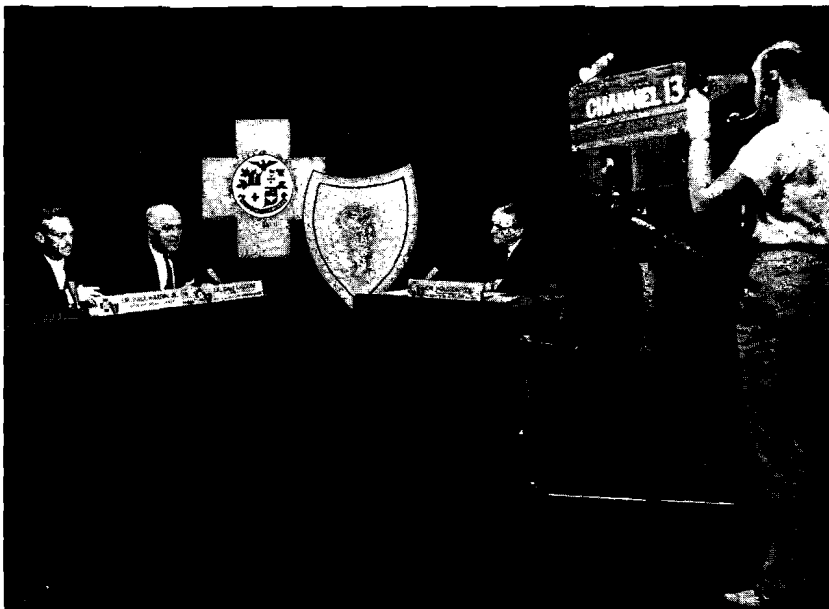
What's Your Problem?, airing in Birmingham on Sunday afternoons, ran for three years on Channel 6 and for nine years on Channel 13 in Birmingham from 1948-1960.

The popular panel, *What's Your Problem?*, gave Cole recognition, along with fellow panelists, Dr. Dale LeCount, minister of First Presbyterian Church, and Dr. Edwin Kimbrough, minister of First United Methodist Church, when the program received awards three times for the best of its kind in the state of Alabama.

Cole says, "*What's Your Problem?* was good promotion for the college."

Through his management, speakers invited to the campus often appeared as guests on the popular program, including Edwin Muskie, Barry Goldwater, Pauline Frederick, and Senator Henry Jackson.

Rising to the level of national caliber, *What's Your Problem?* gain-



An early program of the popular panel, "What's Your Problem?", shows Dr. Paul Hardin and Dr. Dale LeCount pondering and responding to a question from Dr. Houston Cole, moderator.

ed the genuine popularity of family viewers and also enjoyed a vast following of teenagers.

Dr. Edwin Kimbrough shares his experience as a panelist:

For ten years I was privileged to serve as a member of the panel program, *What's Your Problem?*. The experiences that I shared with Dr. Cole and with Dr. Dale LeCount were among the happiest and most fulfilling of my life. I learned so much from the two of them, including laughter and wisdom for living, plus the joy of friendship. Dr. Cole was a masterful moderator; and if he could trap his two panelists with an unexpected query, his eyes danced with satisfaction, and his lips were framed in a victor's smile. Thank God for precious memories and for all that I learned from two wonderful men.

Henry Ford, II, appointed Dr. Cole Chairman of the Crusade for Freedom in Alabama in 1953. The purpose was to raise funds for operation of Radio Free Europe and Radio Free Asia in an effort to combat the spread of Communism.

These stations beamed hard-hitting messages behind Iron Curtain areas, hour by hour, day-in and day-out.

Cole opened state headquarters in Birmingham and traveled extensively throughout the state, working with local citizens to establish an active center in each of the sixty-seven counties.

In 1955 Dr. Cole lectured at the Southeastern Regional Foundry Conference in Birmingham. He "reviewed man's discovery and utilization of power, pointing out how it has increased production of the individual 22 times over what it was in 1900. 'Every increase in inanimate power has brought a corresponding decrease in the value of manpower,' he said. While some see no further value in the individual except as part of a group or social unit, he warned that emphasis must still be placed on the individual, in which progress has always had its origin" (*Birmingham Magazine*, 1955).

Dr. Cole had the privilege of addressing the American Foundry Association in Chicago, Illinois, October 7, 1956. His subject was "Man in Action — Man in Contemplation." Cole's humanitarian concern for mankind as noted in his numerous local and regional lectures brought him the recognition that led to invitations on the national level.

Remaining true to his interests in the development of citizenship and patriotism as parallels to the academic development during his early years as an educator in the public schools of Alabama, Houston Cole brought another first to Jacksonville State College with the establishment of the annual Student Conference on American Government (SCOAG). On December 13, 1964, the first group of high school students descended on the campus, eager to be a part of SCOAG.

Dr. J. W. Selman, the first SCOAG adviser, who served for ten years, 1964-1975, contributed a statement on the history of the organization and paid tribute to Dr. Cole's leadership:

The purpose of the Student Conferences on American Government (SCOAG) has been to bring outstanding high school students from Northeast Alabama, political minded students at JSU, and well-known political leaders from throughout the nation together for a weekend of seminars and round-table discussions dealing with some current issue of American government, e.g., SCOAG in 1966 had the theme of "American National Government in the Changing World;" the conference in 1976 featured "Youth's Role in the American Bicentennial;" and the meeting in 1980 was on "The American Presidency." SCOAG has helped area high school students to have a better understanding of the American system of government and to develop an awareness of major governmental issues which confront our citizens.

The first Student Conference on American Government (SCOAG) met in the fall of 1964. Interestingly enough, three very outstanding JSU students served as student leaders at this conference: A. W. Bolt, later a prominent attorney; Randall Cole, later an outstanding Circuit Judge; and Charles Gamble, later to be Dean of the University of Alabama Law School. High school juniors and seniors came from throughout the area of Northeast Alabama, and from 200-300 students participated annually in a number of these con-

ferences. SCOAG rapidly became an institution at JSU and one of the big annual events on campus. Dr. Glen Browder was faculty adviser for eight years, followed by Dr. Jerry Gilbert in recent years.

Much of the early success of SCOAG was due to the strong support of Dr. Houston Cole, President of JSU. He arranged for the necessary financing of these three-day conferences and often aided in bringing outstanding speakers to these meetings, including numerous U.S. Senators, members of Congress, state governors, and various federal judges. His office was available at all times to help with any problem SCOAG might encounter.

An editorial in *The Gadsden Times* spoke convincingly of the value of the first conference and paid tribute to the students in attendance and to Dr. Houston Cole.

These students (college conference leaders such as Charles Palmer, Taylor Hardy, Jim Broadstreet, Sam Monk, Barbara Smith, Mary Ann McCurdy, Tony Callan, Joe Stahlkuppe, Uffe Erickson, Pat Goodhew) were altogether warm, respectful and about as thoughtful as they come. And it is with deep appreciation that this is acknowledged.

Why go to such length in commendation?

Quite simply, it was a refreshing encounter in view of so much (adverse) publicity being given college and university students in other parts of the nation.

In Jacksonville you see young Americans proud of their college, thankful of being Americans, and just having the time of their lives in the friendly atmosphere which pervades the campus.

In addition to complimenting the students, the writer concluded with positive comments about the institution and its leader.

Jacksonville State under the competent leadership of its president, Dr. Houston Cole, is now the third largest institution of its kind in Alabama. More expansion of its facilities is on the drawing board. Its future seems limitless.

From its unique International House to the ordinary classroom, Jacksonville State College fills to the brim all that can be desired of an institution of higher learning in these United States" (*The Gadsden Times*, December 1965).

SCOAG has had a long and illustrious history since its beginning in 1964. Among the outstanding people who have lectured and assisted in conducting the student seminars are the Honorable James B. Allen, Lieutenant Governor and later United States Senator; Senator John Sparkman; George H. Huddleston, U.S. House of Representatives; Albert P. Brewer, Speaker of the Alabama House of Representatives and later Governor; Guy Sparks, Anniston lawyer and former Commissioner of State Revenue; Carl Albert, Speaker of the House; Jack Nelson of the *Los Angeles Times* and Washington Bureau Chief; Dean Rusk, Secretary of State; Senator Strom Thurmond; Senator Howell Heflin; and Senator Joseph R. Biden.

Circuit Judge of the 7th Judicial Circuit of Alabama, Samuel H.



Dr. Houston Cole, Man of the Year in 1966, received the Anniston Star's citation from Mr. Ralph Callahan, business manager of the Anniston Star.

Monk, II, was involved with SCOAG during his student years. He says:

Dr. Cole, during his tenure as president, was a man with very keen insight into the role that Jacksonville State University should play in its service to the area. He was always very supportive of any quality student effort to serve the state and to promote Jax State. Without his support in its early days, SCOAG would never have survived. The growth and expansion of SCOAG can be attributed largely to Dr. Cole's support of the conference as one of the university's outreach and educational programs. SCOAG's long history of quality programs, in my mind, is one of the many living testaments to Dr. Cole's leadership and foresight.

Congressman Glen Browder, former political science professor, said:

SCOAG served as a source of motivation for high school students in that they were exposed to local and state elected party leaders. SCOAG added strength to the leadership skills of the college students who directed the annual event.

Dr. Jerry Gilbert, professor of political science, found "SCOAG was a double barrel for JSU. It served as a recruiting tool and a means of bringing in national speakers."



Cole receives the Department of Army Civilian Service Medal from General Lewis W. Truman, Third Army. The presentation was made at Fort McClellan. Partially obscured is Marshall K. Hunter, chairman of the Third Army Advisory Committee, who also received the medal.

Cole, listed in "Who's Who in America and Personalities of the South," was named "Man of the Year in Alabama" in 1942 by *The Alabama Magazine* and "Man of the Year in Calhoun County" in 1965 by *The Anniston Star*.

Ralph W. Callahan, executive vice president of *The Star* described Dr. Cole as "a great teacher, thinker, a moving force in civic activities, and a man of extraordinary capabilities and management and executive ability."

Callahan presented a plaque to Dr. Cole inscribed: "For his teacher's genius that kindled thought and fostered ideas and ideals" (*The Anniston Star*, January 13, 1966).

Considered by Dr. Cole one of the finest gifts and greatest honors is the desk presented by the faculty and staff when the institution was elevated to university status by the Alabama Legislature and took the name Jacksonville State University in 1966. He still uses the desk in the Office of President Emeritus today.

On April 6, 1966, the United States Third Army presented Dr. Cole with the Outstanding Civilian Medal for his services. The citation was presented by Louis W. Truman, Lieutenant General,

United States Army; Commanding General, Third United States Army and reads:

The Department of the Army Outstanding Civilian Service Medal is awarded to Doctor Houston Cole, President of Jacksonville State College, Jacksonville, Alabama, for contributing substantially to the mission of the United States Army. During the period 1942 through 1965, Doctor Cole has nurtured the growth of his college ten-fold. Coincidental with the growth of the college, Doctor Cole has steadfastly and publicly emphasized the responsibilities of citizenship and promoted patriotism. Through his establishment of the United States Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps at Jacksonville State College, his support of the educational development program of Fort McClellan, his service on the Third Army Military Affairs Committee and his constant emphasis on patriotism and civic duty, Doctor Cole has rendered outstanding civilian service to the civilian and military community. Doctor Cole's commendable achievements, loyalty and devotion to country are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States and reflect great credit upon himself and his college.

Featured as a "continuing recruiter," Dr. Houston Cole was recognized for building a college by the *Birmingham Magazine*, published by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, September, 1967. According to the article, "If there is one reason for the school's fantastic growth, it is the dynamic leadership and devotion provided by the school's president — Dr. Houston Cole, who is serving his twenty-fifth year. Jacksonville State can almost be called Dr. Cole's creation" (*Birmingham Magazine*, September 1967).

The Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce declared "Dr. Houston Cole Day" in honor of his twenty-fifth year at Jacksonville State, March 10, 1967. The annual dinner was held in the Leone Cole Auditorium where U.S. Representative Bill Nichols delivered the address and paid tribute to Dr. Cole for his vision and hard work in the field of education and, especially, what he has accomplished at Jacksonville State (*Jacksonville News*, March 8, 1967).

The editor of *The Chanticleer*, JSU campus newspaper, Larry Smith wrote the following editorial to commemorate the occasion:

Last month Dr. Houston Cole celebrated his silver anniversary as a college president.

In August 1942, newspapers were running stories of a certain young Houston Cole who had just been named president of Jacksonville State Teachers College. At the time of his appointment, there were 119 students enrolled and the physical plant consisted of three buildings.

During his 25 years as president at least one (and sometimes more) new buildings have been added each year to the Jax State campus.



Congressman Bill Nichols presented Dr. Houston Cole with the award from Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, for the speech made by Cole before Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs in May, 1969, entitled "What's Your Civic I.Q.?"

Under his leadership, Jacksonville State Teachers College gave way to Jacksonville State College, and perhaps his greatest goal was realized last November when Jacksonville State was made a university.

Jacksonville State University with its 5000 students is a far cry from Jacksonville State Teachers College with 119 students. Had it not been for Dr. Houston Cole's dedication, drive and determination, Alabama would have one less university.

Smith, then a student, is now JSU's Director of Financial Aid.

The year 1969 was a banner year for Houston Cole. He received several prestigious honors and awards. One of the most outstanding was the Valley Forge Award for Citizenship.

The distinguished George Washington Honor Medal by the Freedoms Foundation was presented to Dr. Cole by U.S. Representative Bill Nichols in November, 1969, on behalf of the National Awards Jury of the Freedoms Foundation.

Cole's winning speech was entitled "What Is Your Civic I.Q.?" and was delivered before Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs during the state convention which met on the Jacksonville State campus.

The Freedoms Foundation is an organization dedicated to the preservation and perpetuation of the American Way of Life and the Republic (*Jacksonville News*, November 19, 1969).

Congressman Nichols said, "Dr. Cole deserves this recognition—both for his efforts to build a strong patriotism among all citizens and for his contributions to education which also strengthen our great country."

The French government decorated Dr. Cole in 1969 for his work on behalf of world peace, citing him as Officer D'Academe. The citation was presented by E. Depreux, Minister de L'Education Nationale, for his contributions to the development of World Brotherhood, especially through the International House Program, established on campus in 1947 through the dream of Dr. James H. Jones, Professor of French, and the practicality and vision of Cole himself.

The Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs made Dr. Cole an honorary member in 1969.

Dr. Cole was supportive of the Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs and served as guest speaker frequently throughout the state at local, regional, and state programs.

He also hosted the state convention on the Jacksonville State campus two times.

The Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs was supportive of the International House Program, particularly through the efforts of Kitty Stone, well-known educator and club member, who was

instrumental in leading the state organization to establish a perpetual scholarship fund to be awarded to one foreign female student each year.

Mrs. Stone pays tribute to Dr. Cole's leadership in education:

Dr. Houston Cole has a natural majesty. He is a man of decision, and his lovely wife, Martha Bellenger, complements his dynamism. I found this thoroughly contemporary man to be the moving force in offering support and cooperation to secure a \$25,000 Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs Trust Fund to make it possible to offer a scholarship each year to a promising young lady from another country in the International House Program at Jacksonville State University.

The plan was approved at the AFWC State Convention in 1954 at Jacksonville State College. The Trust Fund was completed in October, 1967. Dr. Cole allowed the Federation to select a scholarship student each year during the fourteen years required to raise \$25,000 from the contributions of federated clubwomen in Alabama. Thirty-five young ladies have been brought from other countries to the JSU campus for one year of study and as a member of the International House Program. The scholarship is \$2,550 each year at the present time.

Dr. Cole has been the kind of leader who can be aggressive, unrelenting, successful, and still maintain an ever-growing coterie of friends. He has done innumerable good works as an exemplary citizen and as President of Jacksonville State University.

Honorary degrees have been awarded in recognition of Dr. Cole's achievements as a teacher, administrator, public leader, and scholar.

On June 8, 1948, he received the Dr. of Laws degree from the University of Alabama.

On May 30, 1970, he received the Dr. of Literature degree from Jacksonville State University in recognition of his contributions to the institution during his twenty-eight year tenure as president.

On June 12, 1970, Troy State University paid special recognition to Dr. Cole in the following presentation:

In grateful recognition of his leadership to the cause of education in Alabama as the senior university and college president of this state.

Dr. Houston Cole is hereby named Honorary President of Troy State University with all the responsibilities, rights, and privileges appertaining thereto.

Conferred this twelfth day of June, nineteen hundred and seventy.

The Anniston Chapter of Knights of Columbus chose Dr. Cole "Citizen of the Year" in November 1970. Grand Knight William Toffee, Jr., made the presentation (*The Anniston Star*, November 24, 1970).

Both houses of the Alabama Legislature approved a resolution to name the new library under construction in 1971 The Houston

Cole Library. Representative Hugh Merrill of Calhoun County and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Jacksonville State University said, "During Dr. Cole's years as President, the curriculum of the school has changed fantastically." The resolution reads: "No longer is it a Teacher's College. It offers many majors in the Bachelor of Science and Arts degrees, a rapidly growing Master's degree program, and seven schools are being developed from the various departments and divisions of the university." The resolution concluded: ". . . be named and known as the Houston Cole Library in grateful appreciation for the outstanding services of Dr. Cole" (*The Anniston Star*, June, 1971).

On June 13, 1971, *The Anniston Star's* front-page editorial compared the towering building to the strength of Cole's character:

As one drives into Jacksonville these days, the eye is caught, long before the town itself, by the towering structure of the new library going up on the Jacksonville State University Campus.

Perspective tends to delay recognition of the fact, but then comes the realization — this soaring new feature of the JSU campus will be . . . is . . . of landmark proportions, an imposing great center of learning standing atop the hill overlooking campus and town, gazing in deep contemplation upon the horizon and the mountains, presiding over the years.

How fitting it is that such a building should be named for Dr. Houston Cole. It is an old and accepted custom, to be sure, naming buildings for honorable, useful men.

But here building has been matched uniquely with man, a landmark man of Jacksonville State University's years. His three decades link the school's hallowed, character-setting beginnings with the modern era of change and growth. His own towering character has left its indelible imprint on The Hill for the years ahead. In an incomparable match, Houston Cole and JSU have one.

A library, busy and useful, full of people gaining and giving knowledge, offering pathways to wisdom and life, a steady, confirming constant giving stability in the midst of the uncertainties of our days — how like the man whose name it will bear! (*The Anniston Star*, Sunday, June 13, 1971).

Dr. Harold J. McGee, President, commented on Cole's achievements:

Dr. Cole played the major role in the growth of this institution from a State Teacher's College to a diversified university during his 29 years as President (1942-1971). The academic hub of this institution — our 12-story library is the tallest academic building in Alabama — proudly bears the name Houston Cole Library. It is most deserving that the Alabama Legislature named the library in his honor. It is a well deserved recognition of his many years of service to this University and to the State of Alabama.

In January 1971 Dr. Cole retired from the presidency of Jacksonville State University, having seen the institution grow from a state

teacher's college whose enrollment was only a few hundred to Jacksonville State College and a broadened curriculum to a state university with eight separate academic colleges and nearly 7,000 students.

From the time Cole announced his retirement until his last day as chief administrator, he was the recipient of numerous personal honors, academic recognition, civic awards, and a rich outpouring of news stories, feature stories and editorials from the press all over the state from weekly papers to all the dailies.

His hometown newspaper, *The Jacksonville News*, ran several letters from the book of letters presented to Dr. Cole from business and professional people on the occasion of homecoming in its December 2, 1970 edition just prior to his retirement. The letters came from people of all races and all walks of life.

Eugene Reid, a businessman and member of a historically prominent black family, wrote, ". . . I have kept abreast of your activities, fair play and contributions to mankind."

Paul Vondracek, then pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, said, ". . . you so capably served the university and this community. I can say, without reservation, that I count you a most faithful co-worker and one of my best friends."

"As an alumnus, I am perhaps better able than most to observe and measure your remarkable contribution which enabled the university to achieve its present position of prominence, prestige and influence," wrote Faith H. Pearson, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the City of Jacksonville.

"It is with warm appreciation that I recall ten years of association with you as president of JSU and I as part of Jacksonville's business community. These have been years of unique growth; happily, your spirit of cooperation has always been extended to me," said Darwin Hardison, Crow Drug Company.

The University Board of Trustees named Cole President Emeritus, and for eighteen years he has served his alma mater well in that capacity.

Marked with unity was the warm gesture to Dr. Cole upon his retirement when the faculty made him a life member. Dr. Charles Johnson, president of the Faculty Club, conferred the membership:

Hear This — Hear This

In the year of our Lord 1971 with love, friendship and gratitude the organization of Teachers of Jacksonville State University herein confers on Dr. Houston Cole membership for life. We desire to give food and drink to him who has been food and drink to us.

Each year DeKalb County recognizes outstanding citizens by placing them in County Legend for that year. Houston Cole made

the 1975-76 Legend in ceremonies at the old Opera House in Fort Payne. The tribute could be called "Who's Who" from DeKalb County.

The tribute reads: ". . . to men and women born and reared in our county who have gone forth to reach great levels of achievement in their chosen fields of endeavor."

The year 1979 marked triple honors. Cole was named among the twenty most outstanding citizens of Calhoun County recognized by WDNG Radio Station. Honored for his outstanding career in education, Cole joined other dedicated citizens: Charles Hamilton, Jr., philanthropist; Nimrod Q. Reynolds, minister and civil rights leader; John Kelly, civic worker; Marcus Howze, civic worker; Catherine Whitehead, educator and civic worker; Joseph C. Lett, civic worker; Hazel V. Rowe, civic worker; Maudine Halloway, religious and civic worker; Joseph P. Kingston, civic worker; James A. Dunn, educator and civic worker; John S. Nettles, minister and civil rights leader; H. Brandt Ayers, publisher and civic worker; John B. Lagarde, civic leader; Mary Jo S. Bridges, civic worker; Robert B. Propst, civic worker; James A. Tinsley, Sr., religious and civic worker; and Thomas G. Coleman, Jr., civic worker. These people were chosen from a survey made by WDNG listeners.

Thomas S. Potts, former owner of WDNG radio station adds impetus to the reasons Cole was included:

Dr. Houston Cole is a giant among men. He is one of the first persons I met when I moved to Anniston nearly 30 years ago. He was an active Rotarian and spoke to the club many times. Without a doubt he is one of the most interesting and provocative public speakers I have ever heard. A man of great integrity, I have been very privileged to count him as one of my good friends.

In the same year, *Minister's Manual*, an annual publication by Keuka College, New York, selected a laity day talk he made in a local church for publication in its 1980 edition to be published by Harper and Rowe.

The Anniston Rotary Club presented Cole with the \$1,000 Paul Harris Fellowship Award which was made by Past District Governor Ralph Porch.

Ralph Porch writes:

Dr. Houston Cole's career history would not be complete without reference to his membership in Rotary and his devotion to the ideals of Rotary International.

He first joined the Tuscaloosa Rotary Club in 1933, later served as its President and in 1938-39 he served as District Governor of Rotary International supervising all Rotary Clubs in the State of Alabama and organizing new clubs. In 1942 he became a member of the Anniston Rotary Club, serving as its President in 1946-47.

He now bears the status of honorary member of the Anniston Club which nominated him as a Paul Harris Fellow and made a substantial contribution in his name and honor to the Rotary Foundation.

Dr. Cole's dedication to the high principles of Rotary and its avenues of service led to the involvement of the Rotary District and the Anniston Rotary Club in the International House Program at Jacksonville State University which provides scholarships for foreign students furthering Rotary's goal of international service and understanding.

He is widely acclaimed and sought as a speaker at Rotary and other civic clubs. It is likely that he has addressed more Rotary Clubs in Alabama, on more occasions, than any other person. His messages are thought-provoking, informative, witty and succinct. Dr. Cole personifies Rotary's two mottoes, "Services above Self" and "He profits most who serves best." He is a warm and generous Rotarian with whom we are proud to be associated.

In 1981 the Anniston Rotary Club heard a talk, "A Bit of This and That," from President Emeritus Houston Cole in which he reminisced about his many years as a member of Rotary. At the conclusion of his talk came the announcement that the day would be observed as "Houston Cole Day" for his achievements as a super educator and for his work in Rotary. He had served as former president in Tuscaloosa and in Anniston and was district governor in Alabama in 1939. The Rotary Club's paper, "Roto-Pep," said, "Let's honor this outstanding Rotarian and super educator with a great attendance."

On November 19, 1983, the Fannie Crow Bible Class of the First United Methodist Church of Jacksonville named Dr. Cole President Emeritus of the class of which he has been a member for so many years and which he has taught numerous Sundays. The resolution signed by Clifford Coffee, President, and A. H. Cooper, Treasurer, reads in part:

Whereas, without a doubt, our favorite leader and teacher over a period of many years is our own Dr. Houston Cole with his loving spirit, his many words of wisdom, and for his great concern for our well being, be it resolved therefore that we hereby elect this kind man to be our President Emeritus and present him with a key to our front door.

In addition to the work at the First United Methodist Church in Jacksonville, his own church, Cole has appeared at numerous local churches, as well as throughout the state, both as lay speaker from the pulpit and as guest teacher in Sunday School classes.

The Truman M. Pierce Leadership Award, given in recognition for "outstanding contributions which advanced the direction of education in Alabama" was received by Cole on November 7, 1985. The award was made by the Alabama Association of Elementary

School Administrators during the fall conference at Gulf Shores (*Birmingham News*, October 3, 1985).

The award is presented each year to an outstanding educator in honor of retired dean, Dr. Truman Pierce of Auburn University.

Upon learning of his selection, Dr. Cole said, "I am pleased to be honored by those who are engaged at the 'cradle level' of education in Alabama. It has long been conceded that the best teaching is done at this segment of our educational system. This fact enhances the value of the recognition of which I am the recipient."

The Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Inc., conferred the position of Associate Patron on Dr. Houston Cole through the Anniston Commandery April 20, 1988. The "objectives are for research, treatment and/or hospitalization of diseases or injuries of the eye in an effort to prevent blindness. This service is available to anyone regardless of race, creed, color, age, sex or national origin. The treatment of patients for this purpose shall be free and limited to persons unable to pay."

At the 1988 Rotary Conference in Huntsville, Dr. Cole was honored on his fiftieth anniversary of becoming the 1938-39 District Governor.

He is the oldest living member among those who have served as District Governor. He added six new clubs during his tenure.

Cole estimates that he has made a couple of hundred speeches to Rotary Clubs through the years.

The Town of Ashville honored Dr. Cole with the following resolution, recognizing him for his consistent and rich contributions to the development of citizenship and patriotism particularly in the State of Alabama.

WHEREAS, 1989 is the year for the greatest celebration in the history of our State and ALABAMA REUNION Events are calling friends and family home for good times and great memories of accomplishments, and

WHEREAS, Dr. Houston Cole served as President of Jacksonville State University for 29 years and over 40 new buildings were constructed on campus during his tenure, and

WHEREAS, all surrounding communities have benefited greatly under his able leadership as an educator, and

WHEREAS, he is to be applauded for having made over 3,500 speeches to church, civic, cultural and industrial organizations in 12 states including over 250 commencement addresses over a period of 69 years, and

WHEREAS, it falls the proud duty of every citizen in our great State to share our pride in preserving our heritage and progressing as a State,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED this the 9th day of February, 1989, that the Mayor and Town Council of Ashville, Alabama, hereby recognize and honor Dr. Houston Cole for his numerous achievements as the State celebrates the ALABAMA REUNION during 1989.

Dr. Cole believes that certain people determined in great degree the quality and direction of his life. He feels that being associated with them brought the most generous gifts which have been his opportunity to claim.

He says, "I owe more to more people than anybody. Look how lucky I've been."

Cole reminisces and gives credit to the people he considers responsible for giving him encouragement and assistance when he most needed it from childhood through his early adult years.

There was Annie Cole Burt, his older sister, who urged him to stay in school and get his high school diploma when he seriously considered dropping out and getting a job.

To John Cole, his father, and Professor N. G. Callan, his high school principal, goes almost equal credit. Mr. Callan visited his father and worked out ways for Houston to attend school enough to earn the necessary credit even though he was in demand for work at home on the family farm.

He also learned to rely on his father's philosophy in building his own value system. Mr. Cole told him, "Work hard; earn what you get; and go to church on Sunday."

After high school graduation, Cole enrolled in the Jacksonville State Normal School and graduated in 1924. He feels indebted to Dr. C. W. Daugette, the president, whom he would succeed years later, for recommending him for the position of superintendent of Guntersville City Schools.

Following his year in Guntersville, he was about to accept a position in Tuscumbia when Dr. King recommended him for the position of principal at Northport in Tuscaloosa County. This move placed him near the University of Alabama where he would be able to continue graduate work on an economic basis. The principalship at Northport led to his becoming Superintendent of Education of Tuscaloosa County and his moving from that position to the University of Alabama.

Following his tenure as Superintendent, Cole became Assistant to Dr. Foster, President of the University of Alabama, and worked in Public Relations.

The Rotary Club has been extremely meaningful in Dr. Cole's life. As the result of becoming a member at the beginning of his professional life in Tuscaloosa, he earned many benefits, among them the opportunity to know and work with the most prestigious and able business leaders throughout the state and to develop leadership himself. He gives credit to Dr. John R. McLure for recommending him for membership in the Tuscaloosa Rotary Club in 1933.

Governor Dixon asked Dr. Foster to grant Cole a leave of absence from the University of Alabama to come to Montgomery and head the state's Civil Defense Organization. His success led to his appointment as Director of the Office of Price Administration, in addition.

In each major event, Cole traces his good fortune to the assistance of one or more persons and gives credit where he feels it is due.

A special personal honor which Dr. Cole cherishes is being one of Knox Ide's *Special Life's Extra*. Mr. Ide's father received a little book, *Life's Extra* by Archibald Rutledge from Eleanor Rutledge on his hundredth birthday. Knox ordered copies of the book for gifts until it was no longer in print.

In a letter to Houston following a Rotary speech in December 1983, he wrote:

Now listen to this, Houston. On the night before your Rotary speech, I read through it (*Life's Extras*) just before turning out my light. Imagine my surprise, when all of a sudden, I realized that you were quoting from it. I recited the words with you silently. I have listened to many of your addresses over a long span of years. You have never made an ordinary one, but for me, this was your greatest. I hope it reached every man there . . . What this rambling is all about, Houston, is that you have been one of my SPECIAL LIFE'S EXTRAS for many decades.

And so the statements on honors bestowed on Houston Cole for his achievements during his active and influential life come full circle. Many individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions have honored him. He, in turn, honors his fellow man and speaks in humble appreciation of those who have helped him reach his goals.