

Actor Came Off Broadway for Key Role With Institute of Government

in
memoriam

Elmer R. Oettinger Jr. '34 had a flair for the dramatic.

Early on, he put it to use in show business, acting on and off Broadway while in graduate school at Columbia University and befriending the famous, such as actresses Claudette Colbert and Ava Gardner and bandleader and fellow alumnus Kay Kyser '27.

But when he returned to Carolina in 1936 to further his studies in dramatic art, he instead took a dramatic turn to law school, earning his degree in 1939. From there he took on a role that left a legacy as one of the early movers behind the Institute of Government, now part of the School of Government, and nurturer of good government and media relations across the state.

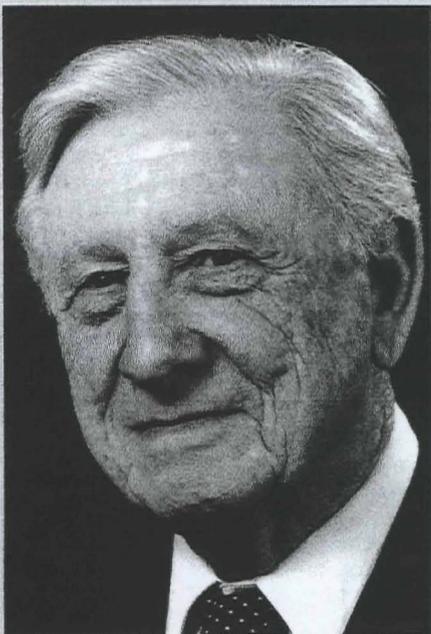
"Elmer was a special person in the history of the School of Government," said school Dean Mike Smith '78 (JD). "He brought a unique combination of legal and creative arts expertise to his classes with energetic flair and was widely respected for his scholarly knowledge as well as the authority he gained from his practical experience in the fields he taught."

Oettinger, who retired in 1978 as assistant director of the Institute of Government, died Oct. 29. He was 95.

Oettinger worked closely with professor Albert Coates '18, who had established the institute in 1931 and who talked Oettinger into going to law school.

He covered the N.C. General Assembly as part of Coates' legislative reporting service and initiated the weekly *Legislative Bulletin*. With Harry W. McGaillard, in 1939, he co-authored the *Notary Public Guidebook for North Carolina*, now in its 10th edition and still used as the official text by the Office of the Secretary of State in the training of notaries public in North Carolina.

He joined the Navy in 1943 for two years and served at Pearl Harbor under Adm. Chester W. Nimitz, commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet, where he worked in naval intelligence and specialized in codes and ciphers. After the war, he returned to his hometown of Wilson, practiced law and worked as news director and commentator at WGTM for Tobacco Radio Network stations.



UNC NEWS SERVICES

Elmer R. Oettinger Jr. '34 was known at the Institute of Government as a teacher who brought creativity and credibility from experience to the classroom.

In 1948, Oettinger moved his family and his broadcast journalism career to Raleigh. That same year he covered the political conventions in Philadelphia and witnessed the Republican nomination of Thomas Dewey and the dramatic exit of South Carolinian Strom Thurmond's "Dixiecrats" from the Democratic

Convention. After moving to Chapel Hill in 1951, Oettinger was recruited to implement and moderate the *IDEAS* program at newly created UNC-TV.

In the 1950s, Oettinger taught in UNC's departments of English and radio, television and motion pictures and was a lecturer at the Morehead Planetarium. In 1960, at Coates' urging, Oettinger returned to the Institute of Government as a specialist in communications law and practice. During his years on the faculty, his expertise included free press and fair trial, sunshine laws and the importance of open governmental meetings, privacy rights, copyright law, libel, bar-bench-press relations, journalist's privilege and auto insurance law, as well as teaching Highway Patrol trainees. Oettinger served as editor of *Popular Government*, a scholarly journal published by the institute, for 12 years.

In 1970, Oettinger was appointed by Gov. Bob Scott as one of seven N.C. commissioners to serve on the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws. He was reappointed by four successive governors, served as an active member for 30 years and continued as an honorary member until his death. He also was an honorary member of the N.C. Press Association and in 1990 received the association's William C. Lassiter First Amendment Award.

At UNC as an undergraduate, he was president of the Dialectic Society and a member of Zeta Beta Tau, and he graduated Phi Beta Kappa. Even after returning for law school and his work with the institute, Oettinger never lost his interest in drama, earning a master's in dramatic art in 1952 and a doctorate in English in 1966.

— from *Carolina Alumni Review and School of Government reports*

was on the men's varsity tennis team. He served on the board of the UNC Law Alumni Association. ♦ **John Rhys Davies** ('46 AB), 86, of Vienna, W.Va.; Oct. 16, 2009. A lawyer, Davies' most recent position was assistant director of personnel at Ohio University. He was a volunteer coach for Vienna Recreation programs in the '50s and '60s. He also was a published sports cartoonist. At UNC, he belonged to Phi Delta Theta, men's swim team and the football team. ♦ **Richard Emerson Davis** ('42 AB; '53, '52 MEd), 89, of Graham; Sept. 19, 2009. Davis retired from Alamance Community College as a financial aid officer. An Army Air Forces veteran, he served in WWII and the Korean War. ♦ **Wallace S. "June" Dunn Jr.** ('40), 91, of Wrightsville Beach, Sept. 22, 2009. Dunn owned a laundry business in Raleigh, then retired to Wrightsville Beach. An amateur golfer, he

held club championships at three golf courses in North Carolina and worked with Arnold Palmer when Palmer was at Wake Forest. At UNC, he belonged to Kappa Sigma. ♦ **Dr. Charles Henry Edwards** ('40 AB, '42 CMED), 88, of Washington, D.C.; Oct. 2, 2009. Edwards retired from the practice of medicine in Montclair, N.J. He was a vascular and general surgeon. Active in the hospice movement, he co-founded Riverside Hospice. In WWII, he served aboard an Army medical ship and became a chief diagnostic evaluator for casualties from the war. ♦ **Maurice Niles Edwards** ('41 BSCOM), 91, of Atlanta; Oct. 15, 2009. Edwards retired as founder and president of Lease Financing Corp. His activities at UNC included Zeta Beta Tau, Playmakers, Wig and Mask, and class executive committee. ♦ **Russell Henry Engle** ('46), 84, of Matthews; May 2, 2009. Early in his career,

Engle worked in the furniture business, then established Walker-Engle and Associates. ♦ **C. Clifford Frazier Jr.** ('48 AB, '51 LLBJD), 86, of Greensboro; Oct. 16, 2009. A lawyer, Frazier joined the firm of Frazier and Frazier (now Frazier, Hill & Fury). He served as special assistant to the U.S. attorney general and president of the Greensboro Bar Association and belonged to the Guilford County Board of Elections. He served in the Navy in WWII. As an alumnus, he was chair of the Guilford County Morehead Scholarship Committee. At UNC, he was president of Beta Theta Pi, Rex of Order of Gimghoul and on the track and field team. ♦ **Virginia Gideon Gray** ('47 CPHN), 90, of Anderson, S.C.; Sept. 25, 2009. Gray retired as emergency room supervisor at Greenville General Hospital. In WWII, she served in the Army Nursing Corps in England. ♦ **Bill Parker**

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