

CHARLES ROY BIRD

We knew him as "Wompa". Most of the rest of the world called him Roy. He and his twin sister, Mary, made their initial appearances as residents of Qualla township on December 7, 1892, children of Sally Terrell and Charles Asbury Bird. Roy lived in Qualla during his childhood, receiving his early education there, and left to attend Cullowhee Normal and Industrial School in 1914.

While at Cullowhee he became very involved in school life, becoming a student leader who attained the presidency of a number of student organizations; becoming accomplished at debating, and winning several awards for excellence in this field; and continuing to be well-rounded as he managed several sports teams. His years at Cullowhee were interrupted as he enlisted in the military and served the United States during World War I.

"Wompa" taught in Jackson County for several years following his graduation from Cullowhee in 1919. During this time he met my grandmother, Edna Clara Coward, daughter of another prominent Jackson County family, and married her in 1922. He then attended the George Peabody School of Education in Nashville, earning a degree in English Literature. He then returned to Jackson County and served as the principal of Webster School. Following the birth of my mother, Mary Elaine Bird Nichols, in 1924, the family moved to Chapel Hill where Roy earned a master's degree in school administration. Following his graduation from the University of North Carolina, the family moved to Guilford County where my uncle, Charles David Bird, was born in 1927.

While in Guilford County, Roy served as principal at Guilford High School for 17 years. Principalships during that time required an active involvement in the academic life of the school and to this end my grandfather not only taught Latin, English, and geometry, but he also directed dramatic productions, and taught tennis to some of the school's students. During the war years, he also worked for the Internal Revenue Service, serving in both Raleigh and Wilmington. Upon returning to Greensboro, he taught at Greensboro Community College until his retirement.

He was also heavily involved in church and community. He taught Sunday School for many years until ill health forced him to resign this labor of love. He had not only a genuine love for teaching, but for his students and fellowman as well. His strong belief in the worth of each person usually served him well, but on occasion also served to disappoint. His legacy to us has been to value learning and teaching, to love without reservation, to laugh unashamedly, to honor family ties, and to live life in such a manner that one's integrity can never be questioned.

443 words

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