

BSC@150

150 YEARS:

an opportunity for celebration, renewal, and reflection

BY GUY HUBBS

We have already begun to celebrate, starting with the outstanding October 9 concert at the Alys Stephens Center, where choirs and soloists presented the best in Birmingham-Southern College music. More celebrations of a different sort have and will follow, such as the Alumni Reunion Weekend in May.

We have already started the renewal as well. President David Pollick launched the process in his inaugural address by calling upon the college to recommit to the founding ideals of promoting human dignity, academic excellence, and selfless service. The Birmingham-Southern community is continuing that process of renewal by engaging in wide-ranging discussions on what direction the college should take.

But 150 years is also a time for reflection. And why not pause for a moment to reflect on how the college has celebrated past anniversaries?

Most striking have been the words—lots of words. We have used every major anniversary since 1906 as an occasion to publish a book about ourselves. This began with Professor Daniel P. Christenberry's *A Semi-Centennial History of the Southern University* (1906) and continued through histories by Professors William Dow Perry (1931), and Joseph Parks and Oliver C. Weaver (1957), the latter being an especially fine scholarly account. The photographic history *View from the Hilltop* (1981) by Robert G. Corley and Professor Samuel N. Stayer, came out during our 125th year. And now, we have alumnus Donald Brown's lavishly illustrated *Forward, Ever: Birmingham-Southern College at its Sesquicentennial*. A clear departure from previous histories, Brown wisely chose to tell about BSC thematically, rather than chronologically, and to focus on the individuals who have made BSC what it is.



Hubbs

These are lots of words—not just written, but spoken. At our 75th anniversary, a host of college and university presidents in academic regalia paraded into Munger Hall to hear lengthy addresses on the theme of the church-related college: past, present, and future. Twenty-five years later, a new generation of presidents or their representatives gathered to hear speeches, as they did again on the 125th anniversary. But the trend has been to move beyond a few great orations to a multitude of more limited events. This anniversary year is finding the college presenting lectures and conferences in virtually every field.

In fairness, our anniversary celebrations have not been limited to mere words. The most visible and lasting contribution occurred during our 75th year, when the cornerstone of Stockham Hall was laid. The 125th anniversary in 1981 included a run from the original Southern University campus in Greensboro to the BSC campus on the Hilltop. The concert that opened this Sesquicentennial year included the world premiere of *Fanfare for Human Dignity*, a piece especially written for the college by our own Professor of Music Charles Norman Mason. During the spring, we will have musical recitals, art exhibits, film series, and even a week of service projects—all commemorating BSC's 150 years.

Celebration, renewal, and reflection: these anniversaries are indeed important to the life of this college. I can't imagine what's in store for the bicentennial.

Editor's Note: Dr. G. Ward Hubbs, an associate professor, serves as reference librarian and as an archivist for the college and the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church.