



Dr. William E. Leuchtenburg

The walls of Bill Leuchtenburg's study on Hawthorne Lane are covered with photos of the many political figures he has known and advised. A political commentator as well as a respected scholar of the American presidency, he is frequently called upon by the national, as well as the local, media to comment on elections and assess the character of Presidents past and future.

Dr. William Edward Leuchtenburg was born in Ridgewood, New York, on September 28, 1922. He received his BA from Cornell University in 1943, and his PhD from Columbia University in 1951. He taught history at Columbia from 1952 to 1982, when he came to Chapel Hill as the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of History at the University of North Carolina, a position he held until 2002.

He recalls being charmed by Chapel Hill on his first visit to the area in 1961. He misses the small town atmosphere of that time, when there were no shopping centers and Fowler's was the only grocery store in town. His fondest memory of Chapel Hill is how warmly he was welcomed into the community when he came here to begin his position at UNC in 1982. "I was a New York City boy, my parents grew up in Hell's Kitchen," he recalls; "I was wondering how I would be received." When he arrived in late August, he was pleased to find a friendly message in his mailbox from Chancellor Christopher Fordham, asking him to be the University Day speaker.

Leuchtenburg is considered to be the leading authority on the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and is the author of more than a dozen books on American history, including *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (1963), which won the Bancroft Prize. He chronicled the many Presidents who visited Chapel Hill, from James K. Polk to Barack Obama, in an essay in *27 views of Chapel Hill* (2011). He himself became a part of that history when he introduced former President Jimmy Carter at a banquet at the Carolina Inn in 1984. His latest book, *The American President: From Teddy Roosevelt to Bill Clinton*, will be published in December of this year. He has served as a consultant and collaborator with Ken Burns on many of his popular documentary films, including *The Civil War* (1990), *Prohibition* (2011), and *The Roosevelts* (2014). The archival materials for Ken Burns' documentary projects now reside in the Southern Historical Collection at Wilson Library, thanks to Leuchtenburg's friendship with the documentary producer. Leuchtenburg has also been actively involved in the civil rights movement. He marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dr. John Hope Franklin in Montgomery Alabama, and served with A. Philip Randolph in civil rights organizations.

He and his wife, Jean Anne, are avid birders, and have traveled the world in search of rare and exotic species. He recalls spending the entire day in the field where Meadowmont now stands, in search of an elusive whippoorwill that could be heard, but not seen. Now he works out at the UNC Wellness Center in that same spot, another sign of the changes he has witnessed in Chapel Hill.

Through newspaper interviews and panel discussions, Bill Leuchtenburg has provided the Chapel Hill community with insightful political analysis. In his 1982 University Day speech, he spoke of the University as a "progressive force," "committed to serving the region, the nation, the world." Today we can say the same of Professor William Edward Leuchtenburg.