

Remembering the Life and Legacy of Leland Park '63

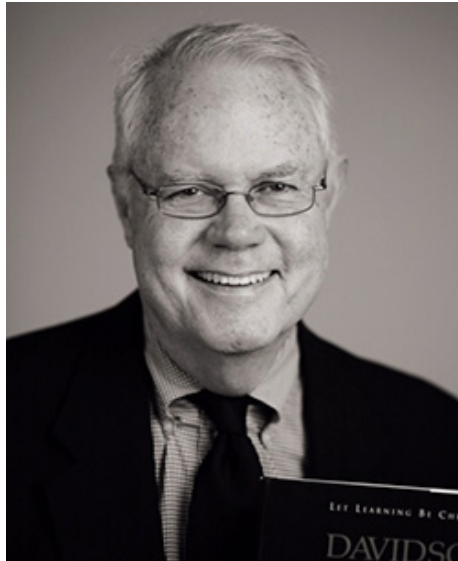
Leland M. Park '63, a lover of books and a lover of life, died on Wednesday, February 13, 2019. He was 77 years old.

Park served as director of Davidson College's E.H. Little Library from 1975-2006. He was the third library director in the history of the college, and followed in the footsteps of his professional mentor and friend, the late Chalmers G. Davidson '28, and the late Miss Cornelia Shaw, who assumed administrative duties from the faculty in 1907. Park was also a friend, trusted advisor, and inspiration to generations of students, faculty, and staff.

"When I arrived at Davidson, Leland very quickly made sure I felt at home," said Davidson College President Carol E. Quillen. "He gave me a tour of the town, complete with a history of who had lived in which house for the past 50 years and some pretty incredible stories, punctuated by his joy-filled, one-of-a-kind laugh. His love of learning and profound commitment to this college guided his leadership and service, both in the library and across campus. That leadership and service continued long after his retirement. I know the entire Davidson community shares my deep gratitude for Leland's friendship and the gift of his extraordinary life."

Labor of Love

Park's career spanned a time from when he was the first Davidson College library staff member with an electric typewriter to the days of digital access. It was a freshman history class under Prof. Chalmers Davidson, a descendant of Revolutionary War General William



Park was known for his hearty laugh and storytelling prowess.

Lee Davidson, for whom the college is named, that instilled Park's own enduring love of the college and its history -- and ultimately determined his life's path.

As a student, he worked "for beer and cracker money" in the Davidson library, and went on to earn master's and doctoral degrees in library sciences from Emory University and Florida State University.

After completing his ROTC obligations to the U.S. Army and a stint as reference librarian in the Charlotte public library, he returned to his alma mater in 1967 as head of reference and student personnel for the library.

He stayed for more than 30 years.

"Leland represented and displayed the very best of Davidson," said Johnston Professor of Economics and former Dean of the Faculty Clark Ross. "His life was intertwined with the college for six decades, during which he served as an authority and chronicler of our past, as well as a supporter and

caring critic of the present. Under his leadership, the library's dedicated and caring staff and welcoming space provided extraordinary service to students, staff, and faculty."

Ross lauded Park's unfailing courtesy to each and everyone who graced the campus. "He was a generous donor to the college, a rabid Wildcat basketball fan, and a supportive, but candid, advisor and friend to all in positions of leadership," Ross said. "While we have lost Leland's remarkable presence on campus, the examples of his good work and his caring spirit will long endure."

On the occasion of his retirement, Park recalled the planning and construction of E.H. Little Library. A week after Park arrived on his new job in Grey Memorial Library, President Grier Martin '32 announced the intention to build a new library.

"Chalmers said, 'I built the last one, thank you, you can do this one!'" Park recounted in a 2005 interview, with a burst of his trademark hearty laughter.

Build it, he did. Park shaped not only the physical space, but also the first-rate staff and collection that would serve a growing, changing campus into the 21st century. Under his leadership, the library's offerings complemented what Park saw as a broadening and deepening of the college's core educational mission toward a more interactive and research-oriented approach to education.

The library's original, 1970s-shade-of-green carpet may be gone, but the foundation of the library's future remains.

Through his careful stewardship of college resources and personal



Upon announcing his retirement, Park wrote to his staff "I hit home runs with each of you. You are the experts in your field."

philanthropy, Park paved the way for those who will safeguard and shape the course of Davidson College's library history. In 2002, he established a \$1 million endowment to provide support for the directorship of the E.H. Little Library. Jill Gremmels served as the first Leland M. Park Director of the Library, and Lisa Forrest became the second person to hold the directorship in 2018.

One of the first lunch dates Forrest made in her new job was with her directorship's namesake, who knew the history of the library, the college and its culture like no other. Like Park, Forrest emphasizes that, past and present, a good library is about relationships, and should be a focal point in the unique community of scholars that gather on a residential liberal arts campus.

Beyond his many years with the library, Park provided the institutional memory for numerous traditions and anecdotes about Davidson. He chaired his 35th reunion and co-chaired his

50th reunion, and served as an Annual Fund class agent and class chair, as well as faculty advisor to the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity. He also organized and coordinated the inauguration proceedings when Bobby Vagt was installed as Davidson's president. In 2007, a group of alumni who were influenced by Park established a scholarship in his name.



Park often served as faculty marshal in academic processions.

Park will be remembered as a gateway and a bridge to the institution he loved, whether for students attempting to navigate scholarly life or new staff and faculty enjoying a tour of campus led by one of the few people who could so gracefully walk the path between the college's past and present.

"Leland always said, 'Davidson College is a way of life based on things of the mind, tempered by manners and morality,'" said Bob Davidson '62, a friend and contemporary of Park's. "That set his course."

Memorial contributions may be made to the Leland M. Park Scholarship, Davidson College Davidson College, PO Box 7170, Davidson, NC 28035, and St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 115 W. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28202.

A service to celebrate Park's life was held at 4 p.m. in the sanctuary of Davidson College Presbyterian Church on Sunday, February 17, with a reception to follow in the Lilly Family Gallery.