

LEADERS OF THE CAROLINAS *Charlotte Observer*  
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## USC President Has As Much Pep As Freshmen At College

Today's subject for our series, Leaders of the Carolinas, is Donald Stuart Russell, president of the University of South Carolina.

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Twenty-four years ago Donald Stuart Russell was a BMOG (Big Man On Campus) at the University of South Carolina. He's back on the 150-year-old campus today as the BMOG.

During his absence from his Alma Mater, he became a successful lawyer, an assistant Secretary of State along with side tours in other important government jobs, and a wealthy businessman.

But almost any Carolina man will tell you he was destined to be president of the University of South Carolina in Columbia.

He started school at the age of four and was graduated as first honor man from USC at the age of 19. At 21 he was top graduate of his law school class. And at 46 he became one of the most popular choices of university presidents in the history of the institution.

His unanimous election came as no surprise. For a number of years his name was linked with the presidency of the university. Last year even before he was elected by the board of trustees, faculty and students went on the record favoring him.

Mr. Russell's ties with the university are strong. In his student days, he was a brilliant scholar and able orator, and headed a number of student organizations. He married Virginia Utsey of St. George—a Carolina May Queen—and they have four children. "Future Gamecocks," Mr. Russell calls them.

How did it all start?

### EXPLAINS START

"Well," said Mr. Russell, "I guess as a campus politician."

The results are dynamic enthusiasm, graciousness that a Southern aristocrat of old would envy, an almost infallible memory and an aggressive determination to do something.

His enthusiasm is contagious. Although he has been president only since September, there is a new pitch in the morale of the faculty, students, and alumni.

One of his friends said, "I've seen him talk with equal ease to a group of troublesome students and a woman's garden club and leave them chewing-at-the-bit to get on with their studies or grow the finest flowers on earth."

That Mr. Russell plans to get things done for the university is plain. Through his personal influ-



DONALD RUSSELL

ence he arranged to have M. Rene Pleven travel to the university campus from France to receive an honorary degree. Pleven, twice French Prime Minister and now minister of defense, is to be the first of a series of international celebrities to make the goodwill gesture.

### OBJECT OF JOB

It's Mr. Russell's job to make the university a top school. The Pleven visit is one step; a step that will bring international attention. "I think we need planned educational statesmanship," Mr. Russell said. "We need to improve our teachers and we need administrative competence. There must be an awareness of how to do the job."

That's the kind of job in which he is most adroit.

Behind him in this is his friend, former law partner, and boss in the State Department, Gov. James F. Byrnes.

Mr. Russell began his law career in Union, S. C., with the late J. Gordon Hughes and in 1930 moved to Spartanburg to join the law firm of Nicholls, Wyche and Byrnes. He

eventually became head of the firm after Wyche became a Federal judge. Byrnes went to the Congress and Nicholls died. He continued the practice until January, 1942, after Pearl Harbor, when he went to Washington as a member of the Price Adjustment Board, connected with the then War Department.

At that time Mr. Byrnes was on the U. S. Supreme Court, and when he resigned to become Director of Economic Stabilization, Mr. Russell joined him as his assistant. During World War II, he served briefly as a major on the staff at Supreme Headquarters in Europe, but returned to Washington again to assist Mr. Byrnes, who had become director of War Mobilization and Reconversion.

When Mr. Byrnes became Secretary of State, Mr. Russell became the assistant secretary in charge of administration. Among his responsibilities were the State Department's budget, the foreign service, and security.

When Mr. Byrnes resigned, he and Mr. Russell opened a law practice in Washington dealing with

appellate court matters.

During the last few years, while practicing law, Mr. Russell has been president of the Auto Finance Co., in Charlotte, and was an organizer and director of the Piedmont Natural Gas Co. The finance company also operates the American Discount Co. of Georgia; the Southeastern Fire Insurance Co.; Victor Oil Mill, Inc., and Southeastern Newspapers, Inc.

Mr. Russell is perhaps overly modest about himself. He is an earnest conversationalist and smoothly turns personal questions back to the interviewer. While friends say he has photographic memory, that is, he can read a page at a glance, Mr. Russell calls his ability "fast reading."

Whatever it is, it is remarkable. He is able to glance at a printed page and grasp the important material almost instantly. He seldom reads novels, preferring history books and biographies.

The 21st president of the university has played golf only a few times in his life and calls walking his favorite recreation. He does not like to walk alone, preferring some one to talk with.

Mr. Russell—he declines the title "Dr."—is a firm believer in the humanities and the need for broad education.

"There has been too much specialization," he said, and he feels that the student of today needs the training and background of the humanities in order to fill out his character and understanding of the job of living.

He admits that he has had no basic philosophy. "I have taken things as they came and I have enjoyed doing them and working up zeal and enthusiasm," he said.

"I get more exhilaration in seeing programs move quicker and come closer to what is trying to be accomplished," he said.

There is a similarity in the problems he faces at the university and the problems he had in the State Department. As the assistant secretary he had to cope with the department's appropriations, working with Congress. Today, he has the State University's appropriations to work out with the Legislature.

Yet he also sees a dissimilarity: "In the State Department I never had trouble getting people. There is a definite shortage of brains in the teaching field. We have excellent teachers and hard workers here, but faculty expansion and development are part of our key problems."

He traces the health of higher education and the citizenry to the primary and secondary schools and believes that those students must be sold the idea of going to college and must be encouraged by more scholarships.

"It is of vital importance that more boys and girls go to college. A good public school system means good colleges, and good colleges mean good citizens," he said. The shortage of teaching talent in the state makes it more imperative that the university develop "native-grown" teachers of quality.

Mr. Russell and his family call Spartanburg their home, but they now live on the university campus where his children, Donald Jr., Mildred, Scott and John are favorites of the students, especially those who live in dormitories near the president's residence.

Mr. Russell was born at Lafayette Springs, Miss., Feb. 27, 1906, but moved to South Carolina at the age of eight after his father died. His mother ran a boarding house in Chester and while going to school there, young Russell was busy selling yeast, working in a drugstore or on a road construction job.

His talent for extemporaneous speaking blossomed fully at the university, where his classmates recall, "he was a powerful speaker." The college annual of 1925 notes, "The old U.S.C. . . . has had but one 'Don' Russell . . . he stands as the morning star of the class of '25 . . . No one has gone out from the . . . dear old institution with a higher grade of proficiency . . . A friend to all . . . a nondiscriminator in friendship . . . he now leaves us."

### SMART DOG

One story of his campus days concerns a constant companion, a German police dog named "Pal." In a law class lecture on an abstract subject, the future interests in real estate, the professor looked at the bewildered faces of his students and remarked, "Gentlemen, I see only one comprehending face here, that of Mr. Russell's dog."

Near the Sumter St. entrance of the university campus there is a marker erected by the State Historical Commission. It says the university is "a faithful index to the ambitions and fortunes of the state."

In Donald Stuart Russell, the 150-year-old institution has a president of national prestige, a scholarly man of executive ability, and a loyal son with the enthusiasm of a college student.

Of him, Governor Byrnes said, "I have known many men; I have never known a better man. His fine mind, high ideals and clean personal life eminently qualify him to direct the training of the young people who attend the university."