

Legislator, lobbyist Walter Brown dies

By **BILL McDONALD**
Staff Writer

State leaders mourned the death Tuesday of Walter Boyd Brown of Winnsboro, longtime public servant and retired Southern Railway executive whom many regarded as the most influential lobbyist of his day.

"Walter had a special spot in the hearts of many South Carolinians, and he was so effective in that warm, wonderful way of his," said Senior U.S. District Court Judge Sol Blatt Jr. of Charleston, a close friend for more than 60 years.

Brown, a former three-term House member and first director of

the S.C. Department of General Services, died Monday after a brief illness. He was 77.

Russ "Chip" McKinney, USC's director of public affairs, recalls first meeting Brown as a page at the State House in the 1950s.

"Walter endeared himself to everybody he met in state government, young and old," he said.

Former Gov. John C. West, who served with Brown in the Legislature, called Brown "an outstanding public servant" who was "generous in his time and commitment to a legion of friends."

In the days when lobbyists could entertain state officials, an invitation

to the Dorchester County hunting preserve of Southern Railway (now Norfolk Southern Corp.) was something to be cherished.

State Comptroller General Earle Morris recalls Brown in those days as a lively host — "one of the funniest people I knew" — who "also personified what an effective humanitarian should be."

Brown loved to be around people. "He brought more joy to the lives of people than anybody I've ever met in my 76 years," Blatt said.

Brown was godfather to Blatt's youngest son, Brian.

Tom Lydon, retired director of the State Legislative Council,

recalled when Brown, the lobbyist, would keep cloakrooms stocked with pizza and sub sandwiches during late-night filibusters.

Brown was a close friend of retired Fairfield Sen. John A. Martin, who played basketball at USC when Brown was a student at Presbyterian College.

"They were like Mutt and Jeff, and nobody on radio or TV has ever been funnier than those two when they were together," Lydon said.

In retirement, Brown was a tireless recruiter, at his own expense, of industry for Fairfield County. Today the county's industrial park near Ridgeway is named in his honor.

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was adamantly different — and it came straight from President David Swinton.

“They think that (because) we sometimes forgive students for their transgressions that we’re sometimes soft on crime,” Swinton boomed from the stage, resplendent in bright purple academic robes. “We’re not soft on crime. We take our guidance from the Lord Jesus Christ,” who advised his followers to forgive others “seventy times seven” times.

ed college have had several run-ins with authority in recent months: One was charged with burglary, another with an off-campus rape and another with arson.

Those students wouldn’t necessarily stay in class, said Benedict spokeswoman Kymm Hunter.

But several Benedict staff and faculty members do act as mentors and counselors for students involved in less serious, on-campus infractions, such as fighting or drinking. The college also has arranged counseling and other assistance for the student accused

“This is not a place for making mischief,” Swinton told students.

Instead, he said, Benedict is a “sacred institution” that binds all students and staff into one body — one body that teaches and looks out for its fellow members.

“Our job is to work with our fellow human beings to make them better human beings,” Swinton said, accompanied by a murmur of “Amen” and “all rights.”

“We need every one of our students to preserve and protect Benedict’s scarce resources” — resources it needs to serve the rest of the African-American com-

“We’re Benedict College. We don’t expect many breaks” from the world, including the news media that report campus-related crimes.

“We need all of our students,” he said.

“We’re all one at Benedict College and we need to act like it. We need you to pull together.”

When Swinton ended his hour-plus entreaty for unity, the hundreds sitting in the Benedict gym rose as one to applaud.

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