

HISTORY MAKER

ANNE CANNON REYNOLDS TATE FORSYTH

Born: Aug. 23, 1930, New York City

Died: May 11, 2003, Winston-Salem

Known for: Heiress to both the Cannon Mills textile and RJ Reynolds Tobacco fortunes who used her wealth to advance racial equity, and cultural diversity and funded building, endowment and scholarship projects at for schools and institutions including Blowing Rock Hospital, Women's College of Greensboro, Bowman Gray Medical School, and NC School of the Arts.

The day Anne Cannon Reynolds Tate turned 21, she wrote a check for \$30,000 to help fund a proposed hospital in Blowing Rock, the Winston Salem Journal reported.

The timing wasn't random. Heir to both the Cannon textile and RJ Reynolds tobacco fortunes, she was labeled the "richest baby in America" by a world media fascinated by the tragic death of her father when she was just shy of her second birthday. Her inheritance was placed in a trust that she received on her 21st birthday.

As with many in her family, she enjoyed a privileged life of travel, fine art and thoroughbreds but also followed a tradition of philanthropic giving throughout her life. Dr. Coy Carpenter, an early leader at the Bowman Gray Medical School, which she supported, said that while she was born to such circumstances "nobody could ever be more like a person without wealth" than Anne.

The only child born to Z. Smith Reynolds and his first wife, Anne Cannon Reynolds, she was raised primarily by her maternal grandparents. She was often surrounded by security officers as the family worried for the girl's safety amid "the national epidemic of kidnapping" according to the Statesville Record and Landmark.

She and her first husband built a home and rehabilitated a horse track near Pinchurst in the western part of the state, promoting equine activities in the region. Most of her charitable and social work, however, focused on education and race relations. In the still-segregated Southeast, she led efforts to integrate boarding schools, funding scholarships for Black students to attend more than 22 prep schools.

She was president of and served on the boards of both the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and the North Carolina Fund, where she took an active role in directing projects and choosing scholarship recipients. In 1963, she represented the Reynolds Foundation when it established the Katharine Smith Reynolds Scholarship at Woman's College, Greensboro, which awarded \$1,200 a year (enough to cover tuition, room and board) for 12 NC women at her



REYNOLDA HOUSE

At Reynolda's opening in 1965, Anne Cannon Reynolds Tate Forsyth (left) with the daughter-in-law of N.C. Gov. Dan K. Moore, N.C. First Lady Jeanette Coulter Moore and Charlie Babcock.

grandmother's alma mater.

In 1971, she was one of a group of private citizens who provided the seed money to found the Coalition for Rural America, an organization based in Washington, D.C., to advocate for balanced growth in rural communities across the country.

"All that Anne does financially is anonymous," said Dr. Coy Carpenter in his 1970 book, "The Story of Medicine at Wake Forest University." "But I am able to say that she has been the greatest single benefactor to Wake Forest University Medicine."

Her position in society gave her opportunities to not only use her own considerable wealth but to work with and encourage others to support a wide range of projects as when she and members of the Gray family endowed three professorships at The Bowman Gray School of Medicine with \$500,000. Carpenter says this act "provided the turning point upward for a great medical school."