FOOTSTEPS ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH

A Tribute to Adron and Mignon Doran

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Published on the Occasion
Of Their Tribute Dinner, May 7, 1976
(Sponsored by the Alumni Association)
Morehead, Kentucky

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“Partners in a Grand Adventure”
ADRON AND MIGNON DORAN were born in the flatlands of Western Kentucky, gained statewide recognition while living in the Bluegrass region of Central Kentucky, and made their greatest contributions in overseeing the destiny of Morehead State University in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky. Doran earned two degrees from Murray State University, a third from the University of Kentucky, has been awarded honorary doctorates from Eastern Kentucky University and Murray State University (as well as Ashland College in Ohio), and has conferred thousands of degrees upon young scholars in Eastern Kentucky. On March 15, 1976, Dr. Alonzo Williams wrote to his most famous high school graduate, “You have walked tall—towering above the ordinary—all the way from your Jackson Purchase homeland, across the rolling hills of the Bluegrass to the highlands of Appalachia where the clouds caress the mountains and the mountains kiss the sky. Your footsteps are clearly visible all across our Commonwealth.”

These footsteps are even more visible because they have been taken by two people working together. Having lived with Adron for 45 years, Mignon recently stated, “I’ve loved living everywhere, but he always made decisions about where to go.” In a most special way, these two strong individualists “left father and mother” and meshed together into one of Kentucky’s most talented and famous couples as “Partners in a Grand Adventure.” History has provided the world with name-combinations which naturally fit together in our lingo—no better example exists than that of Adron and Mignon.
Each member of this team has gladly provided a supportive role to the other and has constantly credited the other for all the goals which have been reached. Mignon often refers to herself as "the one behind the scenes" and to her husband as "the brain in the family" or as "the speaker in the family." In his "Acceptance Address" as a recipient of the Horatio Alger Award in 1971, Adron paid "his roommate since college days" the highest compliment when he pointed out that although they were married in the deep of one of our greatest economic depressions, we managed together to make our way then and since by diligent application of our talents, our confidence in one another, and our faith in God. I have earned a baccalaureate, a master's, and a doctor's degree since we married. She has served as a true helpmeet, an assistant breadwinner, a competent critic, a constant companion and a responsible wife. I owe most of what I am and have achieved to her.

Nothing in the humble surroundings of Doran's childhood indicated the greatness which was to follow. He was born on September 1, 1909, at Boydsville, in "an isolated, unproductive, and underdeveloped section of Western Kentucky." Edward and Elizabeth Doran had moved from Weakley County, Tennessee, to Graves County, Kentucky, between the times of the birth of their six sons: Lois, Curtis, Basil, Adron, Gordon, and James. Adron says that he was half grown before realizing that "the big road which ran in front of the house was the state line" between Kentucky and Tennessee. In explaining his unusual name, Doran often asserts that "they ran out of names before they got to me" and thus arrived at his first name by scrambling the letters of his last name. His mother, however, stated that she had read a story in which the hero's name was Adron.

At the age of five, Adron entered the one-room Zion's Hill School. He later attended the two-room Harris Grove School, in which the first four grades were referred to as the "little room" and the upper four grades were called the "big room." His first sight of a high school graduate was when Francis Hill became his seventh-grade teacher at Panhandle. The fact that Adron's memory of seeing his first high school graduate is so vivid may indicate something about his early concern with education and accomplishments. His elementary education emphasized rote memorization and the "question and answer" methods rather than John Dewey's progressivism. Adron was enterprising even at that early stage in life as he made money by trapping rabbits, opossums, and raccoons. The teacher also paid him
7½ cents per day for building fires at school; on Saturdays, he would cut the wood to be used in building fires the next week. After completion of the eighth grade, Adron journeyed to the county seat of Mayfield, where he passed an examination which permitted him to receive a diploma.

There was no possibility of riding a bus to school; instead, Adron saddled a “one-eyed, cat-loping, wind-broken mare” on which he rode the five miles from his home to Cuba High School. This tall lad “jumped center” for the basketball team which won the district championship his senior year although the entire squad was composed of only five players, known by such names as “Bear,” “Hoss,” “Runt,” “Doc,” and “Stiff.” Called the “Hill Billies,” the team proudly wore the picture of a billy goat on each jersey. “Stiff” Doran and his teammates played all their games on outdoor clay courts since there was no gymnasium in the county. After winning the district championship, the team did not enter the regional tournament because parents then regarded the 35-mile trip to Lone Oak as too far to travel just to play a basketball game.

Adron’s mother, Elizabeth, was very talkative, highly-opinionated, and strongly determined that her children would obtain an education. His father was a quiet farmer who maintained discipline chiefly through the use of stern looks; he saw nothing wrong with keeping the sons out of school when additional help was needed on the farm. The mother was so strongly committed to the Church of Christ that Adron started attending services at such an early age that he “cannot remember the first time” he went. The father made no early formal religious commitment although leaning toward the Primitive Baptist Church; in 1927, both father and son became members of the Church of Christ as they were baptized together in the same revival.

Each member of this large family was expected to help with the farm chores. In a 1948 sociology class at the University of Kentucky, Doran as a graduate student wrote, “There were no highly specialized functions of any of the members other than that evidenced by my father and the two older boys’ doing the heavier farm work and I helping my mother with the household work, tending the garden, milking the cows, tending the poultry, and doing the family wash.” Sometimes, though, Adron hired out for 50 cents per day to drive a harrow behind a team of mules. Between his sophomore and junior years in high school, he made $18.75 per week as a “stock boy” for Curlee Clothing Company in St. Louis. The following summer, Adron worked as a “news butch” on a train from St. Louis, Missouri, to Parsons, Kansas. Governor Luther Hodges of North Carolina and Dr. Doran were exchanging information in 1960 about their similar
experiences as a "news butch." After having congratulated Hodges for his recent appointment to the Kennedy cabinet, Doran asserted, "I had a similar experience as yours in getting my uniform. I had an older brother who had a blue serge coat which he let me borrow, and I had a cousin who was a policeman, and he let me have brass buttons to sew on the coat. We will compare notes on the 'tricks of the trade' sometime." Summer jobs of this nature aided in the purchase of school books, the senior class ring, and graduation invitations.

The average graduate of Cuba High School in 1928 did not bother with the decision of where to attend college, but Adron has never been regarded as average. His interest in religion and the ministry affected young Doran's decision to attend a church-related institution of higher learning although he did not enroll at Freed-Hardeman College, in Henderson, Tennessee, for the express purpose of becoming a preacher.

While still in high school, Adron became an evangelistic singer in summer revivals conducted by some of the most renowned ministers of the Church of Christ. One of these preachers was Alonzo Williams, who also served as Cuba High School's principal and basketball coach. Through Williams' influence, Doran began his preaching career in 1928 at Webb's Chapel near Arlington, Kentucky, as he spoke on the subject of "What Holdest Thou in Thy Hand?" This expression is based upon Exodus 4:2. Williams was "wholly responsible" for Doran's entering college at Freed-Hardeman as he took him in his automobile to Henderson, where Adron enrolled as a freshman in January, 1928. Although he had less than $25 in his pocket at the time, Doran made arrangements with the college authorities to pay the fees on a regular basis. Adron somehow survived since Williams sent him $50 periodically, and the young lad did his own laundry, pressed his own clothes, and often ate just one meal per day. So, in spite of the economic shock generated by the Great Depression, Doran obtained a two-year associate degree in 1930. C. P. Roland, a Freed-Hardeman teacher who first met Adron in 1929, states:

He completed successfully the two-year program offered at that time, showing special aptitude in such subjects as singing, history, and Bible. His appreciation of the higher and better things of life caused him to seek for these, and this has been evidenced by his continual rise in all areas. I rate as one of his many assets his great ability to give inspiration and leadership in all areas. I know that he attributes his phenomenal rise to a faith in God, a faith in his fellow man, and particularly a faith in the youth of our nation.
N. B. Hardeman, perhaps the most popular preacher in the Church of Christ in the latter 1920’s as well as president of Freed-Hardeman College, exerted a tremendous influence upon young Doran. Doran’s oratorical speaking style and his love for Tennessee walking horses came from Hardeman. In his glowing introduction of Hardeman as a baccalaureate speaker at Wingo years later, Doran said, "I take pride in his broad accomplishments, of his intellectual processes as well as the depths of his moral foundation which are a part of his character and have made him so impressive a figure in whatever capacity he has chosen to occupy in his long public service." Upon Hardeman’s death in the mid-1960’s, Doran penned these words to his close friend’s daughter: “Your father was one of the greatest influences among men in the lives of multitudes. He was a significant power for good to me in my formative years. Living with him in eternity will be one of the rewards for those of us who sat at his feet.”

After his graduation from Freed-Hardeman, a junior college at that time, young Doran worked in a Detroit factory in the summer of 1930. Since money was scarce, Adron enrolled at Murray State Teachers College that fall largely on faith. He helped to put himself through college by singing in a trio composed of Adron and two brothers, Curtis and Basil, and by preaching on weekends. Having played basketball in high school and at Freed-Hardeman College, Adron continued his basketball career at Murray his junior year.

But his most significant extra-curricular activity at Murray was meeting and being captivated by a beautiful, petite, black-haired coed with a sparkling personality. Mignon McClain grew up in Sedalia, a Graves County town of 250, where her parents, Oliver and Emily McClain, owned a general store and later operated a fire insurance company. Her closely-knit family consisted of a sister, Eva, and two brothers, Ralph and Eulas. Growing up with her mongoloid brother, Ralph, produced great tenderness and compassion which led to her varied humanitarian activities later. Graduating from Sedalia High School at 17, Mignon then enrolled at Murray State Teachers College.

Adron and Mignon were first introduced at a basketball game on the morning of February 28, 1931. Knowing that she was already engaged, Adron made a bet with his pals that he would date this young beauty that same evening. Young Doran’s aggressiveness took him places even in those early years as he did indeed “keep company” with Mignon that evening. He used the Doran Trio’s radio program of gospel songs the next day on WPAD in Paducah to dedicate a song to Mignon. Miss McClain was so taken in by the
brown, wavy hair, and the winning personality of this handsome young man that she “was eager to say yes” to his constant appeal for dates. As students together at Murray, Adron used her meal ticket so often that Mignon’s father once questioned why his daughter needed so many additional tickets.

Breaking her engagement to her fiance, Mignon enjoyed a whirlwind courtship with Adron, and the two were married on August 23, 1931. The young couple set up housekeeping in Sedalia, where Mignon taught music in the local high school while Adron finished his senior year at Murray State. They bought a 1929 Chevrolet, which he used in transporting four other students from Sedalia to Murray thereby helping to pay the rent.

At the time of their marriage, Mignon was a Democrat, and Adron had a strong Republican background. She was a Baptist pianist and Sunday School teacher and he a member of the Church of Christ. Mignon quickly cleared the air by explaining, “I have an open mind on religion, but you’ll never change me from being a Democrat. I’ll kill your vote every time.”

Thirteen months later, Adron baptized his young bride into the Church of Christ, but shortly thereafter he cast his first vote ever—and that for a Democrat, Franklin D. Roosevelt. His first vote in a state election was for A. B. “Happy” Chandler for lieutenant governor.

Upon his graduation from Murray State in 1932, the 22-year-old Doran was unsuccessful in his attempt to persuade Hardeman to hire him as a history teacher and as basketball coach at Freed-Hardeman College. Instead, Doran became the youngest principal ever to serve in a Graves County high school. A special permit from the State Department of Education was then necessary for a man so young to be allowed to serve as principal.

For $64.10 per month, Boaz High School obtained Adron as teacher, basketball coach, and principal, while Mignon taught speech and music without pay. In the midst of the Great Depression, the Dorans were impressed with their meager salary as they remembered others who had no job. Living in a three-room “gun-barrel house,” they drew water from a cistern for drinking and cooking, provided heat with a warm-morning stove, and studied by kerosene lamp. In spite of a weekly budget of only $16.03 the Dorans did not think of themselves as being poverty-stricken. Each week they allotted a dollar for recreation, which usually consisted of seeing a movie for 22 cents
and “eating out” with the remainder. In the mid-1930’s, the Dorans moved to nearby Fulton County, where Adron served as principal of Sylvan Shade High School. There they lived three years in a deserted school house which had four rooms; although they remodelled three rooms, they saw no need to make improvements on the “mouse room,” to which they often chased the household mice.

Doran returned to Graves County in 1938 as principal of Wingo High School. One must admire the young man’s courage since both principal and basketball coach had just been fired, and there had been a recent student strike as a protest movement. However, rapid advancement was made because State Superintendent of Public Instruction Harry W. Peters said in 1940 that Wingo under Doran’s leadership “had made more progress than any other school in Western Kentucky.”

Doran’s ten-year stay at Wingo was one of his most important decades as he gained statewide recognition for the first time. These fruitful years saw Doran as principal, teacher, basketball coach, editor of the Fulton Daily-Leader, minister of the Church of Christ, president and vice-president of the First District Education Association; president of the Kentucky Education Association, president of the Murray Alumni Association, and state legislator.

The local school board agreed for Adron to serve in Frankfort as a member of the legislature provided Mignon would be in charge during his absence. Mignon had already become so active as a music, speech, and drama teacher at Wingo that the school paper stated that “her loveable disposition and smiling face is missed more and more each day” during an illness. Under the board’s agreement, she often carried out the work of principal during her husband’s busy days in the Frankfort sessions. Adron admits that Mignon “was a good principal” over this school which had 500 students. Actually, he operated the school by remote control as he called from Frankfort or wrote almost daily with additional instructions on what to do next. Sometimes, these instructions related to the maintenance of the Doran’s residence. Their home must have been heated by the worst stove east of the Mississippi River since letters include constant references to the stoker in the furnace, which kept clogging up, thereby putting out the fire. Adron closed one letter, “Babe, my eyes are heavy—Hope the furnace is O.K.—order some coal. My love.”

Mignon sponsored the Wingo cheerleaders and accompanied the basketball team in her husband’s absence. On February 15, 1944, Adron assured Mignon, “You can do more with them than anyone else. If they would only get serious.” Two days later, Coach Doran
instructed, "I hope the boys won from Cayce tonight. Tell them to keep training rules over the weekend. I will be there to work with them Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday morning—I still have great hopes of winning the District." Two weeks later, Adron was writing his wife, "When you go to the game Wednesday night the boys will enter the side door through which we went last year. We are allowed 13 passes so you go in with them as the principal or coach."

The influence of the Dorans' "grand adventure" at Wingo was far-reaching. In 1974, Larry J. Hopkins, representative from the 78th Legislative District, wanted his former principal to know that once again he had made references to Doran "while debating for the cause of education on the House floor. I often attribute what small success I have had to the influence you had over me during my years at Wingo High School, and I am sure there are many of us whose lives you have enriched. For a town the size of Wingo, I doubt that there are many communities on a per capita basis that can compare with the success of your students." And all of this from a Republican!

Doran's career has always been in a perpendicular, upward direction—never a parallel movement. Beginning his career at Boaz, with seven teachers and 200 students, he advanced in salary from $577 in 1932 to $694 in 1935. His next position was as principal of Sylvan Shade, with eleven teachers and 300 students; there, his salary increased from $880 in 1935 to $1,000 in 1938. With fifteen teachers and 500 students, Wingo started Doran at $1,085 in 1938 but was paying him $3,000 by 1948.

In spite of Doran's progress as teacher and administrator, he realized more and more that educators were not receiving their adequate share of the state's revenue. In 1942, for example, Governor Keen Johnson allocated only $10,000,000 to the public schools of the Commonwealth. In the fall of 1943, Doran decided to campaign for a seat in the state legislature that he might be in better position to fight the school teachers' battle. Spending $75 on his first race and campaigning mostly on Saturdays around the court square, Doran carried all but one of the 54 precincts in Graves County. His opponent's campaign manager lived in the one precinct which he lost—by a vote of 29 to 28.

Arriving in Frankfort as a freshman legislator in 1944, Doran was immediately appointed chairman of the House education committee and a member of the powerful appropriations committee by Speaker Harry Lee Waterfield. He used these positions to endeavor to upgrade
the educational system of Kentucky. His constituency in the 3rd Legislative District was so pleased with his accomplishments in all fields that they elected him to three additional terms. During his last race, he was working on his doctorate at the University of Kentucky and did not even return to his district to campaign. Adron and Mignon voted by absentee ballot from Lexington. Interestingly, Doran’s father never voted for Adron since it was impossible for the elder Doran, a registered Republican, to take part in the Democratic primary. As winner of the Democratic primary, Adron never faced Republican opposition in the November general election.

Doran’s many years of experience at getting legislators to work together and his loyalty to the Democratic Party led to his selection as Speaker of the House in the specially-called session of 1949 and in the regular session of 1950. While serving as a member of the General Assembly, Doran helped provide the type of leadership which resulted in an increase in education appropriations from $10,000,000 to $32,000,000. According to the February 15, 1950, issue of the Louisville Times:

If the Doran way had not been a practicable way, there would perhaps have been no law that raised the salary of Kentucky’s school teachers; and possibly all the other school legislation passed thus far in the house in the present session might not have resulted. For Doran was sponsor and co-sponsor of all such bills.

In addition to presiding over a large increase in appropriations for education, Doran as speaker also had two other important accomplishments, including pushing through a bill which allowed teacher certification to be under the Board of Education and another bill which both financed in-service education and placed it under the State Department of Education. How well Doran succeeded as Speaker of the House is indicated in a statement by Senator Earle Clements: “I want to add, Adron, that I haven’t seen anybody preside with any more dignity or any more ‘know-how’ than the gentleman from Wingo.” In a recent letter, Clements added, “The leadership you provided as speaker was always in the public’s interest. In fact, you handled the members of the legislature with the same skill and fair treatment that I am sure you have offered to every student at Morehead.”

Doran, beginning to obtain statewide recognition at this time, found his early years in the legislature to be some of the most trying days in his career. Mignon drove Adron to meet a 4:00 a.m. train in Fulton that he might arrive in Frankfort in time for the Monday
sessions and then met him at 5:00 on Friday mornings in Mayfield. Nearly every letter counted the time it would be necessary to leave each other during the remainder of the session. At one point, Adron assured Mignon, "You are a mighty good advertising agent and advance man. You have meant more than I can ever tell to what little success we have had. I will soon be able to come to your rescue and relieve you a little—you are a very brave Trojan." In another letter, he wrote, "I pray that you may have strength to endure it a few more days. Maybe our pay will come at the end of the rough road. Let us hope that there will be a profit to it somehow."

Doran’s experiences in Frankfort opened up new vistas to higher levels of service provided he had the necessary educational background. Hence, he decided to further his graduate education by obtaining the master's degree at Murray State in 1948, largely as the result of having taken night and Saturday classes. One of Doran’s strongest points has always been his ability to attack several different tasks at the same time while performing superbly at all of them. For example, from 1948 to 1950, he served as legislator, Speaker of the House, minister of the Nicholasville Church of Christ, and completed a doctorate at the University of Kentucky. His resourcefulness led Doran to collect data which was used in writing his dissertation on the history, development, and work of the Council on Public Higher Education.

In spite of his other various experiences, Doran made an outstanding record in obtaining his doctorate at the University of Kentucky with a major in administration and a minor in social sciences. Like all other graduate students, the Dorans “survived” in spite of financial difficulties. Mignon recently commented that they had sold their home in Wingo in order for Adron to get his doctorate. The Chester Travelsteads were also pursuing a degree at the same time. On March 15, 1976, they wrote that “the highlight of each week for us during that time was a simple Saturday night supper of chili, crackers, and ice cream. These weekly ‘celebrations’ were about as ‘wild’ as anything we did, until the summer of 1950 when ‘we’ received ‘our’ degrees—just two of them for the four of us!”

In a “My dear Mr. Doran” letter, President H. L. Donovan, a member of the graduate committee, wrote: “I was pleased to be in attendance and I enjoyed listening to your excellent defense of your dissertation. From the discussion I think you must have made some very constructive suggestions with regard to the Council on Public Higher Education.” Dr. Frank G. Dickey, currently provost of the
University of North Carolina at Charlotte and chairman of Doran’s committee then, expresses his regrets that a board meeting will prevent his attendance at the Tribute Banquet. Otherwise, “I would most certainly be in Kentucky when honors are bestowed upon the two of you. I can think of no one who more richly deserves to be honored.” The “master professor” is proud of his student’s “superb work” at Morehead State—and “for that matter, for all of Kentucky, the region, and the nation in the field of education and human relations. Few, if any, persons have made such substantial contributions to the educational advancement of an institution.” Dr. Maurice F. Seay, another member of the committee, states, “One of my claims to fame is that I played a role when you, Adron, decided to take advanced graduate work. I find personal pride in having known and worked with the two of you before Morehead had a chance to claim you.”

From the time Doran received his master’s degree in 1948, he began receiving invitations to various types of positions. He was approached for a possible presidency at Florida Christian College in Tampa. Since another church-related institution had a greater appeal to them, the Dorans spent a few days on the campus of Oklahoma Christian College to consider the invitation to accept the presidency of that institution. Finally Doran decided against this move because of his belief that such schools then placed too little emphasis upon academics and because he felt that such a life might be too cloistered.

Having received his doctorate in 1950, Doran was a visiting professor of education at the University of Georgia the following year. 1951 was a year of uncertainty. On the one hand, he was considering the possibility of running for state superintendent of public instruction; on the other, he contemplated a position with the U. S. Office of Education in Washington. Kentucky newspapers were also speculating that he would become either president of Murray State, his alma mater, or of Morehead State. When Dr. Jesse Baird resigned as president of Morehead State in 1951, Doran sought this position, but it went instead to Dr. Charles Spain. Many educators in Eastern Kentucky were disappointed when Doran was not appointed. One of these was Chalmer H. Frazier, superintendent of Prestonsburg Public Schools, who had written that Doran has a splendid personality. He makes a fine appearance and wins friends easily. These attributes, I should think, would be of vital importance in filling the requirements for a college president. Because he possesses both the courage of his
convictions and a broadminded attitude toward those whose opinions differ from his, Adron Doran, in my opinion, would bring to Morehead the type of leadership needed for continued growth and development. Mr. Doran has the educational background, breeding and character to become a great educational leader.

For the next two years Doran served as director of the Division of Teacher Education and Certification in the Kentucky State Department of Education. This position required more hours of intensive effort and proved to be one of the most difficult jobs ever held by this talented leader; Doran's recommendation that Kentucky State College be shifted from the control of the State Board to that of its own board of regents was accepted. During these same two years, Doran was secretary of the Kentucky Council on Public Higher Education. In 1953, Jack Vincent, a native of Graves County and now vice-president of the Community College at Poplar Bluff, Missouri, analyzed Doran as "an efficient administrator, brilliant speaker, and an extremely affable fellow. His greatest asset, however, is probably his deep-felt desire to be of service to the masses from which he rose. Education has meant so much to him that he wishes to share its value with others who have to come up in life the hard way."

Several times Doran's name has been mentioned as a possibility for state-wide political office. As early as 1944 Superintendent of Public Instruction John Fred Williams invited Doran to accept a position in his department in Frankfort. In a "Dear Adron" letter, Williams stated, "I am very sorry that circumstances were such that you felt that you could not come to the Department at the present time. I understand the situation, and probably would have done as you did. However, my wish to have you here in the Department probably caused me to discount the importance of your reasons for not coming when we were discussing the matter. I do believe it is important that you come back to the legislature."

By 1946 Doran was in great demand as a high school commencement speaker; many of the principals and superintendents issuing these invitations began urging Adron "to throw his hat in the ring" as candidate for State Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1947. A typical comment came from Superintendent James W. Depp of the Glasgow Public Schools: "I was happy to hear that you are considering becoming a candidate in 1947 for the office of state superintendent of public instruction and from the comments that I
have heard in the different sections of Kentucky, I feel sure that you
would make a strong candidate. We need a man with your experience
and with your outlook on the various problems of education.”

In 1947 Doran resigned as president of the Kentucky Education
Association in order to seek the post as state superintendent. In the
midst of that campaign, however, he dropped out as candidate that
both Adron and Mignon might work for the election of Harry Lee
Waterfield for governor in the Democratic primary. Since Waterfield
had adopted the $34½ million KEA request as a part of his platform,
Doran stated, “I honestly feel it is more important to have a
sympathetic, aggressive and progressive leader in the governor’s chair
than it is for the school people to unite, nominate and elect me... state superintendent of public instruction.” On March 8, 1976,
Waterfield wrote to Doran, “The sacrifice you made in my behalf in
1947 is as clear in my memory as yesterday. Hopefully, subsequent
developments that provided for the opportunity of your lifetime
more than compensated for your then obvious unselfishness.”

After Waterfield lost the Democratic primary to Earle Clements,
Doran immediately threw his support to the latter in the general
election. Clements always felt he owed a special debt of gratitude to
Mignon for this quick decision. “It has brought joy to me to see the
climb that has been made by you both in your chosen field of
endeavor,” Clements told the Dorans in 1971. “I knew then that she was a strong-willed girl with some influence upon a
man whom I thought with opportunity was going places. He has.”

Doran’s name has been seriously considered as a Democratic
candidate for governor upon two occasions. A year after coming to
Morehead, Doran gave consideration to seeking the Democratic
nomination, but the position went to Bert Combs instead. Doran
later asserted that “there was a considerable effort on the part of
many influential Kentuckians to make it possible for me to become a
candidate for governor in 1955, but I refused to give it my personal
consent.” As early as 1961, a writer in the Louisville Courier-Journal
suggested that Doran was a front-runner as the Democrat most likely
to be nominated two years later. Letters poured in urging Doran to
announce his candidacy. The local Morehead newspaper was already
speculating in a front-page story in 1961 that Wendell Butler would
become president of Morehead State after Doran moved into the
governor’s mansion; Tommy L. Preston, editor-in-chief of the
Cynthiana Democrat, wrote in January, 1962, that “an opponent
would become frustrated finding fault with Dr. Doran.”
At the same time, young Carroll Hubbard, Jr., was suggesting to the Dorans that "it would be wonderful if you two could be our governor and wife. Just think, Dr. Doran, you could stay at home during the campaign and just send Mrs. Mignon out on the stump. She'd WOW 'em." The Rowan County News pointed out that Mignon "is unquestionably the most popular woman in all of Kentucky, admired by her own sex . . . and would make a powerful vote-getter in her own right. She is talented and would make the most gracious and beautiful first lady in all of Kentucky's history." Several Republicans urged Doran to make the race. One of them said, "Only once in my life (in 1939) have I registered Democratic and that was for a short period. However, if you should be a candidate, I will consider it an honor and pleasure to register Democratic so I can vote for you in the primary." But in February, 1962, Doran explained to Robert R. McCormick: "When I left the field of government and decided to prepare myself for college administration, I turned my back on any political aspirations which I have ever had. I enjoyed participating in the affairs of government and benefited greatly by these experiences, but I have no desire to return to the political arenas." This explanation sheds some light on why Doran decided against running for lieutenant governor on a ticket headed by Chandler in 1963.

The Doran team became well known across the Commonwealth in spite of the various difficulties experienced by the masses in learning how to spell their names. Surprisingly, there were more frequent misspellings of Adron's name than of Mignon's. Although there is an occasional reference to "Minon," the young Adron Doran was constantly receiving letters addressed to "Adrian," "Adran," "Adrain," "Adorian," and "Adrin;" his last name was sometimes spelled "Dorian." Having used "Adrian" in both the inside address and the salutation, the commissioner of the State Department of Education in another state began his letter, "I am not sure how to spell Mignon's name but hope I am not too far off." Knowing there was something unusual about Doran's name, one writer in 1948 addressed his letter to "Adron Adron." The only record of Doran's ever scolding anyone for misspelling his name was in a letter to a preacher-critic in March, 1962. "You have marked the envelopes 'Professor Dorn,'" which indicates that you are not too familiar with the spelling of my name, and not too well acquainted with me personally," Doran replied. "I would be glad to have you identify yourself to me." Fortunately, these two people with unusual first names have always been well known enough in each community that
their mail has reached them. Morehead State University’s first lady once received a letter addressed simply “Mignon, Kentucky.”

Religion has always played a vital role in the lives of the Dorans. Adron, a prominent personality in the Church of Christ, once preached in 90 consecutive nights of revival meetings, most of them in rural America, but also including such urban centers as Nashville, Louisville, St. Louis, and Columbus. Some of his early meetings were in tents or even “brush-arbors”; he admits that one of his greatest concerns while preaching then was the occasional swallowing of a flying insect. In these evangelistic meetings, Doran baptized individuals in the nearest creek or pond. During such a three-month period, the Dorans lived with families in each local congregation; Mignon helped with the housework while Adron prepared his sermons. People, both small and great, were constantly impressed with the simplicity of the gospel as presented by Doran. In 1944, a typical letter praised his previous day’s sermon thusly: “That was the most simple, yet most powerful, sermon I have ever heard.” Following a motto of early American leaders of the Church of Christ that “we speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent,” Doran has constantly emphasized “the Bible says” rather than discussing some work written by man. He states that he has always received as much satisfaction in the pulpit as in the classroom, the president’s office, the halls of the legislature, or the speaker’s chair.

Like William Jennings Bryan, Doran has been characterized as a conservative in religion while being a liberal in politics. He has always observed a compatibility in what he believes and practices in religion and what is expected of him in the various other activities of his complicated life. While in graduate school, he experienced no great conflicts between what he was being taught by his science professors and what he believed the Bible taught on the subject of creation. Likewise, he has never been cognizant of any inconsistency between what he does in religion and in his political activities. Some of his brethren, however, have accused him of not believing in the separation of church and state. For example, after Doran threw his support to Clements for governor in 1947, one of his brethren criticized Adron for being involved in politics and for referring to the “Campbellite Church” in a speech at Murray. “I felt that you desecrated the name of the Lord’s church, for political reasons.” After advising Doran on what his position should be on Clements,
Waterfield, Chandler, and Barkley, the writer continued, “Bro. Dorin, as a friend and brother, let me admonish you to hold your religion above partisan politics, and always vote like you pray.” Two months later, another Christian brother expressed his church’s interest in Doran’s conducting a revival but requested that he first get out of politics. Speaking of politics, this brother concluded, “I’ll be more happy than I can tell if your reply indicates that you have had enough.”

Upon numerous occasions, Doran has considered giving up the school room for the pulpit. After two years of teaching experience, he wrote to a friend, “I have a desire to leave the school room and do located work with some wide awake congregation where I can devote my whole time to one place.” By 1936, someone was referring to him as a “professor-preacher.” Throughout the 1930’s and 1940’s, Doran’s name was being mentioned as the next minister for different large congregations of the Church of Christ. The Shawnee, Oklahoma, church, with a membership of 350, invited Doran for an interview in 1934. The elder writing the letter wanted to make sure that Mignon accompanied him since “a preacher’s wife means a lot in his work in the church—her cooperation with him and her social ability in handling the ladies of the church.” For some reason, a brother in Western Kentucky assured Doran in 1941 that he was “glad to hear you are going to devote all of your time to preaching.”

Two years later, a church leader from Battle Creek, Michigan, asked, “Would you be available and if so, what price?” In December, 1944, Cecil B. Douthitt informed the Brown Street Church of Christ in Akron, Ohio—a church with a seating capacity of 800—that previous commitments prevented his becoming their minister but gave a strong recommendation to Doran. “He is one of the best preachers in this section of the country, a good personal worker, clean in life, and thoroughly competent in every way,” said Douthitt. “If you can secure him for that work, he will fill the bill 100%. I do not know whether he will be interested or not, but I suggest you write to him soon and find out. You cannot beat him.” The new minister would have been serving a church which had just purchased seven vacant lots next to its own building, thereby providing them with an entire city block. As late as 1951 Doran was giving some consideration to becoming the minister of the Union Avenue Church in Memphis.

While greatly enjoying pulpit preaching, Doran was too much of an individualist to fit into the regimentation which he thought would be expected of a full-time minister. Although willing to respond, he did not appreciate the tone of the following questions which were asked by one congregation: “Are you lazy or willing to work? We
have had trouble along this line, getting the preacher to work like we have to work. Do you pay your debts and live within your budget in order that no reports would come to our Retail Credit Association?" Although Mignon was willing to be the wife of a full-time minister, she breathed a sigh of relief each time Adron rejected an offer since neither of them relished the idea of being totally governed by the various whims and expectations of every church member.

With the Dorans' active background in the Church of Christ, they were greatly concerned upon their arrival in Morehead because no such congregation existed here. Although that first year, Adron preached to Churches of Christ in other towns almost every Sunday, Doran faced up squarely to the dilemma of recruiting students and faculty who happened to be members of the Church of Christ but having no place for them to worship in the same manner when they arrived in Morehead. Believing that many students were bound not only to their mother's apron strings but also to their church, Doran led in the establishment of a local congregation of the Church of Christ, whose seven members met for the first time in 1955 in a basement room of Fields Hall. Two years later, he and John Duncan, Sr., signed a note to borrow money for the purchase of a residence from the city mayor which was then renovated into a church auditorium and class rooms. By 1961 Doran had used his many contacts to raise most of the money necessary to build a small brick edifice on the same lot. Perhaps this was the smallest church ever to move into its church building, debt-free, on the day of its first services. During these early days of the church here, Doran continued to preach often in other towns but then placed his honorariums in the Morehead church so that this struggling group might survive financially.

Doran was always moved by the conviction that a small group composed almost entirely of "college people," who might tend to move more often than other classes of people, should never try to operate with a large deficit. Since 1961 Doran has led in two other fund-raising campaigns that additional class rooms and an extension to the auditorium might be built. In 1967, the church added four class rooms, a new heating and cooling system, and a nursery. The church auditorium was doubled in size in 1970 so that it now seats 250. The present church building, located at 225 Second Street, is valued at approximately $175,000.

The Morehead Church of Christ has provided a place of worship for administrators, faculty, students, and townspeople since September, 1955. It has also provided an opportunity for nine young men to serve as either minister or youth director while obtaining a
Doran has also promoted the type of atmosphere which has encouraged other religious groups on campus. In his first ten years as president, five religious organizations were started at Morehead State: the Baptist Student Union, the Disciples of Christ Fellowship, the Newman Club, the Warner Fellowship, and the Wesley Club. Doran also aided in providing the use of University facilities for Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Catholics, and Mormons at a time when they did not have their own structures. Because of his great concern that a student or faculty member might die during a long ambulance ride from Morehead to Lexington or Huntington, he helped to launch the drive which led to the establishment of a local Catholic hospital. "Without your efforts, we would not have our Saint Claire Medical Center, and our two medical clinics with more than 30 specialists," wrote Alpha M. Hutchinson, president of the Citizens Bank.

Doran believes that one can never retire from the Christian life or ministry. He has spoken on the campus of most of the major Church of Christ-related colleges, has served as a member of the board of directors of Freed-Hardeman College, and was appointed to the advisory board of the Mid-Western Children's Home near Cincinnati. Doran has been the major speaker for dedication services for new church buildings and installation services for church leaders all over this region. Doran continues to keep frequent Sunday preaching appointments and thinks that he will find even more time for the ministry after his retirement. His invitations will likely come from various sections of the nation, since his reputation as a preacher has spread far from his native South. For example, after having conducted a revival in Rochester, New York, he received the
following note from a brother there: “Both you and Mignon seem to fit right in with the work and you leave such a fine impression with everyone. After the meeting closed, we heard nothing but praise concerning your personalities, the wonderful lessons and the excellent manner in which the lessons were presented.”

The Dorans’ adherence to the beliefs of a fundamentalist church has sometimes created conflicts. In 1960, Joe Creason did an interesting feature story on Adron and Mignon in the Louisville Courier-Journal in which he suggested that they participated in social dancing. To indicate their social graces, Creason wrote that “the Dorans shake a leg with the best of them at dances.” After receiving letters of criticism, Doran stated, “I would like to say to all who read the story, or have heard about it, that Mignon and I do not participate in dances on the campus, or off, nor have we ever done so.” Doran presented an interesting explanation to two ministers, as he wrote, “I do not dance, have never danced, and am too old and stiff to ever expect to.” Thinking his original statement had paid Doran a compliment, Creason wrote his long-time friend that he felt “there was an interesting and significant point to be made about how a man of God can be broad-minded enough to serve as president of a state-supported college without in any way allowing personal convictions to change such normally-accepted college functions as dancing.” More typical of the reputation the Dorans have enjoyed among church ministers is the one depicted in the following April 8, 1976, letter from Jim Bill McInteer, of the West End Church of Christ in Nashville:

I’ve seen you in various functions—speaking on behalf of orphan children, delivering learned lectures, preaching the simple and beautiful gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to few and to multitudes. Brother and Sister Doran, we are genuinely proud of you. We are thankful for the beauty of your lives together, the great moral excellency you have employed, the genuineness of devotion you have handsomely fulfilled for all worthy causes to which you have put your competent hands.

Adron Doran has always been known to thrive on a challenge. Just as he had accepted the principalship of Wingo High School immediately after the previous principal and coach had been fired and after a student uprising, he became president of Morehead State College at a time when the position was not all that appealing. In
1947, Morehead State had lost its accreditation from the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges and from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education because of political interference in its internal affairs; the president had been removed from office because of his affiliation with the “wrong” political party. Although the college regained its accreditation the following year, thanks largely to the efforts of Governor Earle Clements, who agreed to the appointment of a board of regents with both political parties equally represented, the school was still a small institution and hardly known outside the state. No building had been constructed on the campus for 20 years. But when Dr. Charles Spain resigned the presidency after only two and one-half years, Doran courageously became the institution’s seventh president on April 6, 1954. President Doran recently asserted that a combination of courage, idealism, and commitment motivated his acceptance of this new position. “I am not sure that I would have had the courage if I had known the intensity of the challenge,” he said. And Mignon added, “We were too young to be afraid.”

Doran had methodically worked his way up through the educational system of the Commonwealth; no rung of the ladder of preparation had been skipped. Few men have ever assumed office with a broader range of experience and preparation. The long road from Boaz High School in 1932 to Morehead State College in 1954 has often caused Doran to be impatient with aspiring young men who wish to achieve instant stardom by beginning at the top. In “The Historical Development of a State College,” an unpublished dissertation, Harry E. Rose writes, “Suffice it to say that Dr. Adron Doran brought a wealth of experience to the Morehead presidency which perhaps more fully qualified him for this position than any of his predecessors.” On April 8, 1954, a Louisville Courier-Journal editorial made the claim that Dr. Doran “knows politics at the effective level. He knows the legislature. He knows the politicians back home who influence the work of the legislature. He is well known and well liked by these people. He speaks their language as well as the language of the classroom.”

Great things were expected of Doran in this new position, as suggested by Dr. Gabriel Banks’ invocation during the inauguration:

Now we are about to install formally another leader in this college committed to rendering the minds of men and women free and full and searching. By Thy power and Thy cooperation may he be endowed to fulfill richly many of the dreams and aspirations that he now possesses and will henceforth possess his mind and heart, we beseech Thee.
Governor Lawrence W. Wetherby presented Doran to the audience with the affirmation that “he is the man that I feel Morehead State College needs.” Dr. Chester Travelstead, a former classmate of Doran at the University of Kentucky, described the need for “A Time for Greatness,” and Doran inspired the audience with the theme of “Beginning Again.”

Wendell P. Butler, state superintendent of public instruction, cast the deciding vote in a three-two decision by the board of regents to bring Doran to Morehead State as president. Reporter Hugh Morris later asked Butler, “Mr. Superintendent, do you think you have appointed a good president?” Butler’s only comment was, “Time will tell.” With so much at stake in this decision, Butler was elated to be able to write Doran on March 9, 1976, “You can see now why I rejoice in the progress which has been made” at Morehead State University in the past 22 years. Governor Wetherby was greatly pleased by Butler’s tie-breaking vote and by Doran’s subsequent performance. On March 11, 1976, Wetherby stated that he as governor had strongly supported Doran’s selection “because I thought he was just the man to make Morehead a great school. My judgment has more than been vindicated by his service during the last 22 years.”

A flood of letters reached Doran after the announcement of his appointment to the presidency. Some wished to give him advice. Guy Miles, professor in the English department, wrote: “Over and over I have debated whether to write you and in a short letter tell you how to be president. Rule One is to be very, very easy with the staff.” The faculty knows “what they are supposed to do better than any newcomer will know for a long time. Rule Two is to hold as few faculty meetings as possible. They inevitably generate friction.” The fall schedule for the English department “has been worked out with utmost care. Simply watch us perform, and for this one semester let us alone. An organization such as ours is very sensitive; a word from the president will re-route us. That is all.” A week after Doran’s installation as MSU’s seventh president, Senator Clements was advising him, “Incidentally, if any trouble develops—I have one bit of advice. Adron, you deal with the girls, where your trouble will be, because Mignon will captivate the men.” Another writer was undoubtedly disappointed since she had written shortly before the appointment: “We are interested to know of your plans for the future—Don’t stop, Bro. Doran, until you have reached the White House. You do it and I still want to be your campaign manager.”

Most writers, however, wished to praise the Dorans for their much-deserved appointment. Joe Creason, a frequent correspondent
with the Dorans, penned: "It really seems only yesterday that we were neighbors in Benton. And yet an awful lot has happened in the years that have passed. You have gone on to become one of the really big men in education in Kentucky and your contributions to your field have been truly outstanding." Basil, one of Adron's brothers, said, "If you won't tell anyone, I just could not keep back the water which really did accumulate in my peepers. Let it be known to all who may chance to hear that you really worked for this advancement, and it was justly due you." A sister-in-law suggested, "I saw you take the step on the bottom of the ladder, watched you climb to the top step, and I know it wasn't easy." All the letters mentioned the significant role which Mignon had constantly played in the "Grand Adventure." Typical examples are such statements as, "Your little helpmate will also be a great asset in all phases of Morehead living," and "I think Morehead has a good president now, and a most attractive first lady." Still another letter stated, "We know that Nonnie, whom we all love dearly, has had a big part in your successful life and we're not unmindful of the credit due her."

The "Doran Years" at Morehead State University have indeed been an era of spectacular and dramatic success. President Doran's firsthand knowledge of state government and close acquaintance with political and educational leaders opened an ambitious era of capital construction and upgrading the faculty to take care of the mushrooming growth patterns which began in 1954. The number and quality of the faculty and staff are two of the most significant ingredients of a university. In 1954, there were 114 employees, 60 of whom were full-time faculty; twelve of the 60, or 20%, held earned doctorates. In 1976, there are 933 employees, 306 of whom are faculty members; 151 of these hold earned doctorates. The faculty and staff today outnumber the total student enrollment when Doran became president. There were 698 students enrolled in the spring semester of 1954. Most of them (96% of the graduating class) were pursuing baccalaureate degrees leading to teacher certification. The fall enrollment of the present school year was 7,318; less than 60% of these are preparing for teaching. Nearly 20,000 students have graduated from Morehead in its 54-year-history; over 90% of these have received diplomas in the past 22 years. In 1954, the total campus extended along University Boulevard from the old section of the Science Building on the west to Men's Hall on the east. The art department was in the library, the music department was in a girls'
dormitory, and the agriculture department included only one teacher. Since 1954, the University's imaginative and ambitious building program has resulted in a campus of new buildings valued at some $75 million, along with four awards for architectural excellence. Morehead State University stands today on a beautiful 500-acre campus in the foothills of Daniel Boone National Forest, a campus renowned for its physical beauty, academic excellence, and congenial spirit. Assessing the "Doran Years" in terms of the faculty and students, Dr. Lyman V. Ginger, recent chairman of the board of regents, wrote to Doran:

In the academic area, it has been my impression that you have tried in every way possible to raise academic standards by recruiting the best available faculty and staff. In the student area, you have accurately identified the type of student who came to your campus and have effectively provided student activities which enriched their college lives and which will be carried over into later life.

The budget of an institution furnishes one of the best indicators of the direction of a university. Morehead State operated in 1954 on a budget that provided for the appropriation of $472,950. Its state appropriation this year is $13,444,600. In 1954 and 1955, the institution operated on a total income of $845,675. This year it will have a total income of $23,460,707. Harry Rose asserts that "the dynamic leadership and administrative knowhow of Adron Doran helped to attract more students and to secure greater appropriations for capital outlay for Morehead."

The history of Morehead State University since 1954 has not only been characterized by a sensational growth of the student body, faculty and staff, and the construction of buildings. Even greater changes have occurred in the structure and curriculum of the school. It has moved through the stage of a state college into a complex regional university. When the school was granted university status in 1966, five academic schools and graduate and undergraduate divisions were immediately formed. A sixth academic school, Business and Economics, was organized in 1971. Today, Morehead State University is offering programs in 80 fields leading to baccalaureate degrees, 44 fields leading to master's degrees, 38 fields leading to associate degrees, and provides a joint program with the University of Kentucky leading to a doctorate in education.

The addition of a graduate program and its continued expansion is significant. Since MSU is a regional university, the concept of
off-campus classes has been utilized in order to serve the needs of the area. Doran recognizes a responsibility on the part of Morehead State University to educate its constituency without forcing students with full-time jobs elsewhere to drive on poor roads to campus each week. Also, since MSU is primarily a teacher training regional institution, the school visitation teaching concept has been pursued avidly. A high school principal in the region wrote Doran in 1973:

By allowing the different professors to come to our school, you have promoted a new feeling of closeness and understanding between our two institutions. The students were impressed with each professor's knowledge and capability. Some professors have gone directly to teaching on the university level and are not familiar with the high school educative process of teaching six classes, thirty students each, five days a week. We sincerely feel that this is one of the finest programs that MSU has to offer and are looking forward to working with you and the University in other such programs.

Giant strides have been made at Morehead since 1954. But President Doran, on April 6, 1976, maintained, "It is not enough to look back. It is not enough to survey the skyline of today. It is well to look to the future." This "Look to the Future" that same day involved breaking ground or recognizing the awarding of a contract for the renovation and expansion of Allie Young Hall, the construction of the Johnson Camden Library Tower, and the expansion of the Lawrence W. Wetherby Academic-Athletic Complex. Allie Young Hall, built in 1925 at a cost of $122,568, will undergo a $1,520,000 renovation. The Johnson Camden Library was constructed in 1930 at a cost of $165,167, then expanded in 1965 with an $847,690 addition; the Library Tower itself will cost $2,656,000. Wetherby Gymnasium was the first building constructed after Doran's arrival. Completed in December, 1956, at a cost of $607,000 and with a seating capacity of 4,350, it is now being expanded at a cost of $5.5 million.

An extensive list of superlatives is needed to describe the numerous honors bestowed upon this natural-born leader. Doran himself regards his most significant honor as the Horatio Alger Award because of what it represents and of its outstanding recipients in its 30-year history. The writings of Alger, a late nineteenth-century literary figure, emphasized the theme of from
rags to riches. Doran received this honor in 1971 in ceremonies at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City in recognition of his rise from having been born the son of a tenant farmer in a two-room house to heading a nationally-renowned university of over 6,000 students. Only four Kentuckians and 200 Americans have been thus honored. Past recipients include such dignitaries as Dwight D. Eisenhower, Billy Graham, Bob Hope, J. C. Penney, Bernard Baruch, and Col. Harland Sanders. Dr. Norman Vincent Peale presented Dr. Doran his award along with nine other recipients, including news commentator Lowell Thomas.

The Horatio Alger Award was started for the purpose of honoring business and professional leaders who attain unquestioned success by overcoming humble backgrounds. Recognizing that his materialistic wealth did not equal that of most other recipients, Doran recently said, "I have never believed that a man's life should consist of acquiring possessions but rather in taking advantage of the opportunities for personal growth and service to others. The successful lives of the young people who have come under my influence are the fruits of my labor and the wealth of my holdings."

In his "Acceptance Address," President Doran described his version of "The Great American Dream":

Whether the son of a tenant farmer, a stock boy in a clothing factory, a news butch on a passenger train, or a door-to-door cosmetics salesman-Whether in the schoolroom as a teacher, on the basketball court as a coach, in the Speaker's chair as a legislator, in the pulpit as a minister, in the composing room as a newspaper editor, before the radio microphone as a singer, in the presidency of a state university, or as a servant in the community, I have learned, in whatever state of being, the worth of an individual human and the dignity to which he is entitled.

Dr. Alonzo Williams, Adron's high school principal, rejoiced with Adron recently that "America keeps a path open from bottom to top for people with capability and determination. Early in life," Williams continued, "you entered that path and pursued it to a peak seldom reached by others."

Morehead State University was created by an act of the 1922 General Assembly as Morehead State Normal School to "train white elementary teachers." Having assumed the Morehead presidency in the same year of the Supreme Court's desegregation decision, Doran highly treasures the Lincoln Key Award, which he received in 1959.
for his leadership in the improvement of race relations in the Commonwealth. Morehead was the first state college in Kentucky to adopt a policy of admitting students regardless of racial composition and was the first to have integrated dormitories. Under Doran's leadership, Morehead was the first school in the Ohio Valley Conference to integrate her athletic teams. The nomination of Doran for the Lincoln Key Award stated that "this progress in human relations has been made at Morehead State College without incident and fanfare." Upon this occasion, John M. Hennessy, Clerk of Jefferson Circuit Court, wrote to Doran: "It has almost become chronic for you to receive honors and recognition for some unusual and fine accomplishment in the field of education . . . Doing great things 'without fanfare' seems to be your way of living."

In 1959, the Kentucky Press Association selected this native of Western Kentucky and "Eastern Kentuckian by adoption" as the "Kentuckian of the Year." Doran was nominated "for superior service to education in Kentucky and other southern states as a member of the Southern Regional Education Board, for his officially recognized contribution to the Kentucky Soil Conservation Districts and for his acknowledged leadership in dealing with racial problems." Other candidates for this honor the same year consisted of such outstanding people as Mrs. Janice Holt Giles, Dr. Francis S. Hutchins, and Adolph Rupp. Being the first educator to receive this award, Doran was so highly elated that he wrote the Kentucky editors: "To me this is the greatest recognition within the gift of the people who have dedicated themselves to propagate the truth and to disseminate information concerning the activities of the day. It is a source of great comfort to know that the members of the Fourth Estate are in my corner, and are pleased with my feeble efforts at public service."

On April 7, 1960, Doran assured Dr. Winfred L. Godwin, associate director of the Southern Regional Education Board, that "the newspaper editors of Kentucky represent one of the most selective groups which I know, and to have this group bestow such an honor upon me serves as a great challenge in our feeble efforts at public service."

The Morehead Chamber of Commerce also named Doran as its "Man of the Year" in 1959. J. Phil Smith, Morehead alumnus and a prominent banker in Eastern Kentucky, was the principal speaker for the occasion; John W. Holbrook presented a citation which credited Doran with "unselfish and untiring efforts for the community, the college, and the region." Upon hearing of this presentation, Superintendent of Maysville Public Schools Earle D. Jones wrote to
Doran that it "seems that you have refuted Matthew's philosophy—'a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country.'"

Congressman Frank A. Stubblefield sang Doran's praises by telling him that he should "be commended" for his "unselfish dedication to the betterment of others" and for his "devotion to the community" of Morehead.

Doran has continued to labor for the well-being of the Morehead community. W. E. Crutcher, publisher of The Morehead News and one of the greatest supporters of both Morehead and Adron Doran, recently penned these words: "I know, Dr. Doran, that massive Cave Run Reservoir would not have become a reality except for you and a very few other 'thinking and dedicated' citizens."

Alpha M. Hutchinson, president of The Citizens Bank, assured Doran on April 9, 1976, that his "work and dedication have forced the growth of our community. From our rural area, subdivisions have developed, with new homes being built, purchased and occupied by incoming faculty and staff members of Morehead State University."

William H. Layne, mayor of Morehead longer than any other person, wrote:

During my tenure as mayor, Morehead State University has had four presidents. But only during your administration has there existed full mutual understanding and cooperation between city government and MSU. You are responsible for this enviable status that accrued to the benefit of the University and the community. You have not only been the most effective, dedicated and greatest president in the history of 'our' University; but Mignon and you have been 'our' best citizens, reflecting by your every act and conduct a favorable image for the City of Morehead.

On March 8, 1976, Congressman Carl D. Perkins stated: "Dr. and Mrs. Doran have made enormous contributions to the entire Morehead community far and above what his official duties required."

Doran exhibited a tremendous interest in the success of Morehead's athletic program from the very beginning of his administration. During his 22 years, varsity teams at Morehead State University have won a total of 13 Ohio Valley Conference championships. MSU represented the OVC in the NCAA basketball tournament in 1956, 1957, and 1961. The banner year for Morehead was 1962, when the Eagles captured the OVC championships in
football, basketball, and baseball. The Eagles also earned basketball championships in the conference in 1969, 1972, and 1974, and again topped the OVC in football in 1966. Shortly after Doran moved to Morehead, he was engaging Governor Wetherby and Senator Earle Clements in a conversation about the school’s most urgent needs. The three concluded that top priorities should be given to building a basketball gymnasium and a student union. Wetherby Gymnasium, seating 4,300, was completed in time for the 1956 basketball season. A new football stadium, with a seating capacity of 10,000, was built ten years later. The football field is encircled by an eight-lane, quarter-mile Grasstex track which has served as the site of the Ohio Valley Conference meet. The John (Sonny) Allen Field, with a seating capacity of 1,150 and named after the baseball coach who won three OVC championships, contains the finest baseball facilities to be found at any university in Kentucky. Fourteen tennis courts have been constructed near Downing Hall since 1954. The Laughlin Health Building provides facilities for almost any type of athletic activity. The University owns a beautiful nine-hole golf course. Money has been appropriated to renovate the Wetherby structure to provide additional facilities for physical education and athletics. Adron Doran has constantly been the “Number One Eagle,” but in spite of his tremendously competitive nature, he has commanded the respect of even Morehead’s greatest rivals. Immediately after Coach Guy Strong moved from Eastern Kentucky University to Oklahoma State University, he wrote Dr. Doran: “You have always been one of my favorite people because of your honest, forthright way of meeting any situation.”

President Doran has always taken great pride in the varied accomplishments of the music department. Thus he was delighted when “The Big Band from Daniel Boone Land” was invited to appear in the Inaugural Parade in Washington on January 20, 1973. On that day Congressman Tim Lee Carter inserted in the Congressional Record: “I wish to commend Dr. Adron Doran, president of Morehead State University, and Dr. Robert Hawkins, director of the band, for their fine work toward making the band’s participation in this great event a reality.” After referring to the fact that 84% of the Morehead State dormitory facilities had been constructed since 1960, Carter continued, “Nearly two decades of continuous dynamic leadership by President Adron Doran have transformed this half-century-old institution dedicated to training teachers into a broad-spectrum, multi-purpose regional university of superior merit.”

Dr. Doran has excelled at bringing to campus some of the most notable leaders on the national level. This accomplishment has been
even more striking since there is no easy access to Morehead by airways. When Senator Ted Kennedy was the featured Homecoming speaker at an afternoon convocation in the latter 1960’s, fog over the Huntington airport caused him to be three hours late. However, an even larger crowd had assembled by the time he finally began his speech at 5:00. CBS Correspondent Daniel Schorr was a guest lecturer at Morehead last year; he was so concerned about making connections to return to Washington that evening that he abruptly announced to a local television crew that there would be no further “false starts” on his videotaped interview; interestingly enough, the next beginning worked out perfectly.

Other celebrities to appear on campus have included Senator Thomas Eagleton, Democratic candidate for the vice-presidency in 1972; Arthur Goldberg, former justice of the United States Supreme Court; Harrison Salisbury, author and distinguished editor of The New York Times; Mrs. Malcolm X; Senator Wayne Morse, maverick leader from Oregon; Senator Mark Hatfield, dynamic speaker also from Oregon; Vance Packard, one of the most well-known novelists; Art Buchwald, outstanding syndicated columnist as a writer of political satire; Dr. T. Harry Williams, Pulitzer Prize winner for his biography of Huey Long; Dr. Holman Hamilton, Distinguished Professor of the School of Arts and Scientists at the University of Kentucky; and Dr. Charles P. Roland, Alumni Professor of History at the University of Kentucky. Several attempts were made to bring Senator Hubert H. Humphrey and Senator Edmund S. Muskie to campus, but other developments always prevented their coming. These “developments” were significant enough for Muskie to resist even the following impassioned plea from his close friend, Congressman Carl Perkins:

Morehead is one of the most progressive institutions in the nation. There is a kind of constructive dynamism about this campus of which I am excessively proud. Aside from the opportunity to be in one of the loveliest parts of America at the loveliest time of year, I particularly hope you can accept this invitation so that you might experience the gracious hospitality of President and Mrs. Doran.

As might be expected in the administration of any president, there have been a few dissidents among members of the faculty. A Dr. Roscoe Baker of the political science department complained in the latter 1950’s that Doran had interfered with his academic freedom. This accusation contained some irony since Doran
previously had led in the development of the first document on academic freedom which had ever been published at Morehead. Upon completing the Southern Association’s investigation of Baker’s complaint, the chairman of the investigating team informed Doran that he had made two mistakes with respect to Baker—“One was hiring him and the second was not firing him sooner than he had.” In another case, Mr. Carl Woods of the history department led a move to oust Doran since the president had supported Waterfield rather than Combs in the 1959 Democratic primary. After Woods recognized that he was fighting a losing battle by trying to work through a newly appointed friend on the board of regents, the history instructor then moved on to Eastern Kentucky University. Woods’ efforts had caused a great deal of consternation among Moreheadians, who were already crediting Adron Doran with “putting Morehead State College on the map.” One of these local residents, John M. Palmer, vice president of the Lee Clay Products Company, wrote to Governor Combs in July, 1960: “There has been a long arduous climb here at Morehead from those dark days of 1947-48, and during the past six years since Dr. Adron Doran has been here at Morehead, more progress has been made than during all of the preceding thirty years of Morehead’s history. If Carl Woods worked for me,” the writer continued, “I would fire him summarily because I would feel that he would be causing a deterioration in the morale of my whole organization.”

The late 1960’s and early 1970’s witnessed one of the most serious challenges to higher education in our nation’s history. The Vietnam War, along with the usual student grievances, resulted in an explosion of protests on campuses across America. Morehead State University was not immune from this unrest. In 1967, the board of regents voted to establish a compulsory ROTC program on campus. Some Morehead State University students and faculty members, including Kenneth Vance, Richard Normans, and Robert Arends, opposed this move. These protests climaxed in 1969-70 in two moratoriums held on campus and in a candlelight procession following the Kent State incident. On the Morehead campus, there were windows broken and bomb threats but no real violence. In June, 1970, the Morehead State Alumni Association attributed the stability of the University to its president. In referring to those difficult days, Congressman Perkins praised Doran’s strong leadership: “There are times when the students have legitimate gripes. You’ve got to consider their problems, you’ve got to let the students express themselves and try to iron out differences that may be legitimate. I certainly feel this is where Dr. Doran has demonstrated
perhaps as great a leadership, if not greater, than any other university president in America.”

Doran was effective in handling these problems because he succeeded in keeping open the lines of communication. During that difficult period, he was often observed sitting in the grass and conferring with small groups of students. When the candlelight procession carrying a coffin reached Button Auditorium, Dr. Doran, waiting there on the steps, pointed out that he had no control over events at Kent State or in Vietnam, answered difficult questions, and then closed the session by leading the large gathering in a prayer for guidance. President Doran thus handled these campus troubles with strength and determination. Remarking that he never feared what would happen at Morehead State because he knew its president, Governor Louie Nunn declared an official “Adron Doran Day” in Kentucky. He was the only college president for whom this was done. Parents were greatly impressed by Doran’s method of handling these problems. “If more university presidents were truly interested in the feelings of students, and prayed to God for guidance and understanding as you did that evening, this nation would be a much better place,” one mother wrote Doran.

Morehead State University established an innovative University Senate in 1969 which the Louisville Courier-Journal praised for helping to ease tensions. The Senate was composed of 12 students, 12 administrators, and 25 faculty. Doran asserted that this represented the first time in which students at a state school had been given so much voice in campus matters. Morehead was the first school in the state to place students in positions on all standing committees. In 1970, Dr. Wilhelm Exelbirt, recipient of the first Distinguished Faculty Award given by Morehead State University in 1964, strongly commended Doran’s support of academic freedom at the school. Having taught at Morehead since 1948, Exelbirt affirmed that there never had been any administrative interference when controversial subjects formed part of classroom discussions.

The ROTC has greatly appreciated the strong cooperation it has received from President Doran. There had been so many applicants from colleges and universities for a campus chapter of ROTC in 1967 that Doran promised that the Morehead program would be compulsory if the United States Army would establish a chapter here. By April, 1970, it was possible for the Morehead ROTC to become voluntary and still have sufficient enrollment. Because of Dr. Doran’s effective support of ROTC on the campus, the United States Army, in February, 1971, presented him the “Outstanding Civilian Service Medal,” second highest civilian award.
When the University dropped compulsory ROTC, Morehead nevertheless continued to recognize its responsibility to inform students of the need for military preparedness. Hence the National Security Class originated with President Doran in the spring of 1970 and was first offered at MSU that year. This voluntary class, balanced between military and civilian topics and speakers, brought outstanding individuals to the campus for the purpose of addressing the issues of national security. Dr. Doran then sold the idea to the army, and the concept has been praised and imitated on other college campuses throughout the nation.

In the early 1950's, Dr. Doran started making a name on the regional and national levels. As Kentucky's Speaker of the House in 1950, he signed the bill authorizing Kentucky to participate in the Southern Regional Education Board compact. Accompanying Governor Wetherby to regional meetings, Doran was instrumental in bringing in southern state legislators as members of the board that they might have a better understanding of the problems and needs of education. He belonged to a four-member committee to organize the first Legislative Work Conference of the Southern Regional Education Board and served as Speaker of the first three sessions from 1952 through 1954. Doran has been a member of the Southern Regional Education Board by appointment of the governor since 1955, thereby ranking him as the third longest-serving member. The purposes of this organization were to provide programs of excellence in the various institutions of the South and to share facilities in such a way as to save money by avoiding duplication. The SREB has permitted governors, legislators, and educators to pursue a great dialogue on higher education. Dr. Doran feels that the SREB has succeeded as "one of the greatest influences to raise the educational level of the South . . . outside the institutions themselves." On March 16, 1976, Dr. Winfred L. Godwin, president of SREB, praised the Dorans:

You have been dedicated and effective champions of the idea of the regional university and have shaped Morehead State into an institution designed to meet the needs and aspirations of your area. You have also looked beyond Kentucky, Adron, to serve another form of regionalism—interstate cooperation for the orderly growth of higher education.

And Dr. John E. Ivey, Jr., presently of Michigan State University, wrote Dr. Doran on April 1, 1976: "Your contribution to the development of the Southern Regional Education Board has been essential to its success. You and your lovely wife have given personal
warmth and intellectual support to all of your many activities.’’ President Doran’s work with the SREB has impressed governors sufficiently for them to honor him with such titles as Arkansas Traveler, Louisiana Colonel, Nebraska Admiral, and Oklahoma Commodore, to go along with his previous commission as a Kentucky Colonel.

As a participant in the White House Conference on Education in 1955, Doran led the delegates in a discussion of the need for additional federal aid to education. Ten years later Doran was a participant in a significant White House Conference on Education, which attracted 500 educators who examined critical issues in education on which the nation should focus its attention. “A commitment came out of this conference,” Doran stated, “for the government to do more to balance educational opportunity among the disadvantaged,” including those in Appalachia. During the period Doran served as a member and chairman of the Legislative Commission of the National Education Association, many federal-aid-to-education laws were passed, including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Vocational Education Act, and the Adult Basic Education Act. Doran brought a sub-committee of Congressman Perkins’ Education Committee from Washington to conduct hearings on the Morehead campus. As a result, Doran was able to establish the Appalachian Demonstration Center here which developed modules to improve adult basic education in thirteen Appalachian states.

By 1964, Doran was of such stature on the national level that he was invited to testify on behalf of the National Education Association before the Democratic Platform Committee. President Doran requested general federal support for public elementary and secondary education. While asking for direct federal grants to the states, he wanted basic control of the program of education to remain with state and local authorities. As past chairman of the Legislative Commission of the NEA, Doran the same year presented a strong statement of NEA support for The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. His hour-and-a-half testimony was well received by even the most outspoken opponents of this anti-poverty measure. In his conclusion, Doran assured Congress of the NEA’s cooperation in their joint war against poverty and ignorance. Because of his many activities in support of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s program for education, Doran received the following telegram: “I hope you will join me at The White House, 5 p.m. on Tuesday, April 13, for a reception in honor of those who contributed to the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.”
President Doran appeared before Congressman Perkins's House Committee on Education in 1969 to oppose legislation that would have required colleges and universities to file with the federal government their student conduct codes and would have cut off federal funds for any institution unable to control its students. Even in the midst of the burning of campus buildings in other places, MSU's president did not regard it as a fair measure to punish a troubled university for what a few dissidents might do on its campus.

Mignon has always complemented Adron's efforts in every endeavor. During the "Morehead Years," the president and first lady were perfectly matched to assume their respective roles. Doran recently stated that although he came here to be the president, there were areas in which the female partner had more competency, and there Mignon took over. Neither member of this illustrious team has ever wished that Mignon be looked upon as "an assistant president." But Mignon has worked hand in hand with the president to effectively change a single purpose college of 698 students into a diversified university with an enrollment numbering 7,318.

Instead of cloistering herself in the "big brick house on the corner," Mignon immediately found natural outlets for her varied talents. She recently stated, "I wasn't afraid to be the First Lady." While the wives of many college presidents are content to play a low profile, limiting their activities to giving teas for faculty wives, Mignon became most active in banquet preparations, forming clubs, redecorating and refurnishing buildings, and creating good public relations. In a November 11, 1971, article, Pat Hanna of the Denver Rocky Mountain News, wrote that Mignon Doran is "the Auntie Mame of the small university circuit" and that she "isn't about to sit on her protocol hiding behind a silver coffee service at an academic tea." Since there were few clubs on the campus in 1954, she adopted as her goal the development of student organizations and soon became the founder of CWENS and the Cosmopolitan Club, the latter around a nucleus of four foreign students. As sponsor of the senior class, Mignon worked on Homecoming floats until the "wee hours" of the morning the day before the Big Football Game.

The highlight for "Mignon at Morehead" was as founder and director of the Personal Development Institute, starting in 1969 with one teacher but now involving three. The Personal Development Institute is a non-credit, five-week course of ten lessons in which both male and female are given an education on how to function well
as a total social human being. PDI is designed to enhance individual qualities ranging from manners to vocabulary to personal attire and provides services to University students, faculty and staff, as well as groups ranging from the junior high level to the adult population of the region. The Institute's services are free and are aimed at improving confidence, poise, personal appearances, and self-assurance of students and other persons, both on campus and off. A July 6, 1975, Lexington Sunday Herald-Leader editorial complimented the popular first lady as "a gracious lady both by southern heritage and by training." Praising the work of the Personal Development Institute, the editorial was entitled, "When at MSU . . . Do As Mignon Doran Does." The Personal Development Institute is the first institute of this nature in the South and one of the first ten in the nation. Mrs. Doran's work in the Personal Development Institute has received outstanding publicity in The Christian Science Monitor's "Students Learn Poise from Mrs. Doran," the San Diego Evening Tribune's "Good Manners Couldn't Hurt," the Kentucky Post's "Morehead's Mignon Helps Students Sparkle," and the Louisville Courier-Journal and Times' "Morehead's Mignon Puts Social Polish on College Students."

Two of Mignon's favorite endeavors have been her work with the Newgate Project, at the Ashland Federal Youth Center, and the Frenchburg Correctional Facility in helping to provide rehabilitation programs for the incarcerated youths. One of these young men stated, "If there were more Mignon Dorans in the world, there'd be less crime and no war." Another inmate said, "She teaches us things we have wondered about but didn't have anyone to ask before." Mrs. Doran also served as the commencement speaker for a high school graduation ceremony inside the Kentucky State Penitentiary at Eddyville.

Like her husband, Mignon has methodically worked her way to the top positions of organizations to which she has belonged. Having joined the Woman's Club at Wingo, she became very active in the Lexington club as a fashion model for stores and as a music teacher providing lessons to club members' children. After coming to Morehead, she organized the University Woman's Club and the University Younger Woman's Club, whose members later changed the name of the organization to the Mignon Doran Woman's Club. From 1962 to 1964 she served as president of the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs, speaking to more than 235 local clubs and travelling over 75,000 miles. One of the many highlights of her term as president was the privilege of having Lady Bird Johnson as the featured speaker during Mignon's last year in office.
Mrs. Doran has also used the air waves to entertain and to instruct. Earlier in her Morehead career, this accomplished musician had a radio program called "Tea Time at Home with Mignon," and more recently another program, "At Home with Mignon," which was broadcast weekly on the University's 50,000-watt radio station. During the past year she has put her Personal Development Institute sessions on video tape, and these were shown over the Kentucky Educational Television network. The response to her program has been so gratifying that KET plans to rerun the entire series. Mr. John W. Koon, executive secretary of the Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation, wrote Mignon on February 25, 1976, "To my very great delight, I saw your presentation on KET Monday evening when you appeared on 'Dimensions of Personality.' I was thoroughly charmed by your gracious presentation and I particularly liked your thought for the day." A high school girl friend who saw Mignon's sessions on KET was most enthusiastic in her praise: "Congratulations on a job beautifully done. This is to let you know how very much I enjoyed them and how proud I am of you! It was such a thrill for me to see that same cute, sweet, lovable little girl I so fondly remember and have always loved—still shining through. You've done so much with your God-given talents and have won everyone's wholehearted admiration."

Mignon is also in great demand as a guest lecturer for various classes on campus. After she had made a recent presentation, a student remarked as he was leaving class, "Mrs. Doran missed her calling. She should be a teacher." Another replied, "She is a teacher, and the Commonwealth is her classroom." A student who had just completed the Personal Development Institute class under Mrs. Doran said, "PDI is like no other course that I have ever had before. You will be without a doubt, Mrs. Doran, my most memorable instructor that I will have here at MSU. In the future I am sure that I will remember you and what you have taught us. I will try to jump as far as I possibly can in my life."

The first lady's musical talents have often produced most favorable responses. As one of the state's finest and most well-known organists, Mignon has played before crowds of 18,000 at both the state high school and the NCAA basketball tournaments. She has also performed at fashion shows, horse shows, and at the University's home basketball games. A local Baptist minister wrote her in 1972: "The contribution your music makes to an evening of enjoyment and pleasure when the Morehead State University Eagles play basketball at home, is inestimable. . . Please accept this note of appreciation as a blanket expression of gratitude for the many evenings in which I
have been thrilled by your music and your spirit,” he added. After a
sports writer had written an article critical of both Adron and
Mignon, a Morehead basketball coach stated that the President and
his wife,

whose efforts at the organ are widely supported by my young
men and the student body in general, do not deserve the type
of treatment you gave them in your article and I simply want
you to know that you have offended me, my staff, our team,
and the Morehead State University community with your
venomous typewriter.

Because of her numerous talents, Mrs. Doran has been the
recipient of special recognitions as well as positions of responsibility.
The Murray State Alumnus once asserted that Mrs. Doran is held “in
extremely high regard by all who have known her. A lovely,
vivacious, and capable person, she is probably the only college
president’s wife in the country who has had a campus building
named for her.” The latter reference was to a dormitory complex
named in her honor by the board of regents, upon the
recommendations of the Student Council and the Alumni Associa­
tion. These four residence halls accommodate 1,100 University
women students.

Mrs. Doran served ten years as a member of the Governor’s
Commission on Children and Youth. Governor Edward T. Breathitt
appointed Mignon as a charter member of the Kentucky Commission
on the Status of Women. Mrs. Doran is a member of the Kentucky
Arts Commission and of the Cave Run Regional Mental Health
Retardation Board. She is a former member of the board of trustees
of Pikeville College. The Young Democrats elected her as the
Outstanding Woman Kentuckian for 1971. From names submitted
by every Cardinal Key Chapter in the United States, Mignon was
unanimously voted Woman of the Year by the Cardinal Key
National Honor Sorority. In May, 1972, the MSU Alumni Associa­
tion honored Mrs. Doran as the first recipient of the University
Special Services Award. She is listed in Who’s Who in America and in
Who’s Who of American Women and is a member of Pi Gamma Mu
and Phi Kappa Phi. Mrs. Doran received the International Association
of Personnel Employment Security Award in Albuquerque, New
Mexico, in 1974. Mignon was also selected as an Outstanding
Educator of America for 1975. This honor is based on talents in the
classroom, contributions to research, administrative abilities, civic
service, and professional recognition. As chairman of Kentucky
Mansions Preservation Foundation, Inc., Mrs. Louie B. Nunn wrote:
Quite proudly we say, Mrs. Adron Doran aided and abetted in the restoration of Kentucky’s Executive Mansion, the restoration and refurnishing of White Hall, and is presently much involved in the restoration of the Mary Todd Lincoln House, which work is under way. You proudly call her a member of Morehead State University’s First Family, and we proudly call her a member of Kentucky’s First Family.

As rewarding as life has been to the president and first lady, the years have also been punctuated by many sorrows. The Dorans have been affected by the death of friends and members of the family, a near fatal traffic accident in 1959, criticism over the naming of the Mignon complex, anonymous hate letters, general harassment including the leaving of a dead opossum at their front door and the receiving of crank telephone calls at 2:00 a.m., manifestations of jealousy, and vociferous inaccuracies in the press. In a way, their lives together have consisted of a series of crises. But President Doran remarked recently, “Nancy (the name he often uses in referring to his wife), we could have avoided most of these crises if we were still serving as high school principal and teacher in a small town in Western Kentucky.”

Even gestures of appreciation by well-meaning friends have at times brought criticism upon the Dorans. When thousands of friends, for example, presented the Dorans with a new Cadillac in 1973, a few dissidents gained the attention of the press by claiming that they had been coerced into making a donation. Newspaper editors then received a large number of letters denying that any form of coercion had been used. One such letter exclaimed,

I wish to inform you that neither I nor my acquaintances had any pressure or coercion whatsoever applied in connection with this event. Furthermore, if you were sufficiently aware of his stature in educational circles in the state and in the nation, you would perhaps see that a lot of us would not agree with a purchase of a Cadillac: we would prefer a Rolls Royce for him.

Doran’s longtime religious mentor, Alonzo Williams, wrote: “Mignon and you have through the years been of the finest Cadillac quality. So it is high time somebody presented you such a coveted carriage for your earthly joys.” A Morehead couple protested that they had not been asked to make a contribution on the Cadillac but were determined to make some gift. Enclosing a check, they wrote
Adron and Mignon, “We know that along with the University the institution dearest to your hearts is your church and that you will appreciate a small gift to it.”

Adron and Mignon have been the recipients as well as the writers of many amusing letters over the years. Several examples will indicate the far-ranging nature of their correspondence. One applicant for a position had used the wrong president’s name when he applied for a position at MSU. A Morehead administrator answered the applicant, “The name of our illustrious president is Dr. Adron Doran, not Roland Dille. We have reviewed faculty and administrative needs at Morehead State University for the coming academic year, and there will be no vacancies that will complement your qualifications.” A frequent correspondent with the Dorans is Dr. John E. Horner, president of Hanover College. In referring to Adron’s trademark, he suggested, “Bow ties are getting so large these days that they look like wings on a B-52. After all, I would not want you to take off like a Purple Eagle and end up on Bob Martin’s campus, despite the generous hospitality which he would certainly offer to you.” In 1964, the local community in Graves County decided to give special attention to the Williams Cemetery where several of the Dorans are buried; among other improvements, the local leaders wished to build a fence around the cemetery. Along with his donation, Doran sent the following comment:

I doubt the wisdom of this project, because I don’t think anybody in this graveyard is going to get out until Gabriel blows his horn, and I don’t think anybody is going to get in unless somebody puts them there between now and the judgment. There is really no way of knowing what will come forth from this graveyard in the resurrection. So if the people think we ought to put a fence around them in the meantime, I am perfectly willing.

A week before the 1964 election, Doran wrote his long-time friend and nationally-renowned historian, Forrest C. Pogue, “I hope that all of us together have done a little bit to influence somebody to vote for President Johnson instead of this crackpot Goldwater.” A Church of Christ missionary assumed that Morehead’s president had far-reaching powers indeed as he addressed his letter to “Mr. Van Doren” and requested aid in securing a teaching position in the mission field where he was going. “I have no connections with the
school system in Puerto Rico, and I am in no position to assist you in obtaining a teaching position in San Juan,” Doran answered. After Doran had won his national championship in horsemanship for amateurs over 60, William Woodson, chairman of the Bible department at Freed-Hardeman College, wrote to Doran, “I noticed in one of our school publications that you have received an honor for horsing around after sixty. I always knew you could ‘cut the mustard’ but I did not know you were so good at horseplay. My commendations and best wishes in reaching this new height in your career.” In January, 1960, Doran wrote the warden at Eddyville State Penitentiary, “Carlos Oakley says one of the reasons he was willing to take the job as commissioner of welfare was because it gave him an opportunity to supervise the assignment of his friends to either the insane asylum or the penitentiary. He says he doesn’t know exactly which place his friends, who are college presidents, will wind up.” In speaking of his brief stay at Morehead State, a student in 1970 wrote Doran, “I have spent the month in the place and I can see what needs to be done.”

As a minister, Doran has been asked for advice on varied subjects. In the mid-1960’s “Bro. Doran” received a request for the Biblical teaching on whether it would be a sin to buy an insurance policy. “We have always looked upon insurance of any kind as taking a chance or might be called a bet,” the lady affirmed. A young Morehead student trying to sell her the policy advised her to just call Dr. Adron Doran and that he could tell whether or not this were a sin. “I have no doubt but that the purchase of insurance coverage is consistent with my religious faith,” Doran replied. In 1948, Doran received the following communication from the state health commissioner: “I very much appreciate your double-barrelled letter of the 21st—one barrel filled with compliments, and the other scattering some very definite criticism. As to that other barrel of the gun, I find myself wondering if you have any more adjectives left.” Having already accepted an invitation to speak on an Indiana lectureship in 1950, Doran wrote to Earl West, its director: “You may send me a date and subject later. I will try to take a text that will fit the subject, leave the text and try never to return to it during the course of the evening.” Finally, anyone who has ever received a copy of his own letter or memo returned with the president’s red circle around even one misspelled word will appreciate the following. After having made 33 mistakes in spelling in a February 14, 1936, letter to Doran, the writer closed by saying, “Please over look the misspelled words, and errors other wise.”
One of the most obvious traits of President Doran is that he is part of a team effort. In spite of the many individual accomplishments of the Dorans, most people have come to think of them as “Partners in a Grand Adventure.” Although Adron has told many audiences that he “outmarried” himself, Mignon recently stated that the greatest thing that ever happened to her was marrying Adron on August 23, 1931, and that her greatest desire has always been for her husband to be proud of her. “I thank Adron every day,” Mignon added, “for helping me do what I wanted to do” in life. It seems so natural for Dr. Doran to end his letters with the usual sentence, “Mignon joins me in very best good wishes and personal regards.”

And Joe Creason’s April 11, 1954, letter to Dr. Doran contains the typical closing sentence for those writing the president. After complimenting him for a recent appointment, Creason closed with the words, “Please give my fondest regards to Mignon.” In 1975, Robert B. Stewart, dean emeritus of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, wrote:

One thing I feel absolutely sure about is that for the past 22 years Morehead has been, and continues to be, in the best possible hands. In you and Mignon, Morehead has a national championship team! If I tried to express the sentiments I felt on all sides among the Alumni at Homecoming, it would simply be: Hail to Adron and Mignon Doran! A long and happy reign to you both!

Most letters have referred to the Dorans as a team. In a March 17, 1976, letter, Dr. Robert Martin said, “You and Mignon have been a team in the development of Morehead State University.” The president of Eastern Kentucky University continued, “We realize, of course, that each of you had a specific sphere of responsibility: You, the administrator, and Mignon the personal development of the students. But the efforts of two individuals working in separate spheres.” According to Mrs. Margaret L. Arnold, past president of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, “This exemplary partnership has inspired others as individuals and as a team, for they literally built Morehead State University. Much of themselves will be left at Morehead, which they represented so well in both state and national circles.” During their 22 years at MSU the “exemplary partnership” has been responsible for the introduction of such important events as Human Relations Day, Better Dressed Week, and the Northeastern Kentucky Civic Celebrity Series. “At Morehead the partnership of Mignon and Adron received widespread recognition,”
Dr. Maurice F. Seay, member of Doran's graduate committee, said recently. "While Adron was demonstrating his unique leadership ability, Mignon was directing an unusual and highly successful teaching program and at the same time filling all the important supporting roles that a university president's wife is called upon to play." Dr. W. H. Cartmell, present chairman of the MSU board of regents, expressed his view that "few men in our lifetime have stood taller in the service of their fellow men than you, Adron, and how blessed you have been to have Mignon share those 'million miles to go before you sleep.' We have enjoyed for two decades many hours of camaraderie." Mignon is "the perfect mate for an outstanding man," wrote Harry King Lowman, MSU alumnus and former Speaker of the House, on April 2, 1976. Lowman then described Dr. Doran as "intelligent, articulate, warm and understanding—Forcible—A Leader—A Man's Man!" Furthermore, Mrs. Doran is "the most gracious of women—A lady of exceptional talent and ability—Staunch in her beliefs and unstinting in her efforts to better humanity—A perfect blend of intellectual honesty and moral stability." In April, 1976, John W. Koon, executive secretary of the Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation, complimented the Dorans: "Very few people, to my knowledge, have had as many opportunities to be of real service to their fellow Kentuckians as have Adron and Mignon Doran. You have, to the very fullest, accepted these opportunities and have been outstanding leaders whom everyone admires."

Those who emphasized the "team approach" all agreed that Morehead State University has won many victories because of this special relationship. "Kentuckians can take great pride in their higher education system. Certainly the Dorans and Morehead State University are a vital influence on the quality of this system," Governor Julian M. Carroll wrote on April 8, 1976. "The credibility of the institution has been enhanced and established by your participation and total involvement," the chief executive concluded. John Sherman Cooper, ambassador to the German Democratic Republic, wrote on March 12, 1976, that the Dorans "certainly deserve every honor that can be given them for their service to Morehead State University and all of Kentucky." According to Governor Louie B. Nunn on March 11, 1976:

Growth and development comes from a force strong enough to plan a change, and the ultimate goal is achieved when the force is strong enough to move all obstacles in the way. Mignon and Adron, your combined talents, dreams, and hard work
were the untiring force that has brought this University to a place of prominence in higher education in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Former Superintendent of Public Instruction Wendell P. Butler recently said of the Dorans, “I am proud to call both of you long-time friends who have been building bridges at Morehead State University for 22 years for those who are to follow you.” And E. C. and Mary Detherage, church friends of the Dorans for more than 30 years, stated: “We are so glad they found an outlet for their dreams and ambitions in the expansion of Morehead State College to Morehead State University. They are to be highly commended for the religious, social, and academic standards that are on the campus today.”

The Dorans are people-lovers. This helps explain why one faculty member recently commented, “President Doran rivals Jim Farley (Franklin D. Roosevelt’s campaign manager) in the number of people he knows on a first-name basis.” An administrator remarked that the president’s “recall of names, places, and minute detail is phenomenal.” Basil Overton, a minister who has known the Dorans for 40 years, recently penned:

I have always known them as lovers of other people. This fondness for their fellows has made them stand out in a very distinctive manner. They have always seemed charmed by their fellow human beings. I feel that if they could have traveled in a space-ship through the blue immensity of space and allowed to pass under their close scrutiny a multitude of other worlds, they would have been less charmed and excited over these far-flung spheres than they have always been charmed and excited by other human beings. They have truly displayed that they really believed the astonishing definition their Master gave of human beings when he said that any one of us is worth more than the whole world.

On March 8, 1976, Congressman Carl D. Perkins asserted that 22 years ago Morehead State was “a small, almost unknown institution; today it ranks among the outstanding universities of its kind in America. I am pleased to note that the institution of Morehead is what it is today because you were concerned not so much with bricks and mortar but with the young people of Eastern Kentucky—indeed, of all the United States.” Mrs. Nancye H.
Thornsberry, who worked as an aide to Mignon while the latter was president of the Kentucky Federation of Women’s Clubs, stated, “Knowing that you had the freedom to live your life in any manner you chose, I think I admire you most for choosing to live outside yourselves.” Harry Lee Waterfield, former lieutenant governor and now president of the Investors Heritage Life Insurance Company, described the Dorans’ success as follows: “You have received the respect of many persons and the affection of many friends. I know you have earned the approbation of honest critics and have learned to endure the betrayal of false friends. This alone is to have succeeded.”

An oft-mentioned trait of the Dorans is their moral, religious, and ethical character. “It must give you great joy to know that your example and deep interest in individuals has reached into the life of thousands of students,” John Sherman Cooper stated. Having watched Doran in action over the years, 89-year-old W. M. Watkins, former superintendent of Casey County Schools, explained in 1974: “Only a soul that knows God and that is in tune with His universe could have traveled your road and lived your life. A dreamer, a doer, a man’s man of useful achievements, faith, hope and love for the improvement of our social structure.” He further declared that Doran’s administration was characterized by “freedom from scandal” in both public and private life and that his “ambitions were of the worthy type—not of the kind that caused sinful angels to fall.” A faculty member, just installed as an officer in the Mignon Doran Woman’s Club, wrote Mrs. Doran: “I shall always treasure my mirror memento, for the center reflection is the essence of those Christian ideals which your charge to me as second vice president encompassed. As I stood there listening, my heart rejoiced, for you were an incarnation of the guardian angel’s counsel that my grandmother’s teaching created in my childhood imagination. May I learn to reflect more of your qualities!” Dr. W. H. Cartmell, who has served more continuous years on the MSU board of regents than any other member, assessed the Dorans thusly: “Both of you are endowed with one talent that distinguishes you as people of charity and compassion . . . bringing forth that which is best for the greatest number for the general good.” In a September, 1960, article in the Paducah Sun-Democrat, Bill Powell praised the straightforwardness and honesty of the president and his companion. Powell stated that he had “always been impressed by Mignon’s straightforwardness, her ability to say directly what she thinks . . . Without batting an
eye; she told me [her age.]” After pointing out that the Kentucky press had previously selected Dr. Doran as “Man of the Year,” Powell wrote, “When the press levels honors on a man, he’s no phony.”

The Dorans look like a president and first lady. Basil Overton, minister, educator, and editor of a religious journal, wrote on March 13, 1976: “All people are made in the image of God, but there are some who make us feel that this image is more visible in some than in others. The Dorans are in this class.” A faculty member, along with her four-year-old daughter, was parked in a car in front of the administration building. Dr. Doran came out of the building and spoke as he passed. The child asked, “Mother, who was that man? He looked like a president.” When the mother replied that he was a president—President Doran—the child asked, “But what happened to President Johnson?” Incidentally, Dr. Doran has occasionally been mistaken for LBJ. Dr. John Kleber, history professor who recently interviewed the Dorans in seven hours of videotaped sessions, said, “Doran and Johnson do bear a remarkable similarity, although I personally feel that the MSU president resembles William Jennings Bryan.” Professor Kleber then lamented, “Oh, what we could have done with Adron Doran in the Republican Party!”

Doran has always been regarded as one of the greatest orators in Kentucky and in the South. One may easily observe in his style and content the influence of both N. B. Hardeman and Alben Barkley. Andy Holt, president emeritus of the University of Tennessee and one of the nation’s speakers in greatest demand, told Doran in 1973, “Adron, as always, your welcome address was ‘just right.’ You possess a remarkable knack for saying exactly the right thing, in exactly the right manner, and in exactly the right length of time!” After W. H. (“Honie”) Rice, director of the Morehead physical plant, had returned from a southern professional convention in 1972, he penned the following to Dr. Doran: “Terry Sanford, president of Duke, gave us a short welcome; he has a long way to go before he can match you in the art of public speaking.” Upon hearing Doran for the first time in 1957, Dr. Hugh J. McShea, member of the education department then, was moved to write the president, “Your selection and assemblage of words certainly hold one’s attention and lessen mental excursions. Your after-dinner participation was much too brief.” In January, 1975, a writer from a small town in Western Kentucky informed Doran, “Not often do we have the opportunity
in our little city to see and hear a man of your caliber. It was a great night!” One reason for Dr. Doran’s popularity as a public speaker is found in an administrator’s assessment that “President Doran has the uncanny ability to take the most complex idea and to transform it into the realm of the understandable.” Most speakers are flattered if a listener remembers a speech a year later. A Morehead alumnus recalled an address made by Doran many years ago—Fola N. Hayes wrote to the president on March 20, 1976:

Twenty-nine years ago, the future president of Morehead State University delivered the commencement address to the graduating class of Camargo High School. The opening remarks, as I recall, were, ‘down where I live, some folks say, man could have sprang from a monkey. I don’t know about this, but there is one thing I do know. Man is a product of God’s plan.’ After listening to that address, I knew that I had been demoted to the second best principal in Kentucky.

One of Doran’s greatest strengths as president has always been his accessibility to faculty and students alike. Upon returning to the campus in July, 1973, one student commented, “The best part of the visit was finding that the president is just as accessible today as in the past.” Another student who had left Morehead in the latter 1960’s and had subsequently attended some classes at Brockport State University in New York wrote to President Doran in December, 1974:

I often marvel at the insight and direction tempered with dedication and poise that you intuitively demonstrated in those trying situations in the late 1960’s. Students in New York didn’t even know what the president of the university looked like. I’m sure he didn’t have an open door even if a student was resourceful enough to find it in the first place. The student body at Brockport was not much larger than Morehead’s, either. It is an honor and a privilege for me to call you a friend.

Having taken very few vacations in his entire career, President Doran has often been accused of being a “workaholic.” Referring to this trait in an April 10, 1954, article in the Louisville Courier-Journal, Allan M. Trout wrote, “It is small wonder, then, that he has never taken a vacation. His only hobby is activity seven days a week.
All this time, you see, Dr. Doran has preached Sundays.” In view of the fact that Doran received the Horatio Alger Award 17 years later, it is interesting that Trout’s 1954 article was entitled, “The Life of Morehead’s New President Is Like Something From Horatio Alger.” This Courier-Journal headline took on added significance on May 6, 1971, when Joe Creason described Doran in “An Honest-Fo-Goodness, True-Life Success Story.” An MSU administrator recently stated, “President Doran never asks anyone to work any harder than he himself works.” Fortunately for the health of both the president and those working under him, he recently rediscovered an old interest—that of riding Tennessee walking horses. Dr. Doran won a blue ribbon in his very first show. Since this beginning, the president has captured a total of 45 other ribbons, including 13 blue ribbons and 11 red ribbons. The crowning achievement came last year at Shelbyville, Tennessee, where Dr. Doran rode Hawk’s Mystery in winning the world’s championship in the amateur class for riders over 60. It seems an irony indeed that a president addicted to work and one who seldom takes a vacation would be the victim of controversy once he finally decided to pursue a hobby.

Dr. Doran’s greatest success has resulted from his being a brilliant administrator. One present MSU administrator says that the president “has a mind like a computer and has younger and more daring ideas of college administration than men half his age.” Furthermore, “When you look at Dr. Doran’s background, his career development and his personality, it appears he was destined to become a college president in Kentucky and lead a struggling college to academic legitimacy.” Toughness has been a leading trait of the Morehead president. He often stood almost alone in such fights as the one against the operation of the community colleges by the University of Kentucky. In a letter of August 23, 1971, Doran stated, “I opposed the establishment of the community college system and operating the system as a part of a far-flung academic empire by the University of Kentucky when it was first proposed, and I still believe it is the wrong way to operate the system.” Dr. Doran’s leadership has not gone unnoticed. A county superintendent of schools recently paid the president the Supreme Compliment when he wrote:

You are and have been one of the most dynamic, constructive and progressive forces in education for several years. You have personally built a Great Institution; you are a legend. You sir, are a giant in education, a leader and a builder, one of a handful of men in the history of this State who have
created a great and progressive institution. Dr. Doran, there are few men that could accomplish what you have. I do not believe that I shall meet your equal in my lifetime. There is no question in my mind as to your place in the history in this State. You are an authority in education.

Russell McClure, MSU administrator for 13 years and presently secretary for the Executive Department on Finance and Administration, described Doran’s administrative ability on April 20, 1976:

The thing which has distinguished Dr. Doran as president of Morehead State University more than anything else has been his total dedication to the best interests of the University, even at great personal sacrifice. The major strength of his administrative style is his ability to master details of every facet of the University, not just policy items, but also the day-to-day nitty gritty things which go on around the University. His recall is astounding and it seems to have gotten better through the years. There will never be another one like him and never be anyone with his willingness to go to the wall for a university, and I hope that many years from now they’ll remember Adron Doran for devoting his life to the University.

The Dorans’ career has indeed consisted of taking “Footsteps Across the Commonwealth.” Dr. Harry Sparks, president emeritus of Murray State University, wishes for the Dorans “continued service to the Commonwealth in higher education and the happiness that comes through realization of the great contributions you have made to the mountains of Kentucky, and to the nation as a whole.” In a December 14, 1975, article, George Wolfford, regional editor of the Ashland Daily Independent, affirmed that Adron Doran, “transplanted Western Kentuckian, has become one of the widest-known names and faces in this, the opposite half of the Commonwealth. Only Carl Perkins and Jesse Stuart, among living legends of Eastern Kentucky, might compare.” Dr. Doran stands out as the only person in the history of the Commonwealth to serve as president of the Kentucky Education Association, as a member of the KEA board of directors from two different district associations, and as president of two different district associations—the First District Association bordering the Mississippi and the Eastern Kentucky Association touching the Big Sandy. And President Doran is probably the only
Kentucky educator who has been the recipient of the Outstanding Alumnus Award from each college attended—the University of Kentucky in 1966, Murray State University in 1972, and Freed-Hardeman College in 1973.

Speculations about Doran’s successor as MSU president have multiplied over the last few years. Faint references to his possible retirement did not begin to appear in Dr. Doran’s personal correspondence until the latter 1960’s. In rejecting an invitation to tour the Holy Land in 1968, Doran wrote:

I am sorry that my responsibilities as a university president keep me pinned down on the campus to such an extent that I cannot be away on those days. I do hope, however, that if I live to finish my job here and retire from this rat race that I will have an opportunity to accompany you on another trip in a few years.

In January, 1972, President Doran admitted to close friends in Chicago that “we would like to quit this job but we plan to go on to September 1, 1974. I will be 65.” The same week, Dr. Doran was writing a Church of Christ minister: “I am delighted to report to you that we are doing as well as could be expected amidst the great pressures of a university presidency.” In the midst of retirement talk in 1974, the board of regents granted the president a new four-year contract. But talk of possible retirement hit center-stage again in December, 1975, when the Ashland Daily Independent speculated on “MSU Without Adron Doran???” With more than two years remaining on his present contract, the president admonished, “Please, don’t choose my pallbearers until the doctors have certified me dead.” Amid speculations that Dr. Doran would announce his retirement on April 6, 1976, he ended a luncheon address: “When cometh the end?” Then, the president drew upon the words of Robert Frost for his reply, “The woods are lovely, dark, and deep. I have promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep. And miles to go before I sleep.” “And away he rode, still in the saddle,” wrote George Wolfford in the April 11, 1976, issue of the Ashland Daily Independent. “If and when Adron Doran ever does step down, Eastern Kentucky will lose its Camelot,” suggested Wolfford. Doran’s “public parties, visiting grandees, performing troupers, and even his own smiling ride on the back of a MSU showhorse are something out of King Arthur. There’s no one else around quite like him,” he added. Recently Harry King Lowman declared that Morehead, indeed, “under the Dorans has achieved a position, and acquired a tradition, that is uniquely its own—’Doranesque,’ if you please.”
With no children of their own, the Dorans have had many "children." "This school has been our child, our grandchild, and our great-grandchildren," Mignon recently stated. Indeed, many young parents have named their children after either Adron or Mignon or both. Since the author of this tribute was appointed to the MSU faculty at the instructor's level in 1962, he has often been asked the question, "You are related to President Doran, are you not?" The author's reply has been, "It would be the greatest honor to reply in the affirmative, but I neither enjoyed the privilege of being born into the Doran or McClain families nor of having been introduced to the president and first lady until I moved to Morehead. We did name our son "David Doran." Both Ray Hornback and Terry McBrayer expressed the sentiment of scores of other alumni in their recent letters. Hornback, a member of the MSU administration for 17 years, wrote on April 2, 1976, "Personally, outside of my beloved parents, there are no two people who have contributed so greatly to my growth and development as you. There is no way I can adequately record all you have done for me and can only say here that my gratitude is exceeded only by my love and devotion for you." And on April 12, 1976, McBrayer wrote:

How does one sum up half a lifetime of close association filled with appreciation and love? It's as if I were trying to pay tribute to my own parents. It is impossible to recount all the things they have done for me. But they will remember some and I remember many. Very few times since I first met them in 1955 have I made a significant decision without first consulting the Dorans. They have and always will share the major events in my life. I cherish the memories of our relationship. I thank them for that.

The Dorans' career thus far is divided into three convenient sets of 22 years each. The first 22 years were spent in elementary, high school, and college training. The next 22 years involved work as high school principal, coach, teacher, legislator, graduate student, and minister. The past 22 years have witnessed their most significant contributions as president and first lady as they were indeed "Partners in a Grand Adventure." What will the next 22 years contain? All of us join with Mrs. Margaret L. Arnold in her wish that "no matter how good the past has been, the best is yet to come." Adron and Mignon, "What Holdest Thou in Thy Hands?"