

Burke Chamber In Tribute To County's Favorite Son

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"Welcome Home, Senator Sam and Miss Margaret" read the huge banner at the Burke County Chamber of Commerce annual banquet Tuesday night at the Morganton Moose Lodge.

And this set the tone of the evening as native son Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. delivered an eloquent address on Americans' heritage of freedom and was then honored by the Burke County Chamber of Commerce as well as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for his long and distinguished service to his native Burke County and the nation.

Also highlighting the banquet was the installation of new Chamber officers for 1975. Ben S. Whisnant was installed as president, succeeding Dr. Gordon C. Blank, who presided at the banquet.

Sen. Ervin, a charter member of the Chamber, which was formed in 1945, was presented a specially made plaque making him an honorary director for life of the Chamber.

The plaque read: "In appreciation, Sam J. Ervin Jr., United States Senator, in recognition of his faithful support as a charter member and for his long record of public service is hereby made honorary director for life; Burke County Chamber of Commerce, Morganton, North Carolina, December 3, 1974.

A gift for the Senator and his wife from the Chamber was a large painting of Table Rock done by Mrs. Nina Hurley, local artist, who also did the Table Rock painting at the Community House.

Tribute also came to Sen. Ervin from the U.S. Chamber of

Commerce in the form of a framed certificate of appreciation for his service.

The senator was introduced to the approximately 300 Chamber members and guests by W. Stanley Moore as "a Burke native son who has brought great credit to his home county as a man of high intellectual attainment and integrity, as a foremost constitutional

authority, as a public servant of mammoth proportions by reason of his leadership on the stage of national and world history, a man who will soon end his tenure as North Carolina's senior senator and the senator for all Americans."

As he received a standing ovation from the audience, Sen. Ervin told them: "It's wonderful

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to be here tonight where my heart has always been, in Morganton. Miss Margaret and I are looking forward in a few weeks to being here to watch the sun set over Table Rock and Hawksbill. Burke County is a place where the good Lord would put the Garden of Eden if he ever returned it to earth."

"We have a lot of problems today; we have inflation, we have recession. But I want to talk to you tonight about something for which we can be grateful — our heritage as Americans," Ervin said.

"Our heritage is freedom," he declared, and then divided freedom into four categories: political, economic, intellectual and religious.

Discussing political freedom, Sen. Ervin pointed out that most of the original settlers of America were denied the right to participate in government in the lands of their origins, which was one of the reasons for their wanting this in America.

"They gave us a valuable freedom on the concept that people have a right to self-rule," Ervin said. "They gave us a constitution designed to last for ages and become a rule of conduct. America is a government of laws, not of men."

He said that economic freedom was established in order that men and women be allowed to maintain a fair share of the fruits of their labor. "Then there is intellectual freedom, the freedom to express our opinions.

"We also have America's most precious gift to the world, religious freedom," Sen. Ervin declared. "The most tragic story is man's own battle for the right to bow his own knees before his own God in his own way."

As he talked about religious freedom, the senator paid tribute to the Waldensians who came to this country with a background of religious persecution.

"Those men and women who made America great recognized they could not give us these great freedoms in perpetuity," Sen. Ervin said. "We could retain them if we proved ourselves worthy of them . . . The most solemn obligation resting on you and me as Americans is to guard and protect these great freedoms for posterity."

He said that despite recession and inflation now, "We Americans have much to be thankful for this Thanksgiving when we enjoy these great freedoms."

Dr. Blank presented the special gifts to Sen. Ervin and made his farewell speech as the 1974 president. He paid tribute to the Chamber members as people who are givers rather than takers, who have given to the betterment of Burke County, and gave special thanks to Mrs. Genie Bohler, executive manager of the Chamber, and her assistant Mrs. Izzy Ross.

He turned over the Chamber leadership to Whisnant, who said the Chamber was facing one of its most challenging years but with the help of all of the members it would be another great year in the Burke County Chamber of Commerce.

The other officers, who were installed by former Chamber President Robert L. Connelly, include Stephen A. Bundy, Robert P. Carr and Billy S. Davis, vice presidents; Jerry T. Norvell, treasurer; John C. Little, assistant treasurer; and Paul A. Atwell, Stephen L. Bouser, Charles E. Horton, Jack B. Kirksey, James H. Rostan, David C. Swann and Robert L. Thompson, new directors for three-year terms.

Connelly also recognized the outgoing directors as well as the holdover directors. The new committee chairmen for the year were recognized by Whisnant.

Another special presentation was the presidential plaque to Dr. Blank, made by former Chamber President John L. Randolph, and a silver telephone to Joel Dalmas for his membership recruitment record.

Dinner music was presented by John Bridges and the invocation was given by the Rev. John M. McCoy Jr., pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of which Sen. Ervin is a member.

Special guests for the occasion included Judge and Mrs. Sam J. Ervin III and officials of the Catawba, Alexander and McDowell Chambers of Commerce.