

# George N. Shuster

## 1894-1977

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President, Alumni Association

George N. Shuster was president of Hunter College for twenty years. Thousands of students passed through the halls of the college in those years and each has her or his own memories. All recollections are necessarily subjective and are the result of selection. I hope that the few memories of Dr. Shuster which I record here will evoke a sense of warm familiarity from those who remember his tenure and will be informative to those who did not know him.

What were some of the many parts that blended in the person of Hunter's fifth president?

There was his belief in the equal importance of the mind and the heart. For as long as the buildings stand, there will be two visible daily reminders of this belief.

The one is the Emerson quotation Dr. Shuster chose to appear on the 68th Street side of the College building. The other is Roosevelt House for it was he who originated the idea of acquiring the homes of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his mother for use as an interfaith house by the students of Hunter College.

There was his belief that teaching was recreation, that "Nothing in the world can keep a man young except contact with young people." Through most of his career at Hunter he regularly taught a course in English poetry and later lectured in the Political Science Department. On the occasion of his retirement Mina Rees (then Hunter's Dean of Faculty, subsequently president of the City University Graduate Center) presented Dr. Shuster for an honorary degree. In concluding her remarks she said:

"The door of his office, like his heart, has been open to everyone, students, teachers, alumni alike. People — all of us — have felt that he loved them; and for that, apart from everything else he did for us, we love him.

"Honored as he has been in this country and abroad, he is so identified with the ethos of Hunter College, its students, its faculty, its staff, that we know he will cherish the honor we bestow upon him today, when the deans and the professors of Hunter College present him for the degree of Doctor of Humane letters, honoris causa."

There was his service to his country. In November 1945 Dr. Shuster went to London as "an adviser on the United States Delegation to consider the creation of an Educational and Cultural Organization of the United Nations," and in November 1946 he was sent to Paris by President Truman as Alternate Representative of the United States to the First

Session of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In 1953 he became Chairman of the American National Commission for UNESCO.

In 1950 he was named Land Commissioner for Bavaria, serving under American High Commissioner John J. McCloy, and remaining abroad for two years. He was concerned chiefly with public relations, unifying all forces, governmental, military, and cultural.

There was his work on behalf of civil liberties and peace as a member of the boards of the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Republic and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

There was his appreciation of the wonder that was the Assembly Hall and his encouragement of Benno Lee and the Hunter Concert Bureau, long one of the cultural jewels of the city, until City University's ever-increasing financial crisis brought about its demise.

There was his generosity on behalf of the college which resulted in the commissioning of the U.S.S. Hunter on the Bronx campus (now Lehman College). As he said in an article in the April 1943 *Alumnae News*, "Like nearly every other college for women, we had offered our services to the Waves. But it may as well be confessed we were a bit startled by the alacrity and completeness with which our offer was accepted."

There was his awareness of the future trends of higher education which resulted in the entrance in the fall of 1946 of five hundred male veterans of World War II on the newly recovered Bronx Campus — the first men to attend Hunter College — and in 1951 the first official coeducational class entered the College on the Bronx Campus.

There was his humility which enabled him to take part in faculty and administration dramatic productions such as *Flash of Lightning* in 1949 and *Horizon* in 1953 for the joint benefit of the Scholarship and Welfare Fund and the Graduate Student Scholarship Fund. (In the latter, Dr. Shuster played the part of Wanne-mucka, an Indian chief.)

In a message to alumni following his appointment as Acting President in 1939, Dr. Shuster wrote: "If interest [of alumni] can be developed, the College will become what it might ideally be — an institution which binds the past and the present together in a living tradition."

If each of us joins in helping to realize this dream fully we will be sharing in a living memorial which will truly honor the memory of George N. Shuster by benefitting the young people he loved so much.



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### MEMORIAL SERVICE

President Jacqueline Wexler has announced that Hunter College is arranging for a Memorial Mass to be celebrated in honor of Dr. Shuster on Friday, April 29, at 10 o'clock A.M. at the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, Lexington Ave. at East 66th St.

Funeral services for Dr. Shuster, who died January 25 in South Bend, Indiana, were held there on Friday, January 28. Dr. Blanche Blank, Hunter's Dean of Social Sciences, who was a student during Dr. Shuster's presidency, represented the college at the services. Dr. Shuster is survived by his wife, Doris, who lives in South Bend, and a son, Robert George, who lives in New York City.

### RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

There are two funds at Hunter College to which alumni who might wish to honor Dr. Shuster's memory in this manner, might contribute. The George N. Shuster Faculty Fellowship Fund supports research by faculty members. Contributions to this fund may be addressed to the Hunter Office of College Relations, 47-49 East 65th Street, New York, N.Y. 10021.

A scholarship designed for needy undergraduates of high potential has been in existence in Dr. Shuster's name for a number of years. Dr. Shuster himself and many of his friends have contributed to it over the years.

Contributions to this fund may be sent to: George N. Shuster Scholarship and Welfare Office, Alumni Association of Hunter College, 49 East 65th Street, New York, N.Y. 10021.



**A.** Dr. Shuster at his desk when he was president of Hunter College.

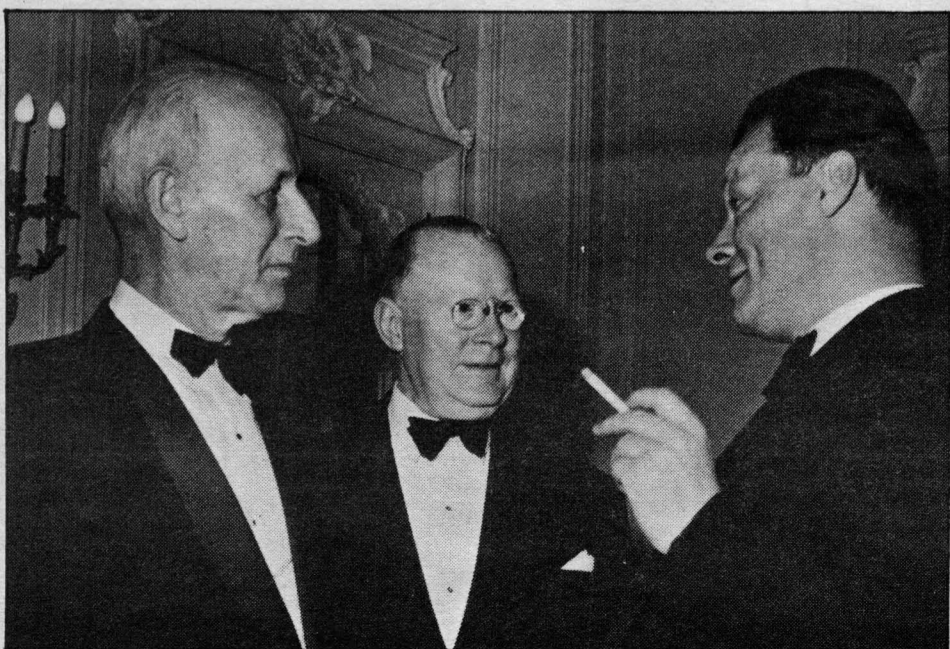
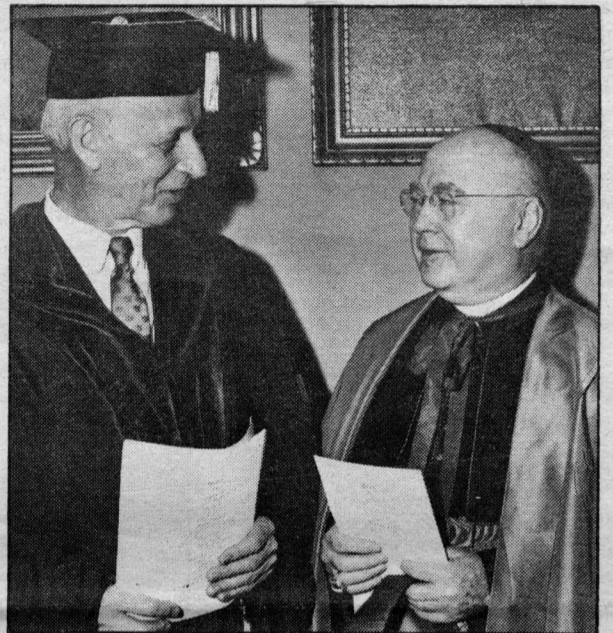
**B.** The date was June 10, 1958. The place was Manhattan College, where Dr. Shuster received an honorary doctor of laws degree. Chatting with him here is His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman, archbishop of New York.

**C.** Dr. and Mrs. Shuster at one of the many informal events they attended while at Hunter.

**D.** New York City celebrated its 300th anniversary in April, 1953. With Dr. Shuster at Roosevelt House are, left, Meike Meurs, a Dutch student brought to the United States for a brief visit by the Association of Neighbors and Friends of Hunter College, and Jill Oplinger, a Hunter student.

**E.** Dr. Shuster, enjoying the students, served as a waiter at a luncheon in the student cafeteria in April, 1956. His tips were given to World University Service.

**F.** Equally at home with many notables of the world, Dr. Shuster is shown here with John Hughes, center, of the Free Europe Committee, and Dr. Willy Brandt, Mayor of Berlin, right. The date was February 11, 1959.



*We are of different opinions at different hours but we always may be said to be at heart on the side of truth.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson