

White, Thomas Jackson, Jr. ^[1]

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by Benjamin A. Jolly and Patrick S. Wooten, 1996

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Thomas Jackson White, Jr., legislator, attorney, lobbyist, and adviser to governors, was born on a farm near [Concord](#) ^[2], the son of Thomas Jackson and Mary Isabelle Culp White. The given names of father and son were for Confederate General [Thomas J. \(Stonewall\) Jackson](#) ^[3]. His mother was a schoolteacher from Quaero, Tex. White attended [Cabarrus County](#) ^[4] elementary schools for five years, then moved with his family to Kershaw County, S.C., where he continued in school for two years before returning to North Carolina in 1917. After a year in a Charlotte school he entered Bailey Military Institute in Greenwood, S.C. for the 1918–19 term. Returning once again to North Carolina, he was graduated from Concord High School in 1920 and entered [North Carolina State College](#) ^[5]. He withdrew two years later, because of his father's ill health, to work on the farm and elsewhere. He also served in the 120th Infantry, North Carolina [National Guard](#) ^[6], between 1921 and 1924.

Beginning in the fall of 1924, White began to study law at [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[7]; he was admitted to the bar in 1927. After practicing in [Durham](#) ^[8] for three years, he moved to [Kinston](#) ^[9], where he was a founding member of the law firm of White and Allen and where he remained for the rest of his life. From 1938 to 1964 he served as county attorney; he was president of the Lenoir County Bar Association in 1952 and of the Sixth District Bar Association in 1954. White also was a member of other state and national bar associations and was elected a [Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers](#) ^[10].

His long career as a public servant in the state began with the creation of the [North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission](#) ^[11] by the [General Assembly](#) ^[12] in 1947, largely in response to White's advocacy; he was a member and first chairman of the wildlife commission. He served in the state house of representatives in 1953, 1955, and 1957 and in the senate during the sessions of 1961, 1963, 1965, and 1967. White was chairman of the Senate Finance Committee in the 1961 session and chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee in the 1963, 1965, and 1967 sessions. He was a member (1961–72) and chairman (1963–72) of the Advisory Budget Commission. In 1969 he served as legislative counsel to Governor [Robert Scott](#) ^[13].

His first term in the General Assembly is perhaps the best remembered because of his involvement in the "Battle of the Whammy" during the 1953 regular session. When White introduced a bill to abridge the use of speed detection devices by the State Highway Patrol, critics attacked him because, they said, he had presented the measure after receiving a speeding ticket via radar detection. White claimed that he had planned to introduce the "anti-whammy" bill before he received the ticket. After this legislative skirmish, White acquired the nickname "Whammy" from the press, with which he had many disagreements throughout his career.

Also during his first term White was instrumental in establishing a driver training program in the Lenoir County high schools—making them the first schools in the country to offer driver training. After convincing the Lenoir County Board of Commissioners to fund such a program, he secured passage of a bill in the General Assembly allowing every county in the state to appropriate funds for driver training in high schools.

During his legislative career White served on numerous commissions, including the [Commission on Reorganization of State Government](#) ^[14] (1957–59), [State Legislative Building](#) ^[15] Commission (chairman, 1959–73), [Sir Walter Raleigh](#) ^[16] Commission, Legislative Council (1963–65), Legislative Research Commission (1965–68), Richard Caswell Memorial Commission (1972–79), [Governor's Commission on Education beyond the High School](#) ^[17] (1961–62), Governor's Committee on Reorganization of Higher Education (1971), and [Museum of Art Building Commission](#) ^[18] (chairman, 1967–83). White is noted for his role in guiding the planning and construction of the State Legislative Building and the State Museum of Art Building.

His commitment to higher education led White to serve on The University of North Carolina Board of Trustees (1965–71) and its executive committee (1967–71) and on The University of North Carolina Board of Governors and its preparatory planning committee (1971–77). He was a recipient of the [William R. Davie Award](#) ^[19] for distinguished service to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1986) and the Distinguished Service Award given by the University of North Carolina School of Medicine.

White's first wife was Amie Jordan Parham, whom he married on 28 June 1927; their children were Amie Isabelle, Sarah Ellen, and Thomas J. III. He married Virginia Edwards Turley on 28 Dec. 1937. White, an Episcopalian, died at age eighty-eight and was buried in Pinelawn Memorial Park, Kinston.

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