The McCormick Tribune Foundation Continues a Tradition

In December 2004, The Citadel Foundation received $400,000 from the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation to renovate and maintain the McCormick Beach House on the Isle of Palms. This substantial gift from one of the nation’s largest charitable foundations will underwrite improvements that will enhance the appearance, comfort and functionality of the beach house and its ability to provide educational and recreational opportunities to The Citadel and the Lowcountry.

An integral part of the cadet experience and a prominent landmark on the Isle of Palms, the McCormick Beach House provides an outstanding off-campus recreational facility and cadet retreat that enriches the educational offerings of the college. During the next two years, the McCormick Tribune Foundation’s $400,000 grant will enable the college to conduct extensive renovations to improve and beautify the beach house while making it more accessible for year-round activities.

In addition to providing funds for the beach house renewal, this gift reinvigorates the longstanding relationship between The Citadel and the McCormick Tribune Foundation. The continuing partnership between the two institutions is rooted in the friendship of Col. Robert R. McCormick, editor and publisher of The Chicago Tribune, and Gen. Charles P. Summerall, who served as the 10th president of The Citadel from 1931 to 1953. Prior to that, Summerall was McCormick’s commanding officer in the First Infantry Division Artillery during World War I.

For a quarter of a century before his death, McCormick maintained an interest in The Citadel that resulted in several generous investments in the college. Beginning in 1934, the McCormick Tribune Foundation supported the First Field Artillery Brigade Scholarships, which eventually became known as the McCormick Scholarships. The McCormick Scholarships benefited cadets from Illinois and other Midwestern states for decades, covering full tuition and all expenses for four years. More recently, the foundation supported the Salute to the Citizen Soldier program for the 1995-1996 school year. Along with the current generous gift for the beach house, the McCormick Tribune Foundation has revived the McCormick Scholarships beginning with the 2005-2006 academic year.

Anticipating Summerall’s approaching retirement, McCormick in 1941 deeded to the college Whitehall Plantation, a beautiful estate in Aiken, S.C., as a permanent residence for Summerall, who lived there from his retirement in 1953 until his death in 1957. When Summerall passed away, Citadel President Gen. Mark Clark sold the plantation and used the proceeds to purchase a five-acre tract on the Isle of Palms and build the Col. Robert R. McCormick Beach Club of The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina.

The original McCormick Beach Club served as a recreational retreat for the Corps of Cadets, veteran students and faculty and staff for more than 30 years. In 1989 it was destroyed by Hurricane Hugo. At a total cost of more than $900,000, provided through the insurance payments, funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and additional gifts from the McCormick Tribune Foundation, the college rebuilt the beach house. Today it boasts a grand ballroom with vaulted ceilings, a large stone fireplace and a screened porch and wooden deck running the length of the house.

In addition to the generous grant of $400,000 for the McCormick Beach House, the college will also receive $40,000 annually from the McCormick Tribune Foundation to reestablish the Robert R. McCormick Scholarships, which will enable two students from Illinois to attend The Citadel each year. The first two scholarship awards will be offered to incoming freshmen for the 2005-2006 academic year.

The selection of scholars will be made by The Citadel and will involve assessment of character, financial need and promise in addition to academic merit. Preference will be given to the children of military veterans. Beginning in 2005, two incoming McCormick Scholars will receive $5,000 per year for a maximum of four years, renewable as long as the cadet remains in good academic standing. Each subsequent year, two additional incoming cadets will receive scholarships so that up to eight students will be enrolled as McCormick Scholars at any given time.

The spirit of the McCormick Scholarships was...