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December 3, 2010

Armstrong Atlantic State University

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## Recommended Citation

Armstrong Atlantic State University, "Armstrong to Award Honorary Doctor of Letters to Alva B. Lines" (2010). *Armstrong News Archives*. 8.

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Arthur M. Gignilliat, Jr. and Alva B. Lines

### Armstrong to Award Honorary Doctor of Letters to Alva B. Lines

*Arthur M. Gignilliat, Jr., Armstrong Class of 1953 and former chair of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, will deliver the commencement address.*

(December 3, 2010) Armstrong Atlantic State University will confer an Honorary Doctor of Letters on 1937 alumnus Alva B. Lines during the university's fall commencement ceremony at 1 p.m., Saturday, December 11 in the Alumni Arena in the Sports Center on campus, 11935 Abercorn Street.

The [College of Liberal Arts](#) and the [College of Science and Technology](#) will have a ceremony at 10 a.m. The [College of Education](#) and the [College of Health Professions](#) will have a 1 p.m. ceremony. Approximately 700 candidates for degrees will be on hand to receive diplomas.

Arthur M. Gignilliat, Jr., Armstrong Class of 1953 and former chair of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, will deliver the commencement address during the afternoon ceremony. Gignilliat has served in the Georgia House of Representatives and on the University System of Georgia Foundation Board of Directors. He spent 40 years with Savannah Electric & Power before retiring as CEO.

#### About Alva B. Lines

Alva Burley Lines has devoted his extraordinary life to serving his family, community, profession and country. A Savannah native and a graduate of Savannah High School, he left a well-paying job during the Great Depression to pursue his goal of higher education, joining a small group of forward-thinking young adults who matriculated at Armstrong Junior College in the year of its founding in 1935.

Appointed chairman of publications by Ernest A. Lowe, the president of the college, Lines played an indelible leadership role in establishing the traditions of the nascent institution of higher learning. He chaired a committee that selected the school colors, the maroon and gold that continue to identify the university today. He was a founding editor of the student publication, *The Inkwell*, which today is published weekly as the official Armstrong student newspaper.

Following his graduation as part of Armstrong's inaugural class of 1937, Lines enrolled at Emory University in Atlanta, completing his bachelor's degree in 1939. Soon thereafter, he eagerly answered his nation's call to duty and went on to serve as a captain in the U.S. Air Force, earning two Battle Stars for his service in Australia and New Guinea during World War II.

Having fulfilled his service to his country, Lines returned home, settled in Atlanta and married Mildred Rand. He began his professional career by founding one of the first businesses in the nation to specialize in microfilming. Within a short time, Lines became a pioneering filmmaker and among the first in his generation to film documentaries that focused on science, medical procedures and biographies of Atlanta leaders of the time. He rose to the top of his profession, serving as chairman of the Society of Motion Pictures and TV Engineers of Georgia.

His civic activities have included membership in the Rotary Club, which recognized him for more than 26 years of perfect attendance, and serving as director of the Atlanta Boys Club. In 1978 he received broad community recognition when he was named an Outstanding Atlantan.

Over the years he also became a strong advocate of Georgia's pristine coastline, its shores and marshes, and served as president of the St. Simons Beach Conservation Association. In 1996, the Supreme Court of Georgia ruled in favor of coastal conservation in a case that was initiated and filed by Lines.

Throughout his distinguished career, Lines has remained loyal to Armstrong through his advocacy, his alumnus association, and his many campus visits. In September 2010, he was honored during the university's 75th Anniversary Notable Alumni reception. Lines and his wife, Mildred, have a granddaughter, Elizabeth Bedell, who is a member of the Armstrong class of May 2010.

#### **About Arthur M. Gignilliat, Jr.**

Arthur Mathewson Gignilliat, Jr. is a member of Armstrong Atlantic State University's class of 1953. Gignilliat's association with Armstrong began when his father joined the inaugural faculty of Armstrong Junior College in 1935, teaching math and English. In 1951, Arthur entered Armstrong Junior College, joining the basketball team, glee club and student senate. He became co-captain and a leading scorer on the basketball team, president of the sophomore class and recipient of the Outstanding Sophomore award in 1953. He met his future wife, Molly Barnhardt, and both graduated from Armstrong Junior College in 1953.

Gignilliat enjoyed a 40-year career with Savannah Electric and was named its president in 1982. He led the company into merger talks with Southern Company, the nation's largest producer of electricity, and retired as president and CEO in 1997.

Gignilliat was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives from Chatham County for eight consecutive terms from 1966-1981. While in the House, he chaired the University System of Georgia Committee (now known as the Higher Education Committee) and served on the Appropriations Committee.

In 1983, Governor Joe Frank Harris appointed him to serve on the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. Gignilliat was on the board until 1993, serving as its chairman from 1985-1986. He supported Armstrong President Robert A. Burnett's position that Armstrong's designation as a health professions education center presented a need for campus housing. Gignilliat's work surrounding the development of residence halls at Armstrong was a catalyst for a system-wide policy allowing construction of new facilities through public-private ventures. His vision and work with community business partners would lead to the establishment of the Educational Properties Foundation, Inc., which has been responsible for the funding of new facilities at Armstrong during the past decade.

Gignilliat's service to the citizens of Georgia continued in 1997, when Governor Zell Miller named him to the Board of the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism and later appointed him a member of the Georgia Ports Authority. Gignilliat served as chairman of the Ports Authority from 2000-2001.

Gignilliat supported Armstrong Atlantic State University by serving on its first Foundation Board of Trustees from 1993-1996. He served as treasurer from 1993-1995 and as board president from 1995-1996.

The Armstrong Atlantic State University Foundation maintains two endowments that bear the

Gignilliat name. The Arthur M. Gignilliat, Sr. Scholarship honors Dr. Gignilliat as a distinguished member of the inaugural faculty of Armstrong Junior College. The Arthur M. Gignilliat, Jr. Distinguished Professorship endowment was established in 1997 as the university's first named professorship for the purpose of retaining and honoring outstanding faculty.

The Armstrong Alumni Association recognized Gignilliat with the Distinguished Citizen Award in 1979, the Distinguished Alumni Award in 1991, and as a Notable Alumnus in 2010.



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