Aguinaldo Alphonse Lenoir was born on September 21, 1918 in DeRidder, Louisiana. He obtained his A.B. degree from Xavier University, New Orleans, Louisiana in 1939. He then attended the Lincoln University Law School in Jefferson, Missouri, where he received his LL.B. in 1942. Upon terminating his studies at Lincoln, he began to practice law while working as a foreman at U.S. Cartridge Plant in St. Louis and as an instructor in the Political Science Department at Lincoln University. Then as duty called, he answered by serving in the United States Armed Forces [Army] from June 1944 to January 1946, receiving the rank of Corporal QMC. July 1, 1947 marked the beginning of a twenty-three-year dedication to the survival and existence of a Black law school, legislatively created for the purpose of keeping blacks out of white law schools. This school is Southern University School of Law. When A.A. Lenoir arrived to become the first Dean of the Law School, he began to realize the struggle and hard work that faced him. The existence of the law school looked hopeless, due mostly to lack of proper funding and a general lack of confidence by most people, black and white. When Dean Lenoir arrived at the law school, his equipment consisted of a typewriter and a clerk. But being the man he was, using hope, faith and hard work, Southern University School of Law opened for operation, September 1, 1947 with a full faculty, library and students.

Dean Lenoir married the former Miss Estella Ruth Collins on June 4, 1941, a native of Jefferson, Missouri. To this union was born eight lovely children.

Lenoir was a member of the Louisiana State Bar, a member of the Missouri State Bar, and the National Bar Association. He was also one of the first few Blacks to receive the Silver Beaver Award [highest award in scouting for volunteer work]. He was Director of the Catholic Council on Human Relations; Vice President of Southern Teachers and Parents Federal Credit Union; Editor, National Bar Association Journal; Member of Research Team, Louisiana Labor Mediation Commission; Louisiana Criminal Procedure Revision Committee; Legislative Drafting Committee of Louisiana; Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Criminal Justice; and a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Howard University, 1966-1967.

During Dean Lenoir’s twenty-three years at Southern University School of Law, he watched it grow and improve. Improvements made basically because of his hard work, determination and also due to the faith that others learned to place in him, he molded the law school into what it is today. He resigned as Dean of the Law School in 1970 to return to Howard University in Washington, D.C. He left because he felt that he had accomplished everything he possibly could for the benefit of the law school.
Dean Lenoir died in Washington, D.C. July 15, 1971. His death affected the lives of many. He was a full time Dean, father, husband and friend to his family and students.

The “A.A. Lenoir Hall” at the Southern University Law Center [SULC] is named in his honor.

Lenoir, Aguinaldo Alphonse. Personal Papers. Archives and Manuscripts Department, John B. Cade Library, Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.


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