

Edward Lee Rankin, Jr.

Ed Rankin's life has been dedicated to service. Throughout his career, which has combined journalism, administration, public relations, business, and health affairs, Ed has developed the skills and nurtured the contacts to become the often vital power behind the scenes.

With the journalism degree he earned in 1940, Ed went into the newspaper business. There he caught the attention of then U.S. Senator William B. Umstead. He served as press secretary for the Senator and crisscrossed the state with him during the hard-fought senate campaign which Umstead lost.

When Umstead was elected governor, he had the good fortune of securing Ed Rankin as his private secretary. When Governor Umstead suffered a heart attack two days after his inauguration, Ed rose to the task of organizing and running the governor's office during Umstead's slow recuperation.

Twenty-two months later, Governor Umstead died. With his skill and experience, Ed was invaluable to the new governor, Luther H. Hodges, whom he also served as private secretary.

Ed's work with state administration and the General Assembly reached a climax when Governor Dan. K. Moore appointed him director of administration.

His contacts and friendships in state administration and in the General Assembly last to this day. On many occasions Ed's intimate knowledge of the inner sanctum of state government and the people in key positions there have been called upon for the benefit of the University at Chapel Hill.

During the years in which he was vice-president of the Cannon Mills Company, Ed was active in service to the University. He was a member of the Carolina Annual Giving Council, and the Board of Visitors and a director of North Carolina Memorial Hospital. In addition, in 1985 he was appointed chairman of the board of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina.

In 1982, Ed was president of the General Alumni Association. It was a time of change for the Association, and Ed's administrative background, advice, and sensitivity about when to let the young new director struggle alone were invaluable.

During his tenure as president, Ed talked with the University's senior officials about the importance to the University of an independent alumni body. The result was new placement of the GAA in the structure of the University's administration which recognizes the importance of our organized alumni.

Hugh Morton Sr. recently said of Ed: "There is no person in North Carolina who has a higher grasp of what has gone on in this state in business and government than Ed Rankin. With this knowledge, he has been able to render great service to the University.

In 1983 there was a desperate need to redress the salary freeze imposed upon the University by the General Assembly. Valuable faculty and prestige were in danger of slipping away from Chapel Hill.

Ed Rankin, on behalf of North Carolina's tens of thousands of alumni, wrote a letter to all the members of the legislature the night before the vote. In the letter, Ed recalled that during the dark days of his World War II naval service, he sometimes wondered, "Will there always be an England?"

With the resources needed to maintain the quality of the University threatened, Ed was posing the same question about the University at Chapel Hill.

The vigilance required to keep the answer to that question affirmative is the responsibility of Carolina's sons and daughters.

Ed Rankin meets that responsibility with grace and success.