

# Elizabeth Stetson Dowd '53

Sally Robinson, a dear friend of many years and fellow member of the Morehead Scholarship selection committee, captures the essence of Elizabeth Stetson Dowd in one phrase: "She is a shining role model for women of any generation." She is a lady—a mother and grandmother—a homemaker; also she is often the calm voice of intelligent reason in various board rooms where she both serves and leads.

Pepper is fully in step with her times. No one who is out of step could be elected vice chairman of The University of North Carolina Board of Trustees, as she was in 1989.

In some ways, she is ahead of her times. Before the rest of us came to see that recycling is the right thing to do, her husband Roddy would tease her about her careful saving of the shortest candle nubs and common plastic bags. His teasing turned to thanks when Hurricane Hugo knocked out all the lights except those now-precious candles and threatened to drench everything not protected in those waterproof bags.

But it is the transporting of traditional values to our modern times that is Pepper's greatest strength. "She combines as well as anyone I know the domestic arts and community service," Sally Robinson says. "A loving wife, mother, and now grandmother, ardent gardener, and a gracious hostess, she is also a distinguished community leader. Her significant and diverse accomplishments continue to inspire and delight her many friends."

Ann Zappa, support secretary to the UNC Board of Trustees, puts it this way: "Pepper Dowd is the genuine article, the premier example of a nearly extinct type—the community-minded volunteer with unending integrity who dedicates her nurturing style and energy to the institutions she believes in—family, community, education, and the University she serves so loyally."

Former chancellor and good friend Chris Fordham said of her role as University trustee, "Pepper Dowd is a wonderful trustee who regularly demonstrates keen understanding of the University's mission and who gives unswerving loyalty and unconditional support and who thereby helps to make the University as inspiring as she is in today's world."

From the board of the General Alumni Association, to the Junior League of Charlotte (which she served as President), to the UNC Board of Visitors, and now to the Board of Trustees, Pepper is known as one who belies her name. She has a reputation for letting others get hot under the collar and have their full say, passionately arguing one position or another, and then calmly stepping in to bring matters to a resolution. Ned Hardison, a friend for many years, says: "Time and again, Pepper's calm voice amidst the tumult and shouting, her unswerving dedication to the truth, and her rare blend of intellect and common sense, have helped make the University the great place it is today."

Susan Ehringhaus, Special Assistant to the Chancellor and the University's lawyer, strikes the same chord: "Pepper Dowd, as a trustee of the University, combines commitment, intelligence, grace, and humanity."

We have it on impeccable authority that Pepper has protested to her friends in Charlotte that she does not deserve this award. Her self-effacing nature is well-known among her friends—she drove around Charlotte red-raced with embarrassment for a whole year the Christmas that Roddy surprised her with a personalized North Carolina license plate that said "Pepper". But in respect to deserving this award her judgment is not keen. As Ned Hardison said, "If I had to pick one person who epitomizes what a loyal alumnus of Chapel Hill should be, I would choose Pepper Dowd."