

## **William Clyde Friday '48 LLB Ida Howell Friday '47 MPH**

This is a moment for celebration. Consider how rare the occasion. Friends of a great state university—arguably the nation's best—gather to honor the two people who have sat at its helm for 30 years. To many of us, Bill and Ida Friday are the wise and loving parents of this institution. More than anyone else, they have given the University life, purpose and direction.

Bill and Ida Friday are the best of a generation dedicated to service. Their generation survived the Depression, when each day was a test, when thoughts of the future were fanciful luxuries for which there was little energy or time. Their generation fought a World War that threatened the prized and hard-won achievements of western culture, the freedoms to speak, believe and act.

The Fridays recognized that a life devoted to self-interest is limited—limited in influence, limited in achievement, limited in personal reward. President Friday himself described movingly his own yearning to make a difference: "It's not a simple thing. It's a drive to find a place; it's a drive to contribute. It's an effort to fill a hole in your life."

So much of what our state looks on with pride originated and flourished under Bill Friday's hand. The University became a 16-campus system, with centers of learning from Wilmington to Asheville. Nine Area Health Education Centers take health care knowledge and skill to places where North Carolinians need it. The National Humanities Center, the Research Triangle Park, student aid and the UNC Center for Public Television are part of his legacy. His skillful fights against the Speaker Ban Law and HEW-imposed desegregation guidelines preserved essential freedoms for the University.

Now, 30 years is a long time, even though Bill Friday is always saying, Where did the time go? Ida, what did we do between 1950 and 1960? Still, even this abbreviated list of accomplishments could go unmatched in our lifetime.

Ida Friday never stood in her husband's shadow. She always cast her own, and it has been a tall shadow indeed. With vigor and intelligence, she undertook many tasks over the years, all in service to the people of her community and her state. With her friend Georgia Kyser, she started the Chapel Hill Preservation Society and, for starters, saved the Betty Smith home and the Horace Williams House. Ida also chaired the Stagville Preservation Society in Durham.

A painter and sculptor, Ida has actively promoted the arts through her work with the American Dance Festival, the North Carolina Central University Museum of Art and the state art museum. She was a tireless and effective fundraiser for the N.C. Symphony.

We don't have adequate time to enumerate all of Ida's civic accomplishments. Perhaps the best summary is to name a few of the public tributes honoring her work: the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year Award (1974), the North Carolina Public Service Award (1981), the North Carolina Distinguished Service Award for Women (1984). In 1984, the coveted North Caroliniana Society Award went to Ida and Bill.

As Ida's middle daughter, Mary, says, "A person would be hard pressed to match in one lifetime the public service Mother has already given. She's been a tremendous example for my sisters and me." She remains one for us all.

How has she been able to accomplish so much? Georgia Kyser says Ida works harder than most people, has the courage to take on the tough jobs, and never looks for personal praise. "Her satisfaction," says Mrs. Kyser, "comes simply from seeing a job well done and making things better for us all."

Much of Ida's contribution to the University occurred under her own roof. She meticulously furnished the big house at 402 East Franklin Street.

It is not so fashionable these days to extol a woman's work as wife and mother. Fortunately, as we all know, fashions are shallow and fleeting. So Ida Friday's praises here are sung. Fran, Mary and Betsy are all successful professionals and fine women. They applaud their mother's ever-present guidance and tell us that she was there in the trenches, taking them to Brownie meetings and reading books while music lessons transpired. To carry off a dinner at which a head of state sits elbow to elbow with a couple of normally vivacious little girls must require surpassing grace, not to mention nerves of steel.

As for the job she did as Mrs. William C. Friday, Bill Friday knows best, and says it best: "But for her love and constant support and total giving of her life, I could not have done much."

What, then, is so special about Bill Friday? What makes today such a poignant moment in this university's history?

Bill Friday is the embodiment of a university's ideals. A university, at its best, shapes young people into Bill Fridays.

His is a keen mind, well trained, captivated by the joy of knowledge. Throughout his career, he relied on reason, evidence and persuasion to move the University forward. He called on others to honor the need to do good in this world.

Alexander Heard, Chancellor Emeritus of Vanderbilt University, praises Bill Friday's "attention to other human beings. . . his concern for the human equation." Betsy Friday recalls that during the anti-war demonstrations of the late 1960s, her parents never had confrontations with protesters because they were always trying to understand the outrage. Understand. Concern for the human equation. This is Bill Friday.

His 30 years in the presidency are more than a career. They stand as a tradition. At its heart is the fight ". . . to protect, to make even more secure, freedom of inquiry and freedom of expression, which, when exercised responsibly, make possible the University's intellectual, moral and professional leadership in North Carolina and the nation."

Those are Bill Friday's words. Perhaps the best way we can thank him for this tradition is to pledge to carry it on.