

Anne Ellen Queen

There is a book-length list of people you should not ask about Anne Queen. You just don't have the time. In her twenty years at Chapel Hill, she marked countless hundreds of students and others in the University community with the badge of tolerance and the strength to embrace social change. And they will tell you about her, at length. The list includes business people, lawyers, teachers, reporters, social workers, doctors—too many voices to hear. But listen to just a few:

“Anne Queen is the kind of person—the Y was the kind of place—we black students felt comfortable in, in the first place. She just opened her heart and opened her mind and could speak and comfort us. And don't forget the white students who wanted us here were few in number. And the few who were here were associated with Anne Queen.” The late Floyd McKissick, Sr. '51, Superior Court Judge.

“I know the mountains from which she hails, and the factory in Canton where she worked for ten years before she went to college. And because of her, I know Berea College which she attended on scholarship; I went there to work on my second novel largely because I wanted to know what kind of an institution could produce a woman like Anne Queen.” James B. Reston, Jr. '63, author.

“During the last half century Anne Queen, other than Dr. Frank Graham, was the person at the University who had the greatest non-academic impact on students.” Jane Smith Patterson '61, senior advisor to the governor.

“More than anyone else, it was Anne Queen who was responsible for enabling the Civil Rights demonstrations in Chapel Hill during the early Sixties to reach their desired result peacefully and without violence.” Joel Fleishman '58, Duke University professor and foundation executive.

“Every student's opinion mattered, ought to be respected by him and others, and honed, tested. Through gentle discussion she changed lives. In the finest tradition of the University she cherished students and helped them grow.” John Ehle '49, author.

“Her home became a laboratory where confused white undergraduates like myself could participate in the important experiment of working and socializing with black students for the first time.” Julius Rowan Raper '60, UNC professor of English.

“It is estimated that she turned out more than 3,000 cubic yards of cheese grits in the interests of that gustatory well-being that makes people of diverse passions and opinions amiable in each other's company and open to a friendly exchange of ideas.” Douglass Hunt '46, UNC Special Assistant to the Chancellor.

Anne Queen was born and reared in Canton, and worked as a paper cutter in the Champion Mill there for ten years after high school. Then by the strength of her character and intellect, she graduated from Berea College and Yale Divinity School. At the Campus Y from 1956 until her retirement in 1975, she taught by example tolerance and reasoned change in race relations, in opportunities for women, and in opposition

to war and social injustice. Hers was the voice all sides trusted in the early integration struggles, the racially-charged cafeteria worker's strikes, the Vietnam War protests. In her home, students black and white mixed with one another and with William Sloan Coffin, Michael Harrington, Tom Wicker '48 and countless others.

When Anne retired and moved back to Canton, she said, “One who loves Chapel Hill never leaves; and I look forward to returning often to the place which has become one of intellectual and spiritual renewal.” We are not the first to insist that she come back—the University has bestowed an honorary degree, the C. Knox Massey Award, and the William Richardson Davie Award—but we delight that we have this chance, for our own intellectual and spiritual renewal.