

## Betty Ray McCain '52

Here's just a taste of what it is like to live the life of Betty Ray McCain: to accept the appointment as the first woman ever to serve on North Carolina's Advisory Budget Commission—an unpaid, highly demanding job—she had to resign her seat on the University of North Carolina System's Board of Governors—an unpaid, highly demanding job.

For more than a taste, you would need energy, drive, and civic spirit beyond that of most mortals—President of the N.C. Museum of History Associates, President of the N.C. Medical Auxiliary, UNC Board of Visitors, Board of Regents of the Barium Springs Presbyterian Home for Children, Board of Directors of the American Lung Association of North Carolina, Board of Directors of the Carolina Telephone and Telegraph Company, Vice Chair of the Wilson County Theater Committee, Board of Trustees of St. Mary's College, Board of Visitors of Peace College, Board of Directors of the Friends of UNC-TV, Board of Directors of the Country Doctor Museum in Bailey, member of the Wilson Human Relations Board of Directors and regional vice president of the North Carolina Mental Health Association, Board of Directors of the UNC General Alumni Association.

That's not nearly all of them, and we haven't gotten to politics, yet.

Betty's civic spirit dates to the examples set by her parents in Faison, North Carolina. Her father, the only lawyer in town, always "took the hard cases and did what he thought was right." Her mother was a dedicated school teacher

always available to help people in need. "I saw the difference my parents' interest, hard work, and kindness made in other people's lives," Betty remembers.

Valedictorian of her high school class, Betty went to St. Mary's and then came to Carolina. True to form, here in Chapel Hill she was president of the YMCA. After earning a masters degree in music at Columbia University, she returned to Chapel Hill and met and married John McCain. When he finished his medical education, the couple settled in Wilson. John's medical partner's wife remembers Betty's civic drive from those early days of young adulthood. When Betty and John arrived in Wilson, Jean Herring recalls, Betty jokingly agreed to serve as president of the medical auxiliary even before she had joined. She said it jokingly, but she did become president.

The civic mindedness that has propelled Betty's work with the history museum and the lung association and all the others has a sharper side to it, a side that has led her to the rough and tumble of partisan politics. It is an environment in which the self-professed steel magnolia has blossomed.

Betty's father dabbled in politics, and her own involvement dates from Terry Sanford's '39 1960 gubernatorial campaign, a political pedigree she shares with Governor Jim Hunt '64 LLB/JD. The McCains and the Hunts share a 30-year friendship that dates from their common membership in the Wilson Presbyterian Church. In 1972 Betty worked in the future governor's campaign for Lt. Governor and in 1976 she was co-chair of his successful campaign for Governor. In 1976 the Governor nominated Betty as chairman of the state Democratic Party, and the executive committee unanimously approved. She was the first woman ever to hold the post.

Betty's ability to tell humorous stories is legendary. For several years GAA Board members confessed that among the highlights of their GAA Board experience was the certain knowledge that Betty would lighten things up.

Her political involvement mirrors her civic involvement. "Democracy is not a spectator sport," Betty says, and her life reflects her belief—delegate to the 1972 and 1988 Democratic National Conventions, delegate to the 1978 and 1982 mid-term National Democratic Conferences, member of the Democratic National Committee, president of the N.C. Democratic Women, co-chair of Jim Hunt's 1980 gubernatorial re-election and 1984 U.S. Senate bids, Governor's Task Force on Child Advocacy, and 1985 National Jaycette Women in Government Award.

Democrats across North Carolina were disappointed when Betty decided not to pursue nomination for U.S. Senate in the 1990 election, but all citizens of this great state, Democratic and Republican alike, could rejoice in her appointment as the state Secretary of Cultural Resources by Governor Hunt just last year.

She has what she saw in her parents—the interest, hard work, and kindness that together makes a difference in the lives of others.