

Thomas S. Kenan III '59

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Tom Kenan squirms a little as the football stadium expands outward and upward. He is sold on the idea that the University should have one of the finest facilities anywhere, and he's gratified that the renovation includes more academic-related facilities — graduation of athletes being one of his priorities. A plan for a cyclorama of sports memorabilia in the new field house plays to Tom's deep sense of history.

But he's also sold on the stadium's primary asset: William Rand Kenan Jr.'s wish that the Carolina blue always be framed with the green pines that surround it. The stadium was the first place Tom noticed his storied family's name when he crossed from town to gown in the mid-1950s. And the wishes of William and his father Frank and other members of the family that has done so much to *define* the University are central to Tom's place in the legacy.

His vision of the importance of philanthropy to a public university that seeks the level of the best private schools is shaped by having read letters between his grandfather's brother and the eminent Professor Francis Preston Venable in the days when such relationships between student and teacher were routine to a complete education; by memories of lunch each year with William, down from New York for graduation day; by watching his father narrow the Kenan focus on the business school to put it on the fast track toward distinction as the best among public universities.

Big shoes to fill? A closet full. And although Tom prefers to think of himself as seeing carefully to the wishes of his forebears, who at Carolina doubts that he has made a very personal mark?

UNC System President Emeritus William Friday LLB '48 says "Tom Kenan's energy, intelligence and his caring heart have been committed to providing a brighter cultural life for all people and to creating hope, good will and a sense of purpose among those less fortunate. He is at all times the faithful, creative and devoted servant of his University."

Thrust into membership on the board of the Sarah Graham Kenan Foundation as a young man, Tom lent his hand to endowments for the law, business and medical schools. He had 25 years experience in philanthropy by the time he joined the trusteeship of the William Rand Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust and the Duke Endowment. Now on the boards of 15 charitable foundations, Tom gets a kick out of applying his economics degree to imaginative investing.

He also works the trenches. In 1989 he accompanied William Friday to observe a literacy project in a rural Kentucky school. They were mesmerized by the program's success, and Tom encouraged the trust to fund it and four spinoffs in North Carolina knowing that in so doing the quality of life for thousands of North Carolinians would greatly improve. By the time the challenge grant had matured, the program was running in almost every state.

Tom has been honored extensively for his devotion to the arts, including the Morrison Award for Contribution to North Carolina Arts and the 1989 Albert Schweitzer Medal for Artistry. Tom has been a major backer of the N.C. School of the Arts, the N.C. Museum of Art and Carolina's Ackland Museum and PlayMakers Repertory Company.

The term "Kenan professor" is as familiar to the language of Chapel Hill as "Old Well." Since 1917, thousands of students have studied under senior professors endowed by the program. But it is also the *potential* Kenan professors with whose futures Tom is concerned. It is for this

reason that he serves on the board of the Institute for the Arts and Humanities which raises funds for fellowships to keep younger professors who are committed to Carolina but are continually recruited by private schools.

"When you help young professors," Tom says, "you build the reputation and the future of the University."

He calls his father the greatest of the Kenan philanthropists, for his work with the business school that now extends to the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, and to a separate institute halfway around the world in Southeast Asia. Still, Tom is attentive to the entire legacy.

William Rand Kenan Jr. helped set the tone for the prestigious rise of the Chemistry Department when he assisted in the discovery of calcium carbide. Tom has undertaken establishment of an Institute for Chemistry in William Rand Kenan's name. "We will create one of the finest chemistry institutes in the country," he says. As for the arts, he says, "I'd really like to have a first-class performing arts center on campus. We *should* have one."

Almost certainly, we shall. Science, business, art — and the loving care to keep it all humbly beneath the green treetops. As the new stadium field house takes the name of Frank Kenan, younger cousin of the original builder, Frank's son, too, carries a great name forward with distinction.