

# Katherine Carmichael

## Serene administrator says she got Chapel Hill sand in shoes 31 years ago and can't leave

By **AMY McRARY**  
Staff Writer

The office in the basement of Steele building is a combination of a gracious lady's parlor and a busy professor's office; a mixture of past and present. A portrait of Wilbur L. Steele, for whom the building was named, hangs above the huge desk that once belong to Frank Porter Graham.

Folders and books cover the desk, among them "What the University of North Carolina Means to Me." Scattered on the Oriental rug that belonged to former N.C. Gov. Luther Hodge are boxes and more boxes of books labeled for their destinations.

Serene in the midst of this chaos sits Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, English instructor, dean of women, and later associate dean of student affairs.

Meeting Katherine Carmichael is a bit like stepping back to a less hurried more gracious time. There is a distant feeling that this is a lady of the Old South, of magnolias and barbecues. "Won't you have a cup of black coffee, my dear," she asks and sends her assistant for a cup.

Yet if being a lady means only watching magnolias bloom, then it is an unfair description, for Miss Carmichael has been busy teaching and advising students for 45 years. The places she has taught read like an atlas: Wisconsin, Maryland, Birmingham, Vietnam, Texas, the Philippines, Yale and Vanderbilt.

At age 64, this tiny lady is not about to sit still and stop her ever-active career. For all her petiteness and seemingly fragility, she speaks with knowledge and quiet authority.

"Sometimes I think I have done very little in my life except work, but I've always had

great joy in my work," she says "After all, in all these years, I've combined administration, student personnel and teaching."

She was teaching English at the University of Wisconsin in 1946 when Robert B. House telegraphed her that she was to replace Margaret Henry Stacy as dean of women.

"I was 33 years old and I had decided I wanted a job where I could remain for a length of time," Miss Carmichael remembers. "The walks of Chapel Hill were all sand then and the legend was that if you got the sand of Chapel Hill in your shoes you could never leave."

"Well, I have remained at this university

for 31 years, with occasional leaves of absence to teach elsewhere, and I found it delightful," she said with a smile.

Thirty-one years brings a lot of changes to any place, and UNC has been no exception. "When I was first dean of women, there were

undergraduate women here. The orientation counselors would bring them by my apartment to see me. I believe I averaged meeting three groups of girls a day."

When she first came to UNC, coeds were required to be in their dorms by 11 on weekday nights and 12 on weekend nights, wore chiffon dresses to parties and vied for the title of May Queen.

Now, women students may remain out all night if they wish, blue jeans abound for all occasions and the May Queen is a tradition of the past.

Besides the changes in the University, Miss Carmichael remembers both pranks and crises during her years here.

"When I first started teaching, I wouldn't let dogs in my classroom. Students would hide the animals under their knees.



Kitty Carmichael

Staff photo by Joseph Thomas

1,100 women students. The campus didn't go beyond Manning Drive and the total number of students was 4,500."

She laughs as she remembers, "I thought that was a lovely size. You see, Wisconsin seemed huge with its 9,000 students."

"But," with what may have been a sigh, "we knew we'd grow. That may be unfortunate, for people just don't know everyone as they did. I once knew most of the

"But the students looked so uncommonly angelic, I knew they were hiding something. I could snap my fingers and out would crawl the poor dog."

Among the happy times also have been crises. "I spent many a time going over the class roster. If there were two Mary Smiths in school and Mary Jean Smith was badly hurt in an accident, then I would check the roster to see if another girl had a similar

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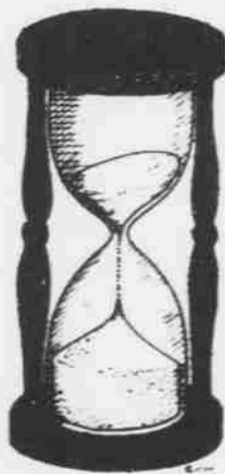
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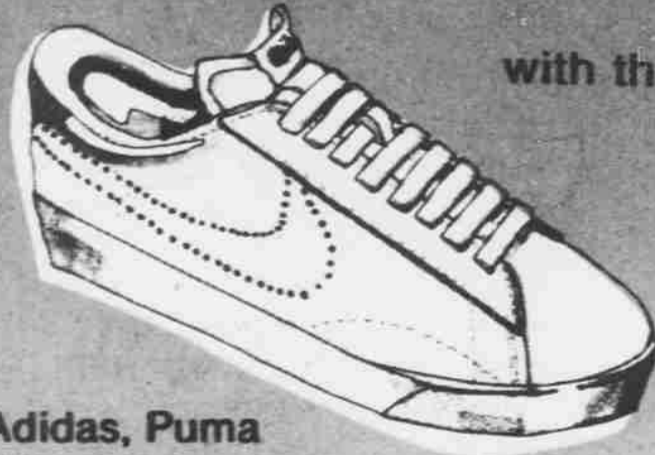
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