

Some Personal Reflections on Juanita Kreps  
Allen Kelley, June 2004

My reflections on Juanita Kreps are numerous and memorable. I met Juanita 33 years ago at a dinner party she hosted when I was being recruited to Duke. She and Cliff lived in a large, stately Southern house owned by the University. The place had a "Gone-With-The-Wind" aura, especially when Juanita was present. The elegant dinner boasted a Southern menu (including gourmet grits). Conversation was designed to convince me to "go South." Juanita put on the hard sell. Her powers of persuasion were daunting. We came to Duke and are forever in her debt.

She has touched our lives in many ways. The Kreps owned a cottage at Caswell Beach, NC. They graciously loaned it to us on two consecutive weekends. On the third we bought a house being constructed. This was a good decision. Time there gave me needed perspective in those challenging days of Department building. We are indebted to Juanita and Cliff for making this possible. Indeed, Juanita wisely noted then that she expected Caswell to be a magnet of family gatherings and bonding. Her Caswell expectations have been true for the Kelleys as well.

My favorite stories about Juanita relate to the early days of her move to Washington. As was then typical of introductions of new Cabinet members, Juanita joined President-Elect Carter in Plains Georgia, where he announced her nomination as Secretary of Commerce. In an exchange a reporter asked if Juanita agreed with Mr. Carter that it was difficult to find qualified women as he was looking for "the best" person for each Cabinet job. She responded: "I think it is difficult to find any person when you are looking for the best person... I think it would be hard to defend the proposition that there are not a great many qualified women." Mr. Carter, smiling, said, "I think she said she disagrees with me." Upon returning to Durham, she was questioned by a reporter about her feelings that she was not Mr. Carter's first choice for the cabinet position. She humorously responded that actually Mr. Carter was not her first choice for President, either. (Juanita supported Duke's own President, Terry Sanford, in the Democratic party primaries.) Juanita's candor and quick wit were two of the attributes that endeared her to Mr. Carter.

Recently Pat and I had lunch with Juanita. We had a delightful conversation about the past at Duke and the Department. I realized anew how important she has been to Duke in both conspicuous and, even more importantly, in numerous "behind-the-scenes" ways. I surprised Juanita by conveying Ed Tower's decision to dedicate this issue of the Duke Journal of Economics to her. She threw her arms into the air in a moment of great excitement and pleasure. I'll not forget that moment. She is truly honored to be the recipient of this recognition. Speaking personally, but I know for many others as well, we are equally honored to have had Juanita as a colleague and friend.