

## 1997 THOMAS JEFFERSON AWARD CITATION

### Donald Charles Jicha

Picture the summer of 1933. Events that would shape life in the United States for decades, particularly for students at Carolina, were unfolding. The stage is set for John Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat*, unemployment is at an all-time high, FDR was inaugurated in March, the New Deal has begun, prohibition will be repealed by year's end, and on a sultry day in late July, Don Jicha is born in Chicago.

Fewer than forty years later Don would be ushering thousands of students through the General College here at UNC. As Associate Dean of the General College, he has direct responsibility, delegated by the Dean of Arts and Sciences, for more students than any other academic administrator on campus. Don's steady hand has remained on the rudder for more than twenty years, through four chancellors, five provosts, and three deans. And, like the indefatigable Energizer Bunny, he's still going.

Since day one of his arrival in Chapel Hill in 1960, Don has been an outstanding chemical educator. Recipient of the Johnston Scholars Teaching Award and the Senior Class Favorite Teacher Award, he sandwiched twenty-four years of excellent instruction between two Tanner Teaching Awards. As organizer of the introductory chemistry laboratories, he coordinates the work of more than sixty teaching assistants every semester. Caring for thousands of chemistry laboratory students is a Herculean task, yet Don does this as if it were only a minor perturbation in his daily schedule. He is beloved by students for the demanding lecture courses he teaches in addition to his laboratory and administrative commitments.

Infused with detailed knowledge of curricula, advising, and student activities, Don is a wonderful resource for faculty, staff and students. Those who work with Don see a practical approach to every problem, boundless commitment to the university, and endless optimism for the future. Dean Jicha is known as a listener among all segments of the Carolina population; sharing a problem with Don is always a good idea.

His level of involvement with undergraduates is exceptional. He writes about 300 letters of recommendation per year for students. How many faculty serve as the administrative leader for a unit the size of the General College and then stuff 300 letters into envelopes they printed themselves? Some of you may know that the first and second floor of Steele Building are occasionally referred to as Generous College: how well that nickname reflects the man at its center.

Don Jicha does not resemble the Jeffersonian ghost who walks the UVA campus on dark nights. Rather, he is a grass roots worker for improved campus life, both academic and social. As Don said earlier this week, "I'm not an administrator; I'm a trench fighter." Don often points out that "we're all just pilgrims," and what a great companion he is for the pilgrimage here at Carolina. Quietly he has often watched others take responsibility for his successes; equally often he has accepted responsibility for the errors of others. One nominating letter noted that "Don is as much a part of our University as the Davie Poplar, and every bit as strong and dependable."

Is it possible to reward a lifetime of university service as an outstanding instructor and dependable administrator with the Jefferson Award? Yes, it is. Today Don Jicha has been chosen by this faculty as the 1997 Thomas Jefferson Award recipient.

Prepared and presented by Joseph L. Templeton, Professor of Chemistry and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.