

Gladys Hall Coates Doctor of Laws

Gladys Hall Coates came to Chapel Hill in 1928 from her native Virginia as the young bride of a law professor. Over the intervening 73 years she has had an immeasurable influence on the intangible spirit of this place. Mrs. Coates never matriculated as a student; never held a faculty position nor taught a class; never served on the Board of Trustees. Yet her lifetime of achievement and service to North Carolina and this University stands as the epitome of loyalty, devotion, gentility, and steadfast commitment to an ideal.

It is impossible to speak of one member of the Coates family without mentioning the other, for they were not only husband and wife, but a team whose success was mutually interdependent. Albert Coates founded the Institute of Government in 1931. He envisioned an arm of the University that would marshal its vast resources in aid of North Carolina's state and local governments. "The Institute," as it is almost universally known outside Chapel Hill, stands today as the nation's oldest, largest, and most influential university-based public service organization. Mrs. Coates was there at its birth, nurtured it through infancy, and, in tandem with her husband, brought it to maturity.

The Coates' 1978 joint work *The Story of Student Government in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* illustrates their collaboration. Mrs. Coates did the basic research, wrote the chapters on "The Coming of Women Students" and "The Society Portraits," wrote all of the captions for the pictures throughout the book, edited the manuscript, and oversaw all of the technical production processes. That partnership, begun in the early 1930s, had by 1978 produced dozens of books and monographs, some bearing only Albert Coates' name on the cover but all influenced by Mrs. Coates' keen intellect and close attention. She continues to write and speak on aspects of the University's history, especially concerning women and the Dialectic and Philanthropic Literary Societies. As recently as December 1999, she delivered the annual Kemp Plummer Battle Lecture, speaking of her memories of Thomas Wolfe and reading from his letters to Albert and her.

Gladys and Albert Coates were the first couple to have separate endowed professorships named in their honor at Carolina. They both received the General Alumni Association's Distinguished Service Medal and the Board of Trustees' William Richardson Davie Award, and today they become the first couple both to have received honorary degrees from Carolina. The building on Franklin Street that first housed the Institute of Government was named the Albert and Gladys Coates Building in 1997. Gladys Coates won Chi Omega's North Carolina Distinguished Service Award for Women in 1974 and was the first recipient of the Cornelia Phillips Spencer Bell Award (1994). She is a member of the Order of the Valkyries, the Order of the Golden Fleece, the North Caroliniana Society, the Friends of the Library, and the Chancellor's Club.