



### **Katherine Kilbourne Burgum, 1915-2005**

Katherine Kilbourne was born on February 26, 1915 in Minneapolis, Kansas. The daughter of Dr. Burton Kane Kilbourne and Daisy Conwell Kilbourne, Katherine was the youngest child, with four older brothers.

The family moved to Fargo in 1923, where her father became the first full-time public health doctor and instilled in his family a lifelong commitment to the betterment of the community, the region and the state.

After graduating from Fargo Central High School in 1933, she enrolled at North Dakota Agricultural College (NDAC), now North Dakota State University, graduating in 1937 with majors in Home Economics, Education, Foods and Nutrition, and a minor in Journalism. That same year, Katherine began her professional career teaching in Sayville, Long Island, New York. True to form, she simultaneously taught at Sayville, and took classes at Columbia University, receiving a Masters Degree in Home Economics, Education and Related Art from that institution in 1939. She was able then to fulfill her goal of teaching at the college level, and from 1939 through 1947, she was an instructor and assistant professor at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.

Katherine married Joseph Burgum from Arthur, North Dakota, on April 8, 1944. Joe and Katherine had been college sweethearts at NDAC, where they worked together on the college year book. After the attack on Pearl Harbor Joe enlisted in the Navy and served as an officer on the Destroyer USS Wren during WWII. After the war, the couple moved back to Arthur, where Joe joined the family grain business and they raised their children, Bradley, Barbara and Douglas.

In addition to the commitment to her young family, Katherine was active in the United Methodist Church at Arthur and led the church's new building committee. She also served on the Arthur School Board, was the first president of the St. Luke's Hospital Auxiliary in Fargo, and later served two terms as state president of the North Dakota Hospital Auxiliary Association. Katherine was a founder of the Cass County Historical Society, and served on its first board of directors. In 1957, she was chosen as one of two representatives from North Dakota to the Congress for Better Living in Washington, DC. She was also active in the March of Dimes and the North Dakota Cancer Society, as well as the Campfire Girls, the PTA, the Red Cross, and both the Red River Valley and Cass County Fair Associations. Katherine was also very involved in Republican Party politics at all levels, serving as National Committeewoman from North Dakota from 1968-72. In 1969, she was appointed to the National Motor Vehicle Safety Advisory Council.

Following her husband Joe's untimely death at age 53 in 1971, Katherine began to explore the job market. Already on the search committee for a new Dean for NDSU College of Home Economics, she was approached to take the job herself and reluctantly accepted the position of acting Dean in 1972. Katherine charged ahead, making a sorely needed addition to the College physical plant her number one priority. She was soon made full time Dean, and leveraging her astute political expertise and extensive personal contacts, she successfully lobbied the North Dakota Legislature for funding, and against all odds, ground was broken for the new addition in 1974. In 1998, the facility was renovated and renamed

the Katherine Kilbourne Burgum Family Life Center. Also during her tenure as Dean, the College of Home Economics experienced a dramatic rise in the number of faculty holding doctorates, and received large increases in the amount of research dollars and projects. During her tenure at NDSU, she remained active in many other areas of service. She continued on the Advisory Council on Highway Safety, pioneering such recommendations as seatbelts, airbags, and the third rear brake light on automobiles. She was named by President Gerald Ford as a member of the President's Advisory Council for Women's Educational Programs. Governor Link appointed her to his ad hoc committee on administrative practices in education, and she was one of twelve North Dakota delegates at the National Women's Conference in Houston, Texas.

Katherine's retirement as Dean in 1980 signaled a whole new round of activity. That same year, Governor Allen Olson named her to the State Social Service Board. In 1984, Governor Sinner appointed Katherine to the Study Commission on Fitness and Productivity and to the New Wealth Creation Task Force in 1986 and 1987. Governor Sinner also appointed her to the Preliminary Task Force for the Vision 2000 Committee. In 1989, Katherine was elected the Republican Presidential Elector and voted the North Dakota ballot in the National Electoral College for President George H.W. Bush. Katherine served on Boards of Directors for the Arthur Farmers Elevator, Western States Life Insurance Company, the NDSU Development Foundation, the St. Luke's Foundation, Red River Zoological Society, and Great Plains Software. She was an early believer in the possibilities at Great Plains, dedicated to the vision of building a world class company that was committed to improving the lives and business success of its partners and customers. She has received hundreds of honors and awards at the college, local, state and national level. These include an honorary doctorate from NDSU and the Greater North Dakota Award from the North Dakota Chamber of Commerce.

Katherine appreciated the work of artists and craftsmen, and thoughtful design for both indoor and outdoor spaces. She was a believer in the concept of art in everyday life, for everyone. She enjoyed seeing others excel in the performing arts, or in athletics, as she believed that everyone had the potential to shine in some endeavor. She enjoyed the beauty of the environment, the changing seasons in North Dakota, and loved sharing her joy in spotting birds and wildlife in natural habitats.

She was a living testament to what is now known as the Greatest Generation. Her selfless dedication to her family and friends, her tireless sense of duty to God and country, and her loyalty, wisdom, courage and unfailing good humor will serve as a role model for years to come.