A typical morning finds Karen Pollick doing yoga poses, eating her usual bowl of oatmeal, and then practicing three or more hours—which she says is “never enough”—on her violin or other instruments (and that doesn’t include rehearsal time for upcoming concerts). At lunch, she might attend a meet-the-president lunch with BSC alumni and friends. Many evenings are spent representing the college with her husband and Birmingham-Southern president, Dr. David Pollick. And, sometime in there, she manages to give concerts throughout the nation and world. This past fall—her first fall as Birmingham-Southern’s first lady—she even performed in Carnegie Hall. And, if that’s not enough, this statuesque beauty finds time for a few rounds of golf, writing poetry, and pursuing a variety of other interests.

She makes it all look easy.

“Being a president’s wife is not taxing for me,” Bentley Pollick explains. “For example, all the inauguration events were not stressful. I show up. I enjoy it. So many others make such days possible. But, making the switch from socializing to playing my music is more difficult. I have to juggle how much I socialize, what I eat, how much I eat, what I can’t drink … before I play. That is challenging. I’m used to juggling instruments within a concert, but this is different.”

She also says that people are what she enjoys most about her role as first lady.

“I always love meeting people,” she says. “I enjoy being part of an exchange of ideas. We’ve been hosting discussion sessions in our home with groups of faculty regarding the college’s future direction. David and I sit quietly on the perimeter, carefully listening. We want to do more and more of this with other groups across a broad range of topics. I love to entertain in this house. It’s strange. It goes from absolute monasticism and discipline with my music … to people. It requires quite a switch. I’m very lucky to have the resources and a support system that enable me to do both. I’m usually practicing right up until a half-hour before an event in our home. And I just go up and get dressed and come down. The way the house is set up, I have my studio and it doesn’t disturb me. But, it is all a joy.”

Bentley Pollick, who first met her husband after performing a concert at Lebanon Valley College, where he previously was president, is quick to point out that there’s more to it for her than simply being a president’s wife.

“I also think that beyond being a college president’s wife, it is about being David’s wife. I’d never been married before. In fact, I’d never particularly wanted to be married. Everything changed. I was going through life happily as a single woman. I was watching my sister, who had children—I was watching that evolution and I was on a different life path … a simpler ‘artiste’ kind of existence … very dynamic. Once David and I met, it was very clear that we were destined for each other. We do everything together. We enjoy doing joint projects … decorating together and shopping together. I’ve learned to love things that I didn’t even know I liked to do. He listens to more Bartók—and I listen to the occasional Jimmy Buffett.”

A match made in identity and difference.

BSC President Dr. David Pollick on Karen Bentley Pollick:

“I’m immensely proud of her. Presidents tend to have to be in the front row all the time—they are never left alone in a room. It comes with the territory. But what’s really great is when I’m involved with Karen’s work and we’re out on the road at one of her concerts, no one cares about me, no one knows me. I can show up in Levi’s at a sweatshirt and sit in the back row and just be her biggest fan.”

It comes naturally for her.

Being at home on a college campus, being a musician, even being in the South—it all makes sense for Karen Pollick. Raised in the Palo Alto, Calif., community surrounding Stanford University, her mother worked in the Microbiology, German,