

July 2, 2007

Powder Springs resident earned degree at age 73

By Ashley Hungerford

Marietta Daily Journal Staff Writer

POWDER SPRINGS - Patricia Richards raised five children, she has 12 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

But there is more to this 73-year-old Powder Springs resident.

In July 2006, Ms. Richards graduated from Kennesaw State University with a master's degree in public administration, and if you ask her, she'll tell you she's contemplating pursuing her doctorate degree.

And Ms. Richards didn't just earn her master's; she graduated with a 4.0 grade point average, earning her a place on the National Dean's List.

"If I set a goal for myself," she said, "I will not sway."

She said the woman in charge of her master's program asked her why she wanted her master's. Ms. Richards's response was, "Because I'm smart, I'm intelligent and I have a mind and heart to do it."

At her Powder Springs home Tuesday, Ms. Richards put her cap, gown and master's hood back on and was taken back to the day of her graduation. She was one of three people graduating with a master's in public administration at the July ceremony.

"When they put (my master's hood) on me, I thought it was the greatest time of my life," she said. "I was crying. I was so happy I was getting my degree that I didn't care."

While at Kennesaw getting her two degrees, Ms. Richards has some familiar company. Her granddaughter, Carmen Meriweather, was also a Kennesaw student.

"It was amazing, she and I being in school together," Ms. Richards said.

Ms. Richards was 62 before she stepped foot into a college to study in 1997. She received her undergraduate degree from Kennesaw in 2003.

After taking the Graduate Record Examination, she completed her master's in one year and three months. In Georgia, college tuition and fees are free for anyone 62 years old or older. Ms. Richards said she also earned grant money and filed for financial aid to pay for books, transportation and other college costs.

She took some time off from pursuing her degree when her oldest son, Harvey, died in August of 1999. She said she was suppose to go back to school that September, but said it took a while to get back after her son's death.

Ms. Richards other four children - Leroy, Jr., Martha Meriweather, James "Friday" Thomas and Kerry - stay in close contact with their mother. Three live nearby in Cobb County, and one lives in South Carolina. Ms. Richards said she talks to all of them almost daily.

"I think taking care of your kids is the most important thing to me," she said. "I love my kids. They are such gracious people to me."

After raising five children, a majority of the time on her own, Ms. Richards says she feels like she can do anything.

Prior to pursuing higher education, Ms. Richards worked for 22 years at the U.S. Post Office in Atlanta before retiring after two knee replacement surgeries. She also worked as a cashier at Lockheed Martin and at the Cobb County Health Center. Sometimes Ms. Richards said she had to work two jobs to support her five children while they were living in the Ford Hill Homes housing projects on Lemon Street in Marietta.

"A lot of people think they can't go to school, but you can go and you don't have to wait until you're 62 to go," she said.

But don't ask Ms. Richards if she ever thought about quitting college.

"It never came into my head!" she said. "I never had a negative thought about school."

With her master's degree, Ms. Richards said she wants to get a job with the Cobb County juvenile detention center as a research analyst. She said she wants to work with the children in the facility and let them know they don't have to live a life of breaking the law.

"I don't think God brought any children into this world that are bad," she said. "Any child deserves a chance in life, and the parents need to stick with them. Helping those children in juvenile detention has been on my mind since I walked into that school."

Ms. Richards said she doesn't think all parents take care of their children like she did when she was raising her children. She said parents are not as involved, and some parents don't stick with their children once they mess up.

"I made it my business to go to their schools at least twice a week," she said. "I put the fear of God in my children. I think parents should stick with their children. If you teach them right, they'll do right - It's amazing what children will do if you give them a little bit of help."

If Ms. Richards can't get a job with the juvenile delinquent system, then she said she'll pursue her doctorate and eventually teach.

"I want to be an advocate for kids and do a lot of research," she said. "If I don't accomplish anything, I'll go back and get my doctorate."

Ms. Richards's children and grandchildren are extremely proud of their mother and grandmother's accomplishments, even though Ms. Richards said they thought she was crazy at first.

Martha Meriweather, Ms. Richards's daughter, said her mom has always wanted to earn her

master's degree. She said her mother's determination, which she also instilled in her children, is what drives her.

"I see the go-getter she really is," she said. "She's much younger than her age."

James "Friday" Thomas, Marietta High School football coach, said after his mother helped put all of them through high school and college, it was her turn to attend college.

"She's just the kind of mom that pushes you and makes you do the best," he said. "She's just a wonderful lady, and she's the best mom in the world."

Dr. Betty Siegel, president emeritus of Kennesaw State University and friend of Ms. Richards said she is proud of how Ms. Richards is an example of life-long learning.

"I think she is a beautiful example of someone who has the amazing capacity to keep on learning through a lifetime," she said.

And Ms. Richards's life-long learning isn't over yet. She said she's ready for her next challenge.

"I'm ready to challenge anybody," she said.

February 3, 2007

MDJ chose well with Lipson

DEAR EDITOR:

My compliments to the Marietta Daily Journal for the beautiful choice it made for this year's Citizen of the Year Award. Certainly no one, living or deceased, deserves it more than our wonderful friend and colleague the late Dr. Robert Lipson. All of us are the better for knowing such a fine, loving visionary and community steward. He would have loved receiving this prestigious award. Thanks for your role in making this award go to one of the finest men I'll ever have had the pleasure of knowing.

Betty Siegel, Ph.D.

President Emeritus

Kennesaw State University

Copyright © 2007 Marietta Daily Journal. All rights reserved.

All other trademarks and Registered trademarks are property of their respective owners.

January 7, 2007

Longtime Cobb educator takes time to look back

By Jon Gillooly

Marietta Daily Journal Staff Writer

MABLETON - Georgians would be hard pressed to find someone more knowledgeable about teaching than the Cobb school board's Betty Gray.

The 73-year-old Mableton resident, who is entering her 54th year in education, retired as principal of Compton Elementary School in 1990. She was first elected to the school board in 1992 and continues to mentor student teachers in her job with Kennesaw State University.

"She's such a strong advocate for education," said former KSU president and friend Dr. Betty Siegel, noting it is important for people in the winter of their lives to share what they have learned.

"You can learn from the wisdom of lives well spent, and it's important to keep on giving as long as you can," Dr. Siegel said.

This semester, KSU's College of Education has about 270 elementary school student teachers. The student teachers have one semester in the schools to observe and evaluate school operations before they're given a class of their own for a semester, with a veteran teacher nearby in case they need help.

Ms. Gray, who became a supervisor of student teaching with KSU in 1998, is monitoring 10 student teachers this semester in various Cherokee County schools, evaluating each of them on four different occasions. They're judged on how well they know the students and classroom management.

"It can't look like a war zone," said Ms. Gray, whose past students range from former Gov. Roy Barnes to Jimmy "Red" Phillips, an Auburn University graduate who played for the Los Angeles Rams.

Ms. Gray said she is not a pushover when it comes to grading student teachers.

"I can tell if a teacher is faking it," she said. "As principal, I had teachers who didn't stay

with me - by design."

Since her first job teaching high school history and journalism in Alabama in 1953, where she was paid \$190 a month for 10 months with no summer pay, the role of a teacher has changed for better and for worse, Ms. Gray said.

One of the most dramatic changes in the last 50 years is the way teachers are viewed by the community, she said. In the 1950s, teachers were respected as bastions of knowledge and if students ever acted up in class, a call to their parents would put an immediate end to it.

"It doesn't seem as positive and I'd like to see that change," Ms. Gray said. "I'd like to see teachers regarded as beacons of learning."

She said the transformation is a result of change in expectations. "I think we all probably expected the same thing then. Communities had different expectations. They expected teachers to be teachers."

When she interviewed for her job at South Cobb High School in 1957, she wore a hat and gloves. And when the school held its football game, she was expected to be there. An appearance at a "gentlemen's club" would have meant termination, she said.

Part of what has led to the change in the way the community views teachers is the increased career options available to women, Ms. Gray said. Moreover, families don't stay put anymore and are more willing to litigate.

Ms. Gray used to be able to say it was healthy to hug an elementary school child who lost his puppy. "That is a risk now," she said.

A constant factor throughout Ms. Gray's career has been the variety of students a teacher is faced with in the classroom, even though schools were racially segregated when she began teaching.

In 1953, while teaching in Alexander City, Ala., she learned how to teach a class divided up of city kids, rural kids and mill kids - children whose parents worked at the garment factories in the area.

"People think the diversity we have now is a challenge, but it's always been a challenge in the classroom," she said, admitting her first non-English-speaking students didn't show up until the late 1980s.

Colleges today are training teachers in their subjects better than before, Ms. Gray said, with teachers receiving more training in their jobs and additional student evaluations that give teachers better information about how to instruct children at different learning levels.

Having taught in Cobb for half a century, she is often stopped in the grocery store by former students who are now grandparents, who tell her stories beginning with "do you remember when."

"The 'do you remember when' is the best tool I have in evaluating if my learning plan had the impact it needed to have," she said.

With an annual scholarship given to teacher hopefuls in her name and a building at Pebblebrook High School named after her, Ms. Gray said a career in education has been fulfilling.

"For me, teaching is the only thing I ever wanted to do," she said.

jgillooly@mdjonline.com

Copyright © 2007 Marietta Daily Journal. All rights reserved.

All other trademarks and Registered trademarks are property of their respective owners.

Q&A ON THE NEWS

Published on: 03/07/07

Q: I read that ex-Kennesaw State President Betty Siegel, a regular at the Waffle House near the university, was just the fourth person given the Golden Waffle Award. Who are the other three and why were they recognized?

JERRY SCHWARTZ, Chamblee

A: Waffle House spokesman Pat Warner says the first Golden Waffle Award, the highest award for customers, was given to Rosie O'Donnell in 1999. After dining at a Waffle House in Destin, Fla., Rosie was so impressed with the three-person crew that she flew them to New York to appear on her show. They cooked waffles on the show and were treated to a stay in a fine hotel and a Broadway play.

In 2006, United Auto Workers President Jim Graham and Director Lloyd C. Mahaffey of Youngstown, Ohio, were given the award on behalf of the entire UAW membership. Active and retired union members also received discount cards honored in all Ohio Waffle House restaurants.

Q: Bags of oranges purchased at grocery stores contain a note that says: "Not for distribution in Arizona, California, Hawaii, Louisiana, Texas and in American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands." Why?

JOEL ARMISTEAD, Lilburn

A: The labeling is due to the August 2006 Florida citrus quarantine for citrus canker, according to David Lowe of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The quarantine allows citrus transport from Florida to noncitrus-producing states, like Georgia, but not to other citrus-producing states or territories. Hurricanes that hit the Sunshine State in 2004 and 2005 spread the damaging wind-driven plant disease.

Staff researchers Alice Wertheim and Joni Zeccola contributed to this column.

Do you have a question about the news? Our news researchers will try to get an answer. Call 404-222-2002 or e-mail q&a@ajc.com (include your name and city). Sorry, individual responses are not possible.

Diverse Online

Spectrum

A Conversation with Dr. Betty Siegel

By staff

Aug 9, 2007, 14:36

A Conversation with Dr. Betty Siegel



Dr. Betty Siegel, president emeritus of Kennesaw State University in Georgia, has been logging many miles in her retirement, in many cases to promote and help implement First-Year academies. She spent three months in South Africa and most recently traveled to Hawaii to attend the 20th International Conference for the First-Year Experience. Long a proponent of diversity before it became part of higher education's lexicon, Siegel

says, "Diversity is ethics in action. It's ethical to treat people as equals, to believe that everyone has untapped potential, that all of us are able, valuable and responsible and should be treated accordingly." Siegel speaks with Diverse about her recent trip to South Africa and what she's up to next.

DI: You spent three months as a visiting scholar at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. What were you doing there?

BS: I came to work with Dr. Ludolph Botha, the director of academic support, on all aspects of implementing the First-Year Academy. As a former rector, psychologist and teacher, I'm convinced that the first-year experience is critical to the overall success of university students. We have found the program enormously successful in our efforts to align student success with academic success.

DI: Do universities in South Africa have a desire to adopt any features of the U.S. higher ed system?

BS: Yes, we can learn best practices from each other. My colleague from Stellenbosch and I recently presented at the International Conference on the First-Year Experience on "Using the FYE As a Vehicle for Institutional Transformation: An African-American Perspective." In addition, the universities in South Africa are being encouraged to become well integrated; yet they're struggling to attract high-quality Black academics. Another big issue they're dealing with is how to produce the highly skilled people that they'll need to play a role in their growing economy. They have a lack of skilled people in the math and sciences.

DI: What do you see as the top challenges facing universities in South Africa?

BS: Diversity is a critical concern of higher education in South Africa, and universities struggle with the mandate to serve previously underrepresented and denied populations. Progress is

being made, and ever-increasing numbers of different kinds of students faced with different kinds of needs are streaming into the universities.

At the same time, the universities have an obligation to create a campus culture and environment that is committed to accommodate these varied students and their needs. The need is to be concerned, not just with access, but with meaningful access.

DI: What's next for you?

BS: From the South African experience, Stellenbosch University is going to take the lead on developing a national conclave on the first-year experience. Also, a group of U.S. college presidents are going to meet Sept. 23-27, 2007, in Sundance to discuss the best practices in ethical leadership at U.S. universities and the lessons we learned as presidents that can be helpful to universities worldwide. And next year in South Africa we want to meet with their country's education leaders to discuss global ethical leadership and social responsibility for the common good.

Tuesday, June 12, 2007

This Day

In History

Austell - In 1997, the Austell police had its first four-legged officer after the City Council approved the addition of a police dog. The \$6,500 cost for the dog, which included travel expenses, was donated by Wayne Hillard, owner of Kellee Kars. Dr. Gary Bullard, a local vet in the city, promised a lifetime of free health care and food for the dog.

KENNESAW - In 1997, Dr. Betty Siegel, president of Kennesaw State University, was honored as "Georgia Woman of the Year" for 1997 by the Georgia Commission on Women at a reception and dinner held at 103 West restaurant in Atlanta. On hand to honor Dr. Siegel were Lt. Gov. Pierre Howard, Donna Coles and Commissioner Deana Womack. Commission Chair Nellie Duke and Vice Chair Juliana McConnell presided and welcomed guests. Commission secretary Dianne Rogers read the governor's proclamation honoring Dr. Siegel. Rosalynn Carter, the 1996 honoree, was the honorary chair for the event.

Marietta - In 1997, Cobb County Commission Chairman Bill Byrne, whose government's reluctance to publicly disclose documents was the focus of a lawsuit by The Marietta Daily Journal, accused the newspaper of "violating the judge's order" when it published two articles on the case following testimony. The newspaper had an article on the lawsuit proceedings in the next day's edition and other articles were planned over the next several days. In March, the newspaper filed suit to force the county to make public documents relating to Cobb's \$26 million co-composting facility. The county had refused to hand over the documents requested under the Georgia open records law. At a meeting of the Board of Commissioners, which assembled as the Solid Waste Management Authority, Byrne spoke out on the case in order to tell what he called the "other side" of what the newspaper had reported.

Byrne did not indicate whether he would seek to have The Marietta Daily Journal and its officials held in contempt of court for violating what he claimed was a judge's order to report only one story on the proceedings. State Rep. Roy Barnes, who was representing the newspaper in its civil case against Cobb, said the remarks by Byrne were puzzling and had no basis in fact.

Copyright © 2007 Marietta Daily Journal. All rights reserved.

All other trademarks and Registered trademarks are property of their respective owners.

July 16, 2007

A new type of leadership

Betty L. Siegel became president of Kennesaw State University in 1981. She was the first woman president elected to a state-supported university. Lisa A Rossbacher was the second president of Southern Polytechnic State and African American Lee Rhyant became the general manager of Lockheed Martin. These people helped usher in a new millennium of diverse leadership in Cobb County, and set a precedent for the state of Georgia.



Copyright © 2007 Marietta Daily Journal. All rights reserved.
All other trademarks and Registered trademarks are property of their respective owners.

February 24, 2007

Dr. Betty Siegel

DR. BETTY L. SIEGEL, president emeritus of Kennesaw State University, will have a booth dedicated in her honor Tuesday at the Waffle House where she dined across from campus nearly every morning during her 25-year tenure at the university.

The dedication ceremony will be held at 8 a.m. at the Waffle House across from campus at 3340 Frey Road in Kennesaw.

Kennesaw State's second president, Siegel ate breakfast at the restaurant almost daily and met with students and staff while at the diner. Siegel stepped down in 2006 after serving for two-and-a-half decades at KSU. Upon her retirement, Waffle House gave her a "Golden Waffle Award" in "recognition of being a goodwill ambassador for its restaurants."

Copyright © 2007 Marietta Daily Journal. All rights reserved.
All other trademarks and Registered trademarks are property of their respective owners.

February 28, 2007

Forever Betty's booth

By Jon Gillooly

Marietta Daily Journal Staff Writer

Dr. Betty Siegel, who retired last year from Kennesaw State University after 25 years at the helm, has broken another record.

The Waffle House across from the campus on Frey Road dedicated a booth in her honor Tuesday.

Just about every morning for a quarter of a century, Dr. Siegel held court at the Waffle House, devouring three newspapers and "endless cups of coffee" before talking with anyone who walked in the door, from professors and university leaders to students and waitresses.

"She's such a bright spot in people's mornings," said Allen Newcomb, district manager for the Waffle House, who said he couldn't recall his restaurant ever dedicating a booth in honor of a university president, or anyone else for that matter.

"She talks to everyone," Newcomb said. "She's been a great inspiration to people, especially our employees. They love Ms. Betty and she cares a lot about them."

Her husband, Joel Siegel, an associate magistrate court judge for the City of Kennesaw, called the Waffle House an "incubator of ideas" for many of the successful programs now in operation at KSU.

"Betty has these 'Waffle House moments,'" Joel Siegel explained, noting how in the middle of a conversation with university leaders - scribbling away on napkins - she comes up with new ideas for the university.

Dr. Siegel also awarded professors with a free meal at the Waffle House when students would tell her about their favorite teachers.

But perhaps the underlying reason Dr. Siegel has been drawn to the Waffle House over the years is it brings back memories of her childhood as a Kentucky coal miner's daughter.

Living in an Appalachian home without central heat, Dr. Siegel recalled how her mother rose early in the morning to light the family's coal stove to make breakfast, removing the chill of the night from her family's clothes by hanging them near the fire.

"It reminds me of my mother scrambling eggs over that old, old stove," Dr. Siegel said of the Waffle House.

Near her special booth, which overlooks the KSU athletic fields, will hang her "Golden Waffle Award," given to her by the Waffle House at her celebrated retirement gala last year "in recognition of being a goodwill ambassador for its restaurants."

"There are not too many words that describe Ms. Betty except for 'awesome,'" Newcomb said.

Joe Wittig, a sophomore majoring in business management at KSU, said that calling Dr. Siegel his role model would not be enough.

"What makes her different is her invitational leadership," Wittig said. "She's extremely approachable and friendly. She cares. It makes you want to spend time with her.

"And her stories are great."

jgillooly@mdjonline.com



Copyright © 2007 Marietta Daily Journal. All rights reserved.
All other trademarks and Registered trademarks are property of their respective owners.

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The (GA)

February 28, 2007

Section: Metro News

Edition: Main; The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Page: B1

Already among eatery's elite, 'Miss Betty' gets own table

AIXA M. PASCUAL

Staff

Betty Siegel has eaten breakfast nearly every day for the last 26 years at the Waffle House across from **Kennesaw State** University.

On Tuesday, the 76-year-old former KSU president had more than her usual eggs with half an order of bacon: The restaurant named a corner table "Miss Betty's Booth" in her honor.

"It's rare that we do this," said Pat Warner, a Waffle House spokesman. "We made it special for her."

More than a year ago, the Norcross-based restaurant chain honored Siegel with its Golden Waffle Award, its highest honor for customers. Only three other people have received a similar distinction. She also received coupons for free food.

Siegel retired last summer after 25 years as president of **Kennesaw State**.

She said the sound Waffle House cooks make when scrambling eggs reminds her of her mom scrambling eggs when she was growing up in eastern Kentucky.

Though retired, she still has an office at the university and goes to South Africa next week to consult with public and private universities.

"I'm busier than I've ever been," Siegel said.

<ImageData>

Photo

ANDY SHARP / Staff

Retired **Kennesaw State** University president Betty Siegel and her husband, Joel Siegel, attend her favorite Waffle House's naming a booth for its 26-year loyal customer.

</ImageData>