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Mother of the Year

Furman University

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Furman alumni news

CLASS NOTES SPRING 06, cont.

Evelyn Rowell Dill McNeely '43, December 28, Greenville. She was retired from Cone Elementary School, where she taught for 42 years.

Jerrold Watson, Sr. '43, February 17, Monetta, S.C. A peach and vegetable grower for 60 years, he received the prestigious Mr. Peach Award in 1997 and the National

Outstanding Peach Grower Award in 1996 for his contributions to the peach industry. He served on the S.C. Governor's Agriculture Advisory Council and the S.C. Farm Bureau Fruit Commodity Board, and was president of the National Peach Council and the Ponderosa Country Club. He also served on the

boards of Federal Land Bank and NationsBank and was a member of the Batesburg-Leesville Moose Club and Lions Club. He was in the Naval Air Corps during World War II in the Pacific theatre.

Ralph Lattimore, Sr. '44, January 24, Greenville. He was a retired Baptist minister,

having served churches in Georgia, Kentucky and South Carolina. He also held several interim pastorates after retirement. He served on the General Board of the South Carolina Baptist Convention and was vice president of the convention and of the South Carolina Pastor's Conference.

Mother of the Year

As a mother of four and a veteran of 27 years of teaching in elementary schools, Jean Orr Belcher has had a strong influence on hundreds of youngsters.

One of her major causes has been to inspire children — and, indeed, all members of the community — to enjoy and support the fine arts.

Now, she has a bully pulpit from which to promote her love for the arts: She is the South Carolina Mother of the Year.

Belcher, a 1953 Furman graduate and resident of Barnwell, was honored in late March at a reception at the Governor's Mansion in Columbia. In April, she traveled to South Dakota for the national Mother of the Year convention.

Appropriately enough, she was nominated for the award by one of her "children" — the Barnwell County Arts Council, which she was instrumental in starting and which she directed for four years.

Her youngest daughter, Miriam Belcher Ponder, told *The State* newspaper, "She is an amazing woman. She did it all, did it well and was a wonderful role model."

Indeed. She worked side by side with her husband, Posey Belcher '54 (H '82), during his distinguished career as a Baptist minister in the Carolinas. Her talents in the classroom led to her being named Teacher of the Year in Walterboro, S.C. At every opportunity

State's top mom a strong advocate for children, the arts

along the way, she promoted the value of the arts, encouraging community interest and support.

In recent years, Jean has worked to help revitalize the town of Barnwell and to dedicate a park recognizing the history of the town and state. In 1998 she was named Barnwell County Woman of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce.

Her children benefited from their mother's patience, determination and quiet strength. All four were the valedictorians of their high school classes and went on to graduate *magna cum laude* from Furman — just like their mother.

With that track record, it's not surprising that she was named the state's top mom.

"She guided us," daughter Elizabeth Belcher Mixon told *The State*. "She knew when to wear the right hat. She knew when I needed just a listening ear. Even when I didn't ask, she knew when I needed advice. I never remember her raising her voice."

Philip Belcher said that his mother "encouraged her children to do their best at all they did. That was a lesson I took with me."

Evidently, his siblings did as well. David '79, a concert pianist, is provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs at the University of Arkansas-Little Rock; Philip '82 is president of the Mary Black Foundation in Spartanburg, S.C.; Elizabeth Mixon '87 is director of choral



Jean and Posey Belcher have been married for 51 years.

activities and chair of visual and performing arts at Northwestern High in Rock Hill, S.C.; and Miriam Ponder '91 of Blythewood, S.C., is a financial analyst for Computer Sciences Corporation.

In a fitting tribute to their parents, the Belcher children established the Belcher Organ Fund at Furman. The first concert in the series was held last fall.

Today, Jean Belcher is no doubt enjoying the chance to pass on her caring nature, civic-mindedness and love of the arts to yet another generation — her five grandchildren.

So it's likely that this mother's influence won't end any time soon.