



The Downtowner

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Louisville's New Mayor Looks Forward ... and Back --

An Interview with Rita Culvern

POISED TO TAKE THE REINS AS MAYOR OF LOUISVILLE IN AN OUT-OF-CYCLE ELECTION FOLLOWING THE UNTIMELY DEATH OF MAYOR BYRON BURT, RITA CULVERN TOOK TIME OUT FROM HER BUSY SCHEDULE TO FIELD QUESTIONS FROM FRIENDS PRESIDENT HELEN AIKMAN. THE INTERVIEW IS PUBLISHED IN *THE DOWNTOWNER* TO GIVE LOUISVILLIANS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GET BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH THEIR NEW LEADER.

MS. AIKMAN: I WANT TO LEAD OFF BY SAYING HOW MUCH WE AT FRIENDS OF HISTORIC DOWNTOWN LOUISVILLE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO HAVING YOU AS LOUISVILLE'S NEXT MAYOR. ARE YOU EXCITED?

MS. CULVERN: I WILL TAKE OFFICE MARCH 21ST, AND YES I AM VERY EXCITED! WHEN THIS IDEA OF BECOMING MAYOR BEGAN, I MUST SAY, I WAS A VERY RELUCTANT CANDIDATE BECAUSE I HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE JOB OR THE POLITICAL PROCESS. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF ALL THE CALLS, LETTERS, AND REQUESTS, I THOUGHT, "OKAY, I WILL PUT MY NAME IN AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS." WITHIN TWO DAYS, IT WAS DECIDED AND I JUST HAD TO DEAL WITH IT! TRUE TO MY NATURE, I IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO ASK FOR INFORMATION FROM DON RHODES, FOR WHOM I HAVE IMMENSE RESPECT AND BELIEVE HAS MANAGED THE CITY WELL DURING HIS TENURE. I HAVE REVIEWED SIX MONTHS OF MINUTES, AUDITED AND UNAUDITED FINANCIALS, A LIST OF EMPLOYEES AND THEIR DEPARTMENTS, TERMS OF COUNCILMEN, PRESENT COUNCILMEN COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS, THE CITY CHARTER, AND OTHER DOCUMENTS. I HAVE MADE TENTATIVE PLANS FOR A COUNCIL RETREAT, ONCE OUR NEW COUNCILMAN IS ELECTED, SO THAT WE CAN DEVELOP A STRONG PLAN OF WHAT CAN REALISTICALLY BE ACCOMPLISHED IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS, WHAT OUR NEW VISION WILL BE, AND HOW WE CAN GO ABOUT GETTING THE JOB DONE!

MS. AIKMAN: I GUESS YOU REALLY HAVE TO BE DIZZY WITH EXCITEMENT TO STAY UP LATE AT NIGHT COMMUNING WITH THE UNAUDITED FINANCIALS. I WANT TO HEAR YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FUTURE – YOUR FUTURE AND LOUISVILLE’S FUTURE – BUT I’D LIKE YOU TO TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE PAST, ABOUT HOW YOU GOT HERE. I THINK MOST OF OUR READERS KNOW YOU HAVE BEEN CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF JEFFERSON HOSPITAL FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, BUT THEY MAY NOT KNOW HOW YOU ROSE TO THAT POSITION. HOW DID YOU COME TO CALL LOUISVILLE HOME?

MS. CULVERN: I HAVE BEEN MARRIED TO JOE CULVERN FOR 42 YEARS. THIS IS HIS HOME. DURING OUR ENGAGEMENT AND THE FIRST EIGHT YEARS OF OUR MARRIAGE (WHEN WE LIVED IN DUBLIN, MY HOMETOWN), WE CAME TO LOUISVILLE OFTEN TO VISIT WITH HIS PARENTS, BOB AND HELEN CULVERN. I SOON CAME TO LOVE LOUISVILLE AND ONCE WE MOVED HERE IN 1972, IT TRULY BECAME MY HOME TOO. I HAD MET JOE IN 1962 THROUGH MY SISTER, JANET, WHO WORKED WITH HIM AT J.P. STEVENS IN MILLEDGEVILLE. HE WAS THERE FOR A FEW YEARS, UNTIL HE TRANSFERRED TO THE DUBLIN PLANT, ONCE WE BECAME ENGAGED. I WAS IN ATLANTA AT THAT TIME IN NURSING SCHOOL. ONCE I GRADUATED IN 1964, WE MARRIED ON JANUARY 2, 1965. I CAN STILL REMEMBER ALL THE PEOPLE FROM LOUISVILLE WHO MADE THE TRIP TO DUBLIN FOR THE WEDDING – MANY OF THOSE PEOPLE HAVE PASSED AWAY, BUT THOSE REMAINING ARE STILL OUR NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS. AFTER EIGHT YEARS, JOE DECIDED HE WANTED TO COME HOME AND WORK WITH MR. BILL PRICHARD AND LEARN TO BECOME A “FARMER.” SO WITH ONE CHILD, BEN, 2 ½, AND EIGHT MONTHS PREGNANT WITH DAUGHTER, STEPHANIE, WE MOVED TO LOUISVILLE. WHEN STEPHANIE, WHO IS NOW ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OF JEFFERSON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL, BECAME EIGHT MONTHS OLD, I BEGAN TO WORK FOR JEFFERSON HOSPITAL. AT THAT TIME WE WERE IN THE OLD HOSPITAL, WHICH IS NOW THE LOUISVILLE CITY HALL-----BOY HAVE I COME FULL CIRCLE ---BACK WHERE I STARTED!

MS. AIKMAN: YOU MENTION BEN AND STEPHANIE. TELL US A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THEM.

MS. CULVERN: OUR SON BEN IS NOW 37, LIVES AT HOME AND ATTENDS THE JEFFERSON COUNTY SERVICE CENTER. STEPHANIE IS MARRIED TO KEN HILDEBRANT, WHO IS THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OF LOUISVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL. TOGETHER, THEY CONTINUE TO PURSUE THEIR EDUCATION – HAVING RECENTLY COMPLETED THEIR

MASTERS, THEY ARE WORKING ON THEIR SPECIALIST DEGREE. THEY ARE THE PROUD PARENTS OF JACKSON, EIGHT, AND JORDAN, FOUR, WHO ARE BOTH STUDENTS AT LOUISVILLE ACADEMY.

MS. AIKMAN: DESCRIBE YOUR YEARS AT THE HOSPITAL. WHAT WAS JEFFERSON HOSPITAL LIKE WHEN YOU BEGAN WORKING THERE?

MS. CULVERN: I BEGAN MY CAREER AT JEFFERSON HOSPITAL AS A CHARGE NURSE (RN), MAKING \$3.75/HOUR. MARY SUE RACHELS WAS DIRECTOR OF NURSES AND SHE ONLY MADE \$4.25. WHEN WE MOVED INTO THE NEW FACILITY IN MARCH 1974, I WAS NAMED HOUSE SUPERVISOR AND THAT JUNE, I BECAME NURSING SUPERVISOR OF SURGICAL SERVICES. THAT JOB EVENTUALLY GREW TO ALSO INCLUDE, ER SUPERVISOR, UTILIZATION REVIEW COORDINATOR, AND DRG COORDINATOR. I SEEM TO HAVE A PROBLEM SAYING NO. IT WAS A CHALLENGE TO KEEP ALL THESE JOBS GOING AT ONE TIME, BUT THE EXPERIENCE CERTAINLY GAVE ME A WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION ABOUT HOW THE HOSPITAL WAS RUN AND HOW IT SURVIVED FINANCIALLY. IN 1985, I WAS ALSO NAMED DIRECTOR OF NURSING. AFTER A YEAR OF THAT ADDITIONAL DUTY, BARBARA COFER AGREED TO TAKE OVER SURGERY.

MS. AIKMAN: AND HOW DID YOU MOVE INTO A MORE EXECUTIVE ROLE?

MS. CULVERN: JEFFERSON HOSPITAL, WHICH WAS PURCHASED FROM HUMANA BY THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY OF JEFFERSON COUNTY AND THE CITY OF LOUISVILLE, GEORGIA IN NOVEMBER 1977, WAS MANAGED BY VARIOUS MANAGEMENT COMPANIES OVER THE NEXT NINE YEARS. IN 1986, THE AUTHORITY FIRED THE MANAGEMENT COMPANY AND HIRED THE ADMINISTRATOR WHO WAS WORKING FOR THEM. THE HOSPITAL, WHICH HAD NEVER MADE A PROFIT, CONTINUED TO STRUGGLE – LOSING MONEY AND DOCTORS, AND ON DECEMBER 12, 1990, THE AUTHORITY FIRED THAT ADMINISTRATOR, AND ASKED ME TO BE INTERIM ADMINISTRATOR UNTIL AN APPROPRIATE REPLACEMENT COULD BE FOUND.

SO NOW, I WAS ADMINISTRATOR AND DIRECTOR OF NURSES. YOU CANNOT IMAGINE THE DIRE POSITION THE HOSPITAL WAS IN FINANCIALLY. WE HAD JUST ENDED A YEAR WITH A \$500,000 LOSS TO OPERATIONS, THERE WAS ONLY A TINY AMOUNT OF MONEY IN THE OPERATING ACCOUNT, AND LITTLE RESERVES IN THE AUTHORITY ACCOUNTS. BILLS COULD NOT BE PAID – THERE WAS NO MONEY – THE 74 EMPLOYEES HAD TO BE

PAID EVERY TWO WEEKS – THE CHALLENGE WAS *HUGE!* I AM A REGISTERED NURSE BY EDUCATION AND TRAINING. I DO NOT HAVE AN MBA OR A MASTERS IN HEALTH ADMINISTRATION – BUT SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE QUICKLY OR THE HOSPITAL WAS GOING UNDER. I CALLED ON MY TRAINING IN TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT, AND PULLED THE STAFF TOGETHER AND HAD THEM TELL ME HOW THE BILLING PROCESS WORKED AND WHAT THE BARRIERS WERE. WE ALL WORKED TOGETHER AND AT THE END OF THAT YEAR, JEFFERSON HOSPITAL HAD ITS FIRST PROFIT – \$25,000! DURING THAT FIRST YEAR THE AUTHORITY MADE THE DECISION TO RETAIN ME AS ADMINISTRATOR/CEO, AND MARY SUE RACHELS AGREED TO AGAIN TAKE OVER AS DIRECTOR OF NURSES.

MS. AIKMAN: BESIDES TRANSFORMING THE HOSPITAL FROM INSOLVENCY INTO A THRIVING ENTERPRISE, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY HAVE BEEN YOUR BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS A LEADER THERE?

MS. CULVERN: SOME OF THE BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS HAVE BEEN BRINGING PRENATAL CARE TO JEFFERSON COUNTY THROUGH OUR JEFFERSON HOSPITAL PRENATAL CENTER. THE INFANT MORTALITY RATE IN 1993 WAS A WHOPPING 29%--- AFTER ONE YEAR OF THE CENTER'S OPENING IT WAS CUT IN HALF AND IS NOW LESS THAN 1%! WE WENT FROM THREE PHYSICIANS ADMITTING TO THE HOSPITAL IN 1994 TO OUR PRESENT WELL ROUNDED STAFF OF SEVEN (SOON TO BE NINE) LOCAL PHYSICIANS, AND EIGHT VISITING CONSULTANTS. WE HAVE BUILT RURAL HEALTH CLINICS IN THE THREE LARGER CITIES OF OUR COUNTY AND OFFER OUR COMMUNITY, NOT ONLY EXCELLENT PRIMARY HEALTH CARE, BUT RENAL DIALYSIS, PEDIATRICS, CARDIOLOGY, PODIATRY, DERMATOLOGY, GENERAL SURGERY /ENDOSCOPY, ONCOLOGY/CHEMOTHERAPY, UROLOGY, ORTHOPEDICS, GYNECOLOGY, AND SOON TO BE OPHTHALMOLOGY.

WE ADDED 19,000 SQUARE FEET OF NEW CONSTRUCTION IN 2005, INCLUDING A BRAND NEW, STATE-OF-THE-ART EMERGENCY ROOM AND NEW RURAL HEALTH CLINIC. WE HAVE ALSO RENOVATED, EXTENSIVELY, OVER 30,000 SQUARE FEET OF ORIGINAL HOSPITAL SPACE, INCLUDING EVERY PATIENT ROOM, THE SURGERY DEPARTMENT, NURSES STATION, AND WELLNESS CENTER. VISITORS ARE AMAZED THAT THE HOSPITAL HAS BEEN THERE SINCE 1974, BECAUSE IT APPEARS LIKE A NEW FACILITY.

MS. AIKMAN: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR MANAGEMENT STYLE AS IT HAD DEVELOPED DURING YOUR RISE AT THE HOSPITAL?

MS. CULVERN: OVER THE YEARS, MY MANAGEMENT STYLE DEVELOPED INTO ONE OF PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT – ONE THAT EMPOWERS AND DEVELOPS LEADERS WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION, BUT DOES NOT ABDICATE OVERSIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY. WE HAVE A GREAT STAFF, AND MANY ORDINARY EMPLOYEES HAVE BECOME EXTRAORDINARY MANAGERS AND LEADERS. THE HOSPITAL HAS CONTINUED TO PROFIT AND HAS BEEN IN THE BLACK FOR THE PAST SIXTEEN YEARS. THOSE 74 EMPLOYEES HAVE INCREASED 117% TO A PRESENT NUMBER OF OVER 200. WE JUST COMPLETED A SURPRISE SURVEY FROM THE JOINT COMMISSION, WHICH COMPARES HOSPITALS TO THE BEST OF ESTABLISHED STANDARDS OF CARE. WE WERE GIVEN AN OUTSTANDING STAMP OF APPROVAL. KUDOS TO OUR STAFF!

MS. AIKMAN: IN ADDITION TO YOUR EMPLOYEES, WHAT PARTNERS HAVE SUPPORTED YOUR MISSION AT JEFFERSON HOSPITAL?

MS. CULVERN: DR. JIM POLHILL, OUR CHIEF OF MEDICAL STAFF, HAS BEEN MY FRIEND AND ADVOCATE THROUGH ALL THESE YEARS. WE HAVE BEEN A GOOD TEAM AND HAVE ALWAYS WORKED TOGETHER TO MOVE THE HOSPITAL FORWARD. HIS MEDICAL STAFF LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN INVALUABLE AND ESSENTIAL. THE AUTHORITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN ENGAGED AND LED THE CHARGE IN MAKING DECISIONS THAT ANSWERED OUR COMMUNITY'S HEALTHCARE NEEDS.

MS. AIKMAN: WHAT AN AMAZING CAREER. WILL IT BE HARD TO LEAVE IT BEHIND?

MS. CULVERN: I RETIRE FROM THE HOSPITAL APRIL 30, 2007, AFTER NEARLY 35 YEARS. I WILL BE LEAVING IT IN GOOD FINANCIAL SHAPE AND WITH A BRIGHT FUTURE UNDER THE NEW LEADERSHIP OF INCOMING ADMINISTRATOR/ CEO, H. HEYWARD WELLS, III.

MS. AIKMAN: SOUNDS A LOT LIKE JUMPING FROM THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE. HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE THE CHALLENGES YOU FACE AS THE LOUISVILLE'S NEW LEADER?

MS. CULVERN: AS I BEGIN MY NEW ROLE AS MAYOR OF LOUISVILLE, MY BIGGEST CHALLENGES ARE GAINING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE JOB FIRST, LEARNING HOW THE CITY WORKS, MEETING EACH AND EVERY EMPLOYEE AND GETTING TO KNOW THE

COUNCILMEN AND HOW THEY FUNCTION IN THEIR ROLES. DON RHODES IS A WONDERFUL CITY ADMINISTRATOR AND HIS WORK HAS BROUGHT US TO A TIME WHEN LOUISVILLE IS ON THE CUSP OF GREAT THINGS. WE HAVE A FANTASTIC AIRPORT, PLANS AND FUNDING IN PLACE FOR AN UPDATED DOWNTOWN STREETScape, A GREAT NEW PARK, THANKS TO MS HELEN CLARK, AND MANY OTHER PLANS THAT I WAS AMAZED TO LEARN ABOUT. OUR CITIZENS HAVE MUCH TO BE PROUD ABOUT, AND WE AS CITY LEADERS NEED TO DO A BETTER JOB OF COMMUNICATING ALL THESE PLANS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FUTURE DREAMS AND IDEAS! I ALSO NEED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING THERE.

MS. AIKMAN: WELL, I HAD PLANNED TO ASK YOU A QUESTION ABOUT STRAY CATS, BUT I GUESS IT'S ONLY FAIR TO GIVE YOU A FEW WEEKS ON THE JOB BEFORE GETTING DOWN TO THE TOUGH STUFF. WHEN YOU THINK STRATEGICALLY, LOOKING DOWN THE ROAD, WHAT DO YOU SEE IN STORE FOR LOUISVILLE TEN YEARS FROM NOW?

MS. CULVERN: I WANT THE PEOPLE – ALL THE PEOPLE – TO PARTICIPATE IN HELPING TO DEVELOP THE VISION FOR WHAT LOUISVILLE WILL AND SHOULD BECOME. WE ARE THE FIRST PERMANENT CAPITAL OF GEORGIA. WE SHOULD AND WILL BECOME A JEWEL FOR OUR STATE! WE SHOULD SET THE BAR FOR WHAT A SMALL GEORGIA CITY SHOULD BE! OUR LEGISLATORS, BOTH STATE AND FEDERAL SHOULD BE ON BOARD. OUR HISTORY IS ONE OF LEADERSHIP AND WE WILL BECOME LEADERS AGAIN. AS MICHAEL LEWIS RECENTLY SAID AT A BLACK HISTORY MONTH PRESENTATION, WE NEED TO BECOME “WATER-WALKERS.” WHEN JESUS WALKED ON THE TROUBLED WATERS OUT TO THE DISCIPLES IN THE BOAT, PETER STEPPED OUT OF THE BOAT TO WALK TO HIM, BUT THEN HE TOOK HIS EYES OFF CHRIST AND BECAME AFRAID. HE BEGAN TO SINK. WE MUST KEEP OUR EYES ON THE GOAL AND NOT BE AFRAID. WE MUST BOLDLY STEP OUT OF THE BOAT AND BE COURAGEOUS. THIS WILL TAKE THE INPUT AND SUPPORT OF ALL CITIZENS! DO YOU WANT TO SEE LOUISVILLE PROSPER? DO YOU WANT TO LIVE IN A CITY THAT IS RECOGNIZED FOR ITS BEAUTY AND HISTORY? DO YOU WANT TO BE A PLACE THAT OTHER GEORGIANS WILL BE PROUD TO KNOW WAS FIRST IN THE PAST AND WILL BE FIRST AGAIN? IF SO, GIVE ME YOUR IDEAS, YOUR THOUGHTS AND LET'S MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER.

MS. AIKMAN: HOW DO YOU THINK LOUISVILLE GETS TO THAT VISION OF THE FUTURE?

MS. CULVERN: ONCE THE COUNCIL AND I, WITH DON RHODES, HOLD OUR RETREAT, USING A PROFESSIONAL FACILITATOR, WE WILL HAVE A BETTER IDEA OF WHAT OUR VISION IS. WE WILL THEN COMMUNICATE THIS PRELIMINARY VISION IN A PUBLIC SETTING AND SEEK THE INPUT AND SUPPORT OF INTERESTED CITIZENS. I HOPE EVERYONE WILL PARTICIPATE!

MS. AIKMAN: THANK YOU, MS. CULVERN. I KNOW WE ALL WISH YOU WELL.

MS. CULVERN: MY PLEASURE!

This Month

At The Pal . . .

- MARCH 2 - 6 – DREAMGIRLS
- MARCH 15TH – PUPPET SHOW BY INSKI THEATER

THE REST OF THE PAL'S OFFERINGS FOR MARCH WERE NOT AVAILABLE WHEN THIS ISSUE OF *THE DOWNTOWNER* WENT TO PRINT. FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION, CALL THE PAL AT 478.625.9998 OR VISIT FRIENDS ONLINE AT WWW.OURLOUISVILLE.COM.

SHOW TIMES – FRIDAY, SATURDAY, MONDAY, AND TUESDAY AT 7 P.M.

. . . and The Bistro

- MARCH 2 - PRIME RIB DINNER \$15.99
- MARCH 3 - JOYCE STEVENS, LIVE GUITAR
- MARCH 9 - ITALIAN DINNER - LASAGNA AND ALL YOU CAN EAT SPAGHETTI \$6.99
- MARCH 10 - LAMB FAMILY BLUEGRASS
- MARCH 16 - FLEA MARKET - DINNER AVAILABLE
- MARCH 17 - ST. PATRICK'S DAY BASH - IRISH FOOD AND BREWS - HIGH LONESOME
- MARCH 24TH - GLEN WATKINS

LUNCH TUESDAY - SATURDAY, 11 AM - 3 PM
BEER AND WINE AVAILABLE ON WEEKENDS

The Downtowner's Image of the Month



ABOVE, THIS RECOGNIZABLE IMAGE IS KAREN LEWIS'S ENTRY IN THE STAPLES® ALL-AMERICAN "HOMETOWN VIEWS" PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST.

Louisvillian Enters "Hometown Views" Contest

LOUISVILLE, GEORGIA IS ABOUT AS FAR FROM ICELAND AS YOU CAN GET AT THIS TIME OF YEAR. EVEN SO, JUST AS THE FIRST HINTS OF REAL COLD SETTLE IN, LOUISVILLE NATIVE KAREN LEWIS HAS SET HER SIGHTS ON A TRIP TO THAT GLACIATED COUNTRY.

THE OFFICE-SUPPLY CHAIN STAPLES® IS RUNNING A NATIONWIDE PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST HIGHLIGHTING WHAT AMERICANS LOVE ABOUT THEIR HOMETOWNS. ENTRIES ARE LIMITED TO ONE PER PERSON. FORTY LUCKY FINALISTS WILL HAVE THEIR POSTER-SIZED PRINTS AVAILABLE FOR SALE IN

THEIR LOCAL STAPLES® STORES AND WILL RECEIVE ROYALTIES ON THEIR WORK. ALL ENTRANTS RECEIVE A FREE POSTER-SIZED PRINT OF THEIR SUBMISSIONS. ONE GRAND PRIZE WINNER WILL GET A TRIP FOR TWO: A FIVE DAY, FOUR NIGHT ADVENTURE TO ICELAND. THE PRIZE INCLUDES LODGING AND MULTIPLE EXCURSIONS – FROM WHALE-WATCHING TO OTHER ICELANDIC TOURS – AND IS VALUED AT \$6,000.



MS. LEWIS EXPRESSED ENTHUSIASM FOR THE COMPETITION (“HOPE I WIN!” SHE WROTE), THOUGH SHE CONFESSED THE GRAND PRIZE TRIP TO ICELAND “DOES NOT SOUND GOOD CONSIDERING THE TEMPERATURE OUTSIDE.”

THE STAPLES® HOMETOWN VIEWS CONTEST BEGAN JANUARY 1, 2007 AND RUNS THROUGH MARCH 15, 2007. IT’S OPEN TO ANY AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO ARE U.S. RESIDENTS AGED 18 OR OLDER AS OF MARCH 15, 2007. FOR INFORMATION ON ENTERING, VISIT THE STAPLES® WEB-SITE FOR THE CONTEST AT [HTTP://HOMETOWNVIEWS.DJA.COM/](http://hometownviews.dja.com/).

NEWS FROM

THE FIRE HOUSE GALLERY

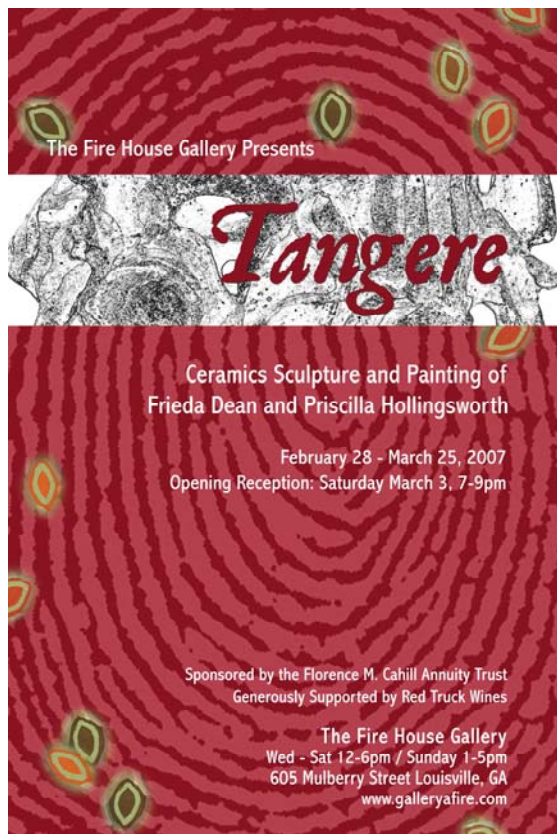


Painting and Ceramics – A Tango of Media

TANGERE – CERAMICS SCULPTURE AND PAINTING BY FRIEDA DEAN AND PRISCILLA HOLLINGSWORTH

FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 25

OPENING RECEPTION, SATURDAY, MARCH 3, 7-9PM



THIS MONTH THE GALLERY HOSTS TWO ARTISTS OF REMARKABLE TALENT FROM AUGUSTA STATE UNIVERSITY. PROFESSOR PRISCILLA HOLLINGSWORTH HAS HAD A LONG ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY, WHERE SHE'S TAUGHT SINCE 1993. FRIEDA DEAN HAS BEEN A STUDENT IN THE ART PROGRAM AT ASU AND PREVIOUSLY DISPLAYED HER WORK IN A FIRE HOUSE GALLERY EXHIBITION OF THE SCHOOL'S ADVANCED PRINTMAKING STUDENTS IN 2005. BOTH ARE EXPERIMENTAL WITH THEIR WORK AND BOTH EXPRESS A CERTAIN GOOD FORTUNE IN MAKING ART.

"I SEEM TO BE AT THE POINT IN LIFE," SAYS MS. HOLLINGSWORTH, "WHERE MY INTERESTS ARE COMING FULL CIRCLE, AS OPPOSED PERHAPS TO THE MERE ARCS THAT WERE DISCERNIBLE

EARLIER. I'M LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE ESTABLISHED AS A PROFESSOR OF ART AT A UNIVERSITY. I'M SHORT ON TIME TO MAKE ART (THERE IS ALWAYS LOTS OF TEACHING AND PAPERWORK TO GET THROUGH), BUT THEN ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE IS LITTLE TO STOP ME AT THIS POINT FROM BRANCHING OUT BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF

IDEAS AND MEDIA AS THOSE ARE CONVENTIONALLY DEFINED FOR PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS.” AFTER AN EARLY INTEREST IN PAINTING AND A PROFESSION CENTERED ON WORK IN CLAY FORMS, MS. HOLLINGSWORTH NOW CREATES INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE ART FORMS, COMBINING TWO AND THREE DIMENSIONAL WORK BY SUSPENDING CERAMIC PIECES (VESSELS) ON SIMPLE SHELVES BEFORE HER PAINTINGS (WHICH SHE CALLS “THE ENVIRONMENT”).

“I FEEL A MISCHIEVOUS SENSE OF REVENGE WHEN PLACING A PAINTING AS A BACKDROP TO A SCULPTURE,” SHE SAYS. “FOR VARIOUS HISTORICAL REASONS, WESTERN ART PRIVILEGES PAINTING ABOVE SCULPTURE, AND CRAFT BELOW EITHER.” MS. HOLLINGSWORTH INTENDS “FOR THE PAINTING AND THE VESSEL IN THESE WORKS TO ILLUMINATE ONE ANOTHER.” THESE COMPOSITE WORKS INVITE “A KIND OF CONVERSATION WITH A WORLD OF OTHER PEOPLE” WHO MAY BE DRAWN TO STUDYING THEIR ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE.

MS. DEAN ALSO WORKS IN SEVERAL MEDIA WITH CONNECTIONS TO THE LANDSCAPE. HER “PHILOSOPHERS’ STONES” ARE REMINISCENT OF CHINESE SCHOLARS’ ROCKS. “THEY WOULD FIND THESE INCREDIBLE ROCKS WITH SUCH RICH QUALITIES AND BUILD ELABORATE STANDS FOR THEM. THAT’S WHAT THEY WOULD LOOK AT WHILE DOING THEIR BRUSHWORK – LIKE HAVING A LANDSCAPE RIGHT THERE IN THE STUDIO.”

THE PAINTED STONES ARE INVITATIONS TO CONTEMPLATION. “ALL OF THEM HAVE TO DO WITH THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING, WHETHER IT’S LOSING MY MOTHER OR THE REDEMPTION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT.” “I’VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO FIND THE KIND OF ROCKS THAT I’D LIKE,” MS. DEAN ADDED, “SO I’M MAKING THEM.”

MS. DEAN’S PAINTINGS HAVE A SIMILAR DEPTH, A “VERY TACTILE QUALITY.” “THEY’RE VERY THREE-DIMENSIONAL IN THAT THEY USE A LOT OF PAINT.” THIS GIVES HER WORK “NOT JUST COLOR, WHICH IS WONDERFUL, BUT ALSO A SORT OF LANDSCAPE QUALITY BY THE WAY THE LIGHT SHINES ACROSS THEM, CREATING DEEP TEXTURES.”

MS. DEAN’S PHOTOGRAPHS TESTIFY TO HER EXPERIENCE LIVING FOUR BLOCKS FROM THE WORLD TRADE CENTER DISASTER. “FOR ME THEY’RE NOT ABSTRACT. THEY’RE DARK BUT STILL LUMINOUS. I TRIED TO INFUSE THEM WITH INCREDIBLE BEAUTY BECAUSE THEY DEAL WITH SUCH A DARK SUBJECT.”

MS. DEAN WAS HONORED TO WORK IN THE RENOWNED “ATELIER 17” STUDIO IN NEW YORK, WHERE SHE LEARNED VISCOSITY ETCHING. “I’VE BEEN LUCKY TO STUDY WITH THE VERY BEST ARTISTS AND THAT STILL HOLDS TRUE TODAY,” SHE CONCLUDED. “I AM

SO IMPRESSED WITH THE FACULTY AT ASU.” MS. DEAN IS DELIGHTED TO CO-EXHIBIT WITH HER CERAMICS PROFESSOR.

April Brings Crowther, Arts Guild

THIS APRIL, THE GALLERY IS DELIGHTED TO HOST TWO EXHIBITS. FIRST, OPENING ON MARCH 28 AND RUNNING THROUGH APRIL 15, IS A THOUGHT-PROVOKING DISPLAY OF THE EXPANSIVE FIGURATIVE PAINTINGS OF THOMAS MICHAEL CROWTHER, AUGUSTA STATE UNIVERSITY ALUMNUS AND PROFESSOR. TITLED “TIME AND PROCESS,” MR. CROWTHER’S SHOW EMPHASIZES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ACT OF ART AND THE FINAL PRODUCT. THOUGH A NATIVE OF THE NORTH OF ENGLAND, MR. CROWTHER IS A LONG-TIME RESIDENT OF THE SOUTH, HAVING GROWN UP IN AUGUSTA AND RECEIVED HIS MFA FROM RADFORD UNIVERSITY IN RADFORD, VIRGINIA.

DURING THE SECOND HALF OF APRIL, THE GALLERY WELCOMES BACK THE ARTS GUILD OF JEFFERSON COUNTY AND ITS ANNUAL SPRING EXHIBIT. SAYS THE GALLERY’S KATHLEEN GALVIN, “THE GUILD IS ALWAYS WELCOME HERE. INCREDIBLY, THIS SPRING EXHIBIT MARKS THE GALLERY’S SECOND ANNIVERSARY. WE CAN’T THINK OF A BETTER WAY TO CELEBRATE A BIRTHDAY.”

Artist Shares Tricks of the Trade on Showing Work

“YOU WOULD NOT BELIEVE HOW MANY EXHIBITS ARE BEING PUT ON IN SOUTHEAST GEORGIA, AND A LOT OF THEM ARE FREE!” PAINTER ZAL RICHARDS BROUGHT A UNIQUE BLEND OF ARTISTIC INTEREST, BUSINESS SAVVY, AND ENTHUSIASM TO LOUISVILLE SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, FOR A WORKSHOP WITH MEMBERS OF THE ARTS GUILD OF JEFFERSON COUNTY. A DOZEN PARTICIPANTS TURNED OUT AT THE MAGDALENE HOUSE STUDIOS FOR HIS SESSION ON FINDING AND PARTICIPATING IN ARTISTIC EXHIBITIONS.



MR. RICHARDS QUIZZED THE AUDIENCE ON HOW THEY'RE FINDING PLACES TO SHOW THEIR WORK. "I'M REAL BRASSY," GUILD MEMBER MARIANNE MILLER CONFESSED. "I GO RIGHT IN AND SAY, 'LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT I DO.'" SHE WAS PLEASED TO REPORT, "USUALLY THEY'LL TAKE A FEW OF MY THINGS."

DELIGHTED, MR. RICHARDS ENCOURAGED HIS LISTENERS, "BE CREATIVE. PEOPLE LOVE ART. C'MON FOLKS, WE DO GREAT THINGS. WE MAKE SCULPTURES; WE DO PAINTINGS; WE CARVE GREAT THINGS; AND PEOPLE LOVE THIS STUFF!"

MR. RICHARDS SHARED INSIGHT WITH HIS AUDIENCE ON THE AVERAGE COST OF PARTICIPATING IN AN EXHIBITION (\$103 – A GOOD BIT ABOVE THE ENTRY FEE ONCE YOU COUNT THE COST OF SLIDES, POSTAGE AND OTHER SUNDRIES). HE OFFERED WARNINGS ON AVOIDING SCAMS, AND TURNED OVER COPIES OF HIS HOMEMADE EXHIBITION WORKSHEET, WHICH CONVENIENTLY TRACKS EXHIBITION INFORMATION.

MR. RICHARDS ALSO SUGGESTED LOOKING INTO PAST SHOWS (“ARE THEY INTERESTED IN MORE REALISTIC LANDSCAPES? ARE THEY AFTER MORE ABSTRACT LANDSCAPES? DO THEY HATE LANDSCAPES?”) AND CHECKING THE INTERNET FOR EXHIBIT INFORMATION. “IF THE WEB-SITE HAS LOTS OF INFORMATION, THAT’S GENERALLY A GOOD SHOW.”

Readers interested in receiving a copy of Mr. Richards exhibition worksheet (a Microsoft Excel file which can be shared electronically or via paper copy), are welcome to contact the Gallery via email at firehousegallery@aol.com or by phone at 478.625.0387.

**Friends of Historic
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