

Cook, 'confidante' of 25 years gets a tasty tribute from 'kids'

By Frale de Guzman

Of the Emerald

Swaying to the beat of Randy and the Equators, residents of the Chelsea House quickly made dinner, lit candles on a cake and then dimmed the lights — all in honor of their surprise guest, Ruth Thorne.

Fittingly enough, Thorne this time was catered to by about 80 of her past and present "kids," or University students she has cooked for during the past 25 years.

Although she currently cooks at the Chelsea House, Thorne began working in the University area as the first cook at the Philadelphia House in 1961. She then cooked for Phi Delta Theta and Alpha Tau Omega before starting in 1979 with the Chelsea House, where she has cooked for the last four years.

Famous for her chocolate chip cookies and strawberry pies, Thorne was more than a cook and managed to endear herself to a lot of people, says Mike Evans, a former ATO member.

"Ruth fulfilled a much larger role," Evans says. "She made sure the house functioned. And she was a great friend."

In addition to being a cook and budget director, "she was also surrogate mother, friend and confidante. And she takes a lot of pride in what she cooks," says Jeff Bissonnette, current manager of the Chelsea House.

The smells of Thorne's cooking is often what makes a visitor want to live at the Chelsea House, Bissonnette adds.

Many students say the love and affection she gives her "kids" have enriched their lives, earning Thorne a special place in their hearts.

"She's a real pioneer on campus," says Kevin Long, an English major and a current resident of the Chelsea House. "She's real traditional and has got a lot of charisma."

"She's one of the most giving people I've ever known," says Joanne Green, Thorne's daughter. "She really knows how to love. I'm really proud of her."

Love and a strict adherence to the Golden Rule is Thorne's key to success, she says. In the 25 years she has cooked in the University area, Thorne has witnessed many changes, especially in the Greek system.

"After the discontinuation of hazing in the Greek system, things began to quiet down," Thorne says. "Now the boys have a lot of respect for older people, and in the last few years, they've been more con-



Ruth Thorne, "surrogate mother" to scores of students in the past 25 years, gets a hug from Kim Ketterer.

Photo by James Marks

cerned with their education. But boys will be boys!

"When the movie 'Animal House' came out, my friends tried to convince me not to watch the movie. They probably thought I was a prude," Thorne says. "But I told them that I had seen it all in person."

As confidante, Thorne was often told about upcoming pranks and special events such as the engagements of various house members.

"I was full of secrets," Thorne says. "And I wish that I had kept a diary, then I could blackmail somebody," Thorne adds with a laugh.

A widow since 1965, she says she regards the "kids" she cooks for as her second family.

"The kids mean a lot to me," Thorne says. "They're what's kept me going all these years. They're my life."

"It's been interesting and rewarding life," she adds. "I feel that I've made a little mark in the lives of boys and girls, and if I have, it's all been worthwhile because they're all good kids."



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