

Ginny Brewster:

Sandy High board member fights for parent involvement

by SUE LAFKY

"There's order in this chaos," Ginny Brewster said as she rummaged around her study, looking for papers on her latest school board project.

The room, formerly a study for her husband Averytt, has become a headquarters of sorts for Brewster since she was elected to the Sandy Union High School Board three years ago.

"Nobody touches this room," she said with a laugh while surveying stacks of papers that could qualify her for a guest appearance on "The Paper Chase." "Everything is supposed to be filed. I file everything."

Notes on everything from school board meetings and audio-visual equipment to federal grants and policy ideas are tucked away in the study. Brewster even comes to Sandy school board meetings with a suitcase full of materials and papers—her "portable file."

"Then I don't have to worry about losing stuff or not having stuff."

Mrs. Brewster is the only woman on the Sandy High School Board, and is one of the first to say that she's ruffled a few feathers.

"I do not feel that I have mean feelings. I feel I'm tolerant of people. I do react—I'm a reactionary kind of person," she said.

"I mean, it shows. If I disagree with someone, it shows. And if I'm frustrated with somebody, it shows."

She added: "A positive way to say it is that I'm an upfront person. But that also gets you in a lot of trouble. You say what you think, and it doesn't always win friends and influence people."

"I keep working on that," she said and laughed. "But I probably have a long way to go."

The Brewsters live on wooded acreage outside of Sandy in what was once downtown Marmot. The road to the former mountain resort town is long and winding, following the old Barlow Road, the last leg of the Oregon Trail. Three German shepherds greet

visitors to the Brewster property—also home for some horses, a few cows and some pigs ("the kids' 4-H and FFA project"). On this particular morning, it is also home for a neighbor's kitten which jumped off a tractor and missed—falling into a barrel of oil.

"There's oil over four towels," Brewster said as she walked through what she jokingly referred to as the "scenic route," a laundry room strewn with clothes of her five children, ages eight to 17.

"I have too many irons in the fire," she said as she walked through the five-bedroom home she and her husband built nine years ago. "That's the way I work best."

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Brewster grew up in the Willamette Valley ("Shedd, Oregon—you can't get much smaller than that") and received a B.S. from Oregon State University.

"I'm a teacher," she said. "I have my certification in physical education and health." She also holds a teaching norm in science and home economics.

She switched her college major from home economics to physical education. "I couldn't take counting steps from the sink, to the refrigerator, to the stove," she remembered. "That's what they used to do in home ec classes."

She did remember to count the steps when she designed her own kitchen. The Brewsters planned their home to have plenty of window space and rooms

which led outside. The home is brick throughout because Brewster doesn't like to paint. "We've been here nine years and I haven't had to paint yet."

Her past careers range from driving a grain truck to making change one summer at Harrah's Club in Nevada. Currently, she holds a real estate license and works with Four Seasons Realty, specializing in land sales.

She has also done her stint as a 4-H leader, and currently takes charge of the junior high group at Damascus Lutheran Church with her husband.

"My hobby's supposed to be photography," she said. And even though she has taken every

photography class offered by Mt. Hood Community College, her darkroom is usually ignored these days. Brewster estimates that she puts in a "minimum of 20 hours a week" on school board business.

"I ran because I have five kids in school and was concerned about the educational program," she said.

Brewster would like to see parents become more involved in the high school, but was unsuccessful in her attempt to get a booster club going earlier this year.

"The community is divided," she said. "The people think of themselves as Cottrell parents, or Welches parents, or Sandy Grade School parents."

One of her pet projects has been developing a school board policy on how to develop policy. "I worked months on that thing, and attended a two-day workshop."

She also spearheaded the publication of a brochure which introduces visitors to the school board, and explains procedure for airing concerns.

"The board's function is to be a place for people to be heard."

Other projects Brewster has worked for include a drug education program recently started at Sandy High School.

"The three major problems of teenagers are drugs, driving and venereal disease. We're not even dealing with them, and think they'll go away."

Brewster has been active in Republican politics, and worked to elect Norma Paulus to Secretary of State. Paulus offered the Sandy resident two pieces of advice when she was elected to the school board.

"Don't let anyone intimidate you because you've been elected by the people," Paulus said.

"Second—know your facts. Get a lawbook and know your facts."

Brewster owns a well-thumbed copy of a large notebook from the Department of Education which lists Oregon law concerning school boards.

"It never says the superintendent will do this, or the teachers will be sued, or anything like that—it says the school board will."

One of the major projects the school board will be taking on in the next year—"or maybe two"—will be the revision of Sandy's policies to conform with the National School Board policy book.

"It's encompassing," Brewster said. "It will involve the public, students and teachers."

Brewster said she has seen changes in the board during the past two years. The agenda "moves faster" and board meetings are "more relaxed."

"There's more input from all the

members of the board," she added.

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School Board Vice-chairman Ginny Brewster

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"I think they appreciate my ideas," Brewster said of her fellow board members. "I appreciate the way board members allow me to follow through on my ideas or concerns."

Does she ever feel that anything she does is misunderstood by the public?

"All the time," she said with a laugh. "If you have a five-hour board meeting and the newspaper writes two paragraphs, the paper obviously can't get in all the background reasoning."

She added that some people have based their opinion of her on rumors.

"I've had this happen several times where people have based their whole

patience.

"It's the kind of thing where I throw out a lot of ideas, and we get involved in a lot of things, and we make a little change," she said. "We make a little impact here and there."

Brewster said she doesn't believe in astrology, "but I sure fit the bill for a Leo."

According to the stars, Ginny Brewster is friendly and likes people, but is often misunderstood.

"I'm supposed to be a leader, but step on toes," she said.

"I'm more aggressive, bossy—I admit it," she added.

"I figure a lot of people just ignore that."

Library adds gardening books

The Sandy Public Library has purchased a new series of gardening encyclopedia

volumes which should prove very useful during the gardening and landscaping

season, according to Librarian Sue Newlands. Eleven volumes cover topics including annuals, flowering shrubs, evergreens, pests and diseases, landscape gardening and greenhouse gardening.

Other recent additions include "The Island" by Peter Benchley, "Man-watching: A Field Guide to Human Behavior" by Desmond Morris, "Jayhawk" by Dorothy Kedington and "Children of the Holocaust" by Helen Epstein.

New juvenile and easy books include "Knight of the Lion" by Gerold McDermott, "Magic Through Science" by Robert Gardner.

Scouts win award

For Cub Scout Pack 248 of Sandy, the third time is a charm.

By capturing the Perpetual Trophy for the third consecutive year, the scouts now retain permanent possession of the award.

The trophy, donated by Mt. Hood Community College, is given annually to the top pack in the district which covers the area between Welches and Portland. Winning the award requires participation in a variety of council events, according to Sharon York, a represen-

tative of the pack. Those events include the paper drive just completed in which the scouts gathered 21.8 tons of old newspapers in the Sandy area. The money collected through the drive is used to buy awards through the year and pay for scouts' memberships.

The scouts also participated in an annual fun day, the Pinewood Derby and the district's Scout-captives, held this year at Portland's Washington Square.

Vacation Bible school set

All Sandy area children are welcomed to attend the Vacation Bible School at the

Sandy Seventh-day Adventist Church June 11 to 21, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

"Character Building" is the theme of this year's program. Stories, crafts, games, songs and prizes will hold the interest, throughout the session, according to a school spokesman.

Children ages 4 to 12 may attend and engage in the supervised activities.

Sharon Zull is coordinator of this year's session with her capable helpers promises an outstanding program. There is no charge.

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Pg. 3

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