

Therese Stewart's 90th Birthday Celebration at UTS Barrytown

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Therese Stewart, celebrating with family and friends, and cake

BARRYTOWN - A day of joyful celebration and thankfulness was held on the Barrytown campus of Unification Theological Seminary (UTS) on Saturday, February 25, 2017 as family and friends came together to honor UTS' first Dean of Students, Dr. Therese Stewart, on the occasion of her 90th birthday.

More than one hundred people filled the dining hall as many old friends and several younger ones came to pay tribute to a woman who regaled the audience with stories of her remarkable life.

Her childhood was spent on a farm in rural Minnesota where she recalled listening to President Franklin Roosevelt's "fireside chats" during the Depression years. She became a cadet nurse after World War II, called to aid the many servicemen injured in the war. 20 years followed, as a nun in the Franciscan order, followed by her time as an early member of the Unification Church in America and her appointment as the first Dean of Students at UTS, a position she held for 19 years.

"All-in-all, it was just so wonderful to be a part of something very special, new, challenging; that just kind of carried us along" said Dr. Therese Stewart, UTS' first Dean of Students.

Being part of the founding of UTS had both triumphs and struggles. Probably the biggest - and longest - struggle was for the school's charter, which was originally applied for in April, 1975 and, after several denials, was finally approved in January, 1990.

“We had students that came from all over,” said Dr. Stewart, remembering her time as Dean. “They weren’t just from this country (America) but other countries, too. That was really special. Getting the charter was also very memorable, especially after the struggle that it turned out to be.



UTS President, Hugh Spurgin and Therese Stewart

“All-in-all, it was just so wonderful to be a part of something very special, very new, very challenging; that just kind of carried us along. The frequent visits of True Father [Moon] were very important, and President David S.C. Kim’s inspiration and presence, Dr. [Edwin] Ang and Young Oon Kim, just the inspiration of these people to make it all work.”

Members of the audience were invited to take part in a quiz about Dean Stewart’s life which was passed out by her son, Michael. After all the questions had been asked and answered, more than a dozen people came up and spoke

about their experiences with Therese Stewart over the years, delighting the audience with tales of their personal experiences or thanking her for the influence she had had on their lives, whether as a sister, mentor, leader, or friend.

It was a fitting tribute to the person many referred to as the “heart” of UTS, and whom President Kim affectionately called “Mother Superior.” She has spent most of her life serving others and, rumor has it, is still volunteering as a nurse in Ithaca, New York, where she lives with Michael, her daughter-in-law Kim, and her four grand-children.