

# Allegations against graduation speaker explained

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News Editor

Aviator and Meredith commencement speaker for May '98 Linda Finch said in a statement that allegations of violations at two Texas nursing homes she owned were brought on by publicity surrounding her after she completed Amelia Earhart's intended journey.

One concern was about the death of a 91-year old resident of Pecan Grove Nursing Home in Austin.

According to her statement, the resident's death was not the result of negligence. She says that his death certificate and the emergency room physician testify that the resident died from his worsened condition due to a urinary tract infection and diabetes (which he had when he was admitted to the nursing home).

Finch said in her statement, "Pecan Grove did receive a deficiency for an administrative problem—failure to properly record blood sugar tests—but the quality of care was always good, as the resident's doctor attested. There was nothing Pecan Grove could have done to prevent his death. I will continue to remember him and his family in my prayers."

As of June 3, 1997, the date of Finch's statement, Pecan Grove had not been notified of any pending action regarding the incident.

The other issue dealt with a 1994 inspection of the Dublin Nursing Center. Finch said that all inspection violations were promptly solved. "While I maintained operation of the home," said Finch, "the State sent a trustee to observe, a role I also have been asked to play at other nursing homes. At the end of that time, I invited the Department of Human Services back to Dublin. Not only did they agree that the problems had been corrected, they gave us the highest rating the State can award to a nursing home. They found no financial penalties were warranted and the matter was closed."

Finch, who began investing in nursing homes in 1979, believes that the publicity of these allegations coincides with the publicity she received after completing Amelia Earhart's fabled, ill-fated journey. Finch set off Mar. 17, 1997, in a rare Lockheed Electra 10E, the same

model Earhart had flown, on the same around-the-equator route Earhart had begun when she van-

tence (only 15 were ever produced).

Her journey, called World Flight 1997, became the central part of a comprehensive education outreach program she developed that reached millions of school students. Finch now speaks all over the world, sharing her adventure and discussing what she feels is Earhart's legacy. She was quoted in a Wall Street Journal article as saying, "My mission is Amelia's—to remind everyone that no one has to settle for a small life."

Finch said that none of the allegations were a public issue until press coverage of the World Flight began. "The Attorney General's office filed a lawsuit against the partnership that owns the facility, not against me personally," said Finch. "While I was traveling on World Flight the lawsuit was amended to include me personally."

According to an article in *People Magazine* (Dec. 29, 1997/Jan. 5, 1998), "awards poured in" to Finch after she completed her journey. One

award for \$10,000 allowed Finch to endow a school in Calcutta.

"It saddens me that, only after the tremendous response we received from successfully completing World Flight on May 28, the Attorney General's office chose to disclose information regarding this lawsuit," Finch said in her statement.

"It was obviously a way to capitalize on her popularity," said John Truran, a marketing director at Keppler Associates Inc., Finch's agency. "I'm not sure of the final settlement. I think she has divested in nursing homes."

Bill Rodgers, Music/ Speech/Theater professor and the chairman of Meredith's convocation committee, worked with Madra Britt in Continuing Education, Rebecca Huffstetter, senior class president and graduate Heather Wilkin to decide on a graduation speaker. "We chose Finch because she is a dynamic speaker who's in the news," Rodgers said. "She speaks on motivational subjects like 'Soaring High' which is most appropriate for a commencement address."

Rodgers said he had not heard about any of the controversy surrounding Finch's nursing home violation allegations.



Aviator Linda Finch will be the speaker at commencement on May 10, 1998.

PROMOTIONAL PHOTO

ished in 1937. Although other women have circumnavigated the globe (the first was Geraldine Mock in 1964), Finch was the first to complete the flight in a Lockheed Electra 10E. Her plane, which she restored herself, is one of the only two left in exist-

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### EXPERIENCE continued from page 1

At 2 p.m., visitors attended the closing session with a "Salute to our Little Sisters" from members of the sophomore class and remarks from '98-'99 SGA President Shannon MacFarlane.

Many of the prospective students shared the same sentiment as Sarah Hroza, a future member of the class of 2002, from Albertston, NC. "I love it," she said. Hroza already knows she is coming to Meredith this fall.

During the day, students and parents were asked to fill out evaluation forms. The completed forms will be read thoroughly by admissions counselors to find out what they can improve on or what they did well. Remarkd one student on her evaluation: "You truly infatuated me with this place, and I feel very welcomed and wanted, especially by our big sis class." A family from Maryland said "this was a positive, wonderful, and very informative experience." A student who has already decided on Meredith said, "I can't wait to come. See you in the fall." One parent said that Experience Meredith! helped ease her daughter's "apprehensions."

The overall impression of Experience Meredith! was that it served its purpose to inform its visitors and make them more comfortable with Meredith. Said Hube: "It was very much a community effort from the current students and faculty. The prospective students and their families seemed very pleased. We were delighted with the day."

## HEY SENIORS!!

Don't forget to fill out your Last Will and Testament forms on page 5 of this week's *Meredith Herald*. This is the last time forms will be published. All forms are due April 8th in 325 Barefoot at 5:00 p.m.