



Dr. Jerri Nielsen tells her story at opening convocation

Dr. Nielsen's story inspired a book as well as countless women across the world to overcome adversity

A full house comes to hear the true story of the author of *Ice Bound*.

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On Monday, August 26, students, faculty, staff, alumnae and guests packed Jones Auditorium and Jones Chapel to hear from Dr. Jerri Nielsen, medical doctor, cancer survivor and author of *Ice Bound: A Doctor's Incredible Battle for Survival at the South Pole*.

Nielsen was the featured speaker at the college's opening convocation, which celebrated the freshman Summer Reading Program and this year's featured book, *Ice Bound*.

By 10 a.m., people were sitting in the aisles in Jones Auditorium, forcing later attendees to be directed to

Jones Chapel, where they viewed Nielsen's speech by live video feed.

Nielsen opened by explaining that she came to speak at Meredith because she is a friend of the aunt of Meredith senior Lara Stroud, who also nominated Nielsen's book for the Summer Reading Program.

Although Nielsen may not have come to Meredith without that personal connection, she said that she "would have liked to have gone to a girls' college" because of the challenge women face today with keeping their identities.

"We [women] learn not to say what we think," Nielsen said. "It is a sad state when the mouth is no longer connected to the mind."

Nielsen delivered other inspirational advice to the crowd, including her favorite quote from Goethe, "If there's anything you can do or dream you can, begin

it."

She compared life to an amusement park in that we can get as many "transfers" as we want. She encouraged everyone in the crowd to choose the type of ride he or she wanted to take, using the roller coaster and the carousel as examples.

Nielsen also spoke of her experiences in Antarctica before, during and after her discovery of a cancerous lump in her breast.

"It's the most beautiful place I've ever lived," she said of Antarctica while introducing a slideshow of pictures from her time there. The photos included views of the Antarctic landscape; McMurdo Station, where she lived in Antarctica; the clothing the people at the station wore; and her hospital area at the station.

Nielsen said that her illness helped her to put her life into perspective. "To me, cancer is something

that gave my life color and texture, and it made me," she said.

The Meredith community's response to Nielsen's personal words of encouragement was overwhelmingly positive.

Alumna Marion Welch Thorn, '65, was invited to attend the convocation and decided to bring her friend Lisa Rose, a school librarian and the mother of a Meredith freshman.

"It was very powerful," Rose said of Nielsen's speech.

"We enjoyed being here," Thorn agreed.

Dr. Jean Jackson, vice president for student development, also praised Nielsen's speech. "I thought she gave a message that we all needed to hear, and I'm especially grateful for the freshman listeners to hear this message of personal challenge and personal choice," Jackson said.

If the reactions of the

freshmen are any indication, this year's Summer Reading Program was a success. Several freshmen responded enthusiastically when asked their opinions of the convocation, and many waited in a lengthy line to have Nielsen sign their copies of *Ice Bound* at the reception in the Johnson Hall rotunda following the convocation.

"I thought her speech was awesome," said freshman Jennie Niland, who was waiting in line to meet Nielsen. "*Ice Bound* was one of the first books I had been assigned that I liked."

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