



CONTACT: Browning Brooks
(850) 644-4030

By Bayard Stern
April 1, 2009

ELAINE GEIGER TULLY WOODWARD ENDOWS CIRCUS SCHOLARSHIP

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- As a member of Florida State University's Flying High Circus in the early 1950s, Elaine Geiger enjoyed the spotlight as she defied gravity performing aerial acts such as the cloud swing, the Spanish web and the triple trapeze.

Now in her 70s, Elaine Geiger Tully Woodward finds herself in the circus spotlight once again with the announcement of a \$25,000 endowed scholarship that is being established in her name.

The announcement of the scholarship's second recipient will be made during the Flying High Circus home show on Saturday, April 4, at 2 p.m.

"I can't even begin to describe how thrilled I was when I learned about the scholarship," Woodward said. "The circus was such a large part of my life, and I still love it. We were a close-knit group and Coach (Jack) Haskin really cared about all of us. He was always pretty strict about grades and morals and such, and he treated us like his children. We were like a family. I can't think of anything that teaches students the importance of cooperation and trust more than being in the circus."

The \$500 Elaine Geiger Tully Woodward Award will be given annually to a student who has demonstrated significant contributions to the overall circus program through a helpful, enthusiastic and positive attitude toward the circus and Florida State, while maintaining an above-average grade point average. The scholarship was presented for the second time this spring, but now it is fully endowed.

Elaine Geiger Tully Woodward was first married to Jim Tully, the brother of Bobby Tully, for whom Florida State's Tully Gym is named. Woodward now is married to Robert Davidson "Bob" Woodward III.

The oldest of Woodward's three daughters, Katee Tully, helped lead the effort to raise the money to endow the scholarship.

"From the time that we were small children, we heard such lovely stories from my mother, and my father (Jim Tully), about their experiences as students at Florida State," Katee Tully said. "And being small, we were absolutely intrigued that our mother had been involved in some way in a circus. As we grew older, we could better understand how the circus experience had helped to shape my mother, both as an individual and as a student. When Helen Levine (Katee Tully's partner) and I were thinking about a tribute to her, it just seemed like nothing would have been a better fit than to help a student in the circus at Florida State share that same joy and incredible experience that my mother had. She has always kept in touch with many of her friends from the circus. She still loves going to the circus, being around young people and meeting the students."

"What we did not foresee, is that shortly after we started trying to raise money for the scholarship, my mother had open heart surgery," Tully said. "That became an even greater motivation for us to get moving with everything. She's quite a force and just a lovely person, and thankfully, she's doing great now."

They sent out letters of solicitation to family and friends and said they received a generous level of support.

"We also were so impressed with Liz Maryanski (associate vice president for Student Affairs, financial operations) and Mary Coburn (vice president for Student Affairs)," Tully said. "They were absolutely gracious and so helpful to us with the

entire effort.

"My mother was just absolutely thrilled and overwhelmed when she found out the scholarship had been endowed," Tully said. "It's not like her to seek recognition or be in the limelight. I think for her to be honored like this came as both a surprise and a delight."

Founded in 1947 by Jack Haskin, the Flying High Circus is one of only two collegiate circuses in the United States. A unique tradition on campus since 1947, the circus is a year-round, extracurricular activity for Florida State students under the Division of Student Affairs.

The program was originally created as a way to integrate men and women when Florida State became a co-educational institution -- and it continues to do so today. Said to rival any professional circus, the Flying High is primarily an aerial and stage presentation with three rings of "spellbinding" entertainment. Unlike professional circuses, it has no animal acts. Student performers rig all of their own equipment, sew their own costumes, produce lights and sound for performances, and set up the Big Top tent on campus.

For more information, visit www.circus.fsu.edu.