

Charlotte Schexnayder, Dumas, AR

Charlotte Tillar Schexnayder attended Arkansas A&M College (now UAM) and the University of Chicago and later received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Louisiana State University, where she also studied in graduate school. The first woman appointed to the Arkansas Board of Pardons and Parole, Schexnayder also served as the first woman president of the Dumas Chamber of Commerce. She has been president of every professional journalism organization of which she was a member, including the Arkansas Press Women, The Little Rock professional chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, the National Federation of Press Women, the Arkansas Press Association (first woman President), and the National Newspaper Association. While she no longer owns a newspaper, Schexnayder, now in her 80s, continues to write and remains active in civic life.

Charlotte served 14 years in the Arkansas State Legislature (elected in 1985). She was a founding member and acting director of the Desha County Community Foundation. Charlotte was instrumental in initiating the Great River Bridge Project with Mississippi under then Governor Clinton and getting Congressional backing for I-69, ensuring the bridge would be built. Charlotte was awarded the Judy Thacker Board Member of the Year award by AR Dept. of Historic Preservation in 2003 for her contributions to Main Street Dumas of which she was a founding member.

In talking about leadership, Charlotte was quoted as saying, "Leadership with integrity. You're acting for the ultimate good of the community. Everybody can talk to somebody to help defuse a situation. If people don't work together all is lost." "You have to be a role model for leadership without dominating."

A FEW noteworthy achievements:

- Chosen as National Press Woman of Achievement by Nat'l Federation of Press Women, 1970
- Appointed to the Parole Board by Gov. Pryor, 1975. Charlotte was the first woman to hold this post. She remarked that in her deliberations, at no time did she realize how that appointment would lead her into a joint career of politics and journalism. Nor did she realize how much it would teach her about the lost in our society.
- Received the George Washington Honor Medal from the American Freedoms Foundation for her column on an American Creed, 1975
- Served on the Winthrop Rockefeller Board, in the 1980's
- Elected as first woman member of the Dumas Chamber of Commerce
- Was a member of the Arkansas Commission on the Status of Women (appointed by Bumpers)
- Member of the Electoral College, 1992
- Assistant Speaker of the House of Representatives, 1995
- Was **never** shy to tackle difficult topics in print nor difficult issues in the legislature.